BUILDING A PITCH DECK

The 12 slides investors expect, what goes on each one, and how to keep your story clear and honest.

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AT A GLANCE

- A **pitch deck** is a short slide presentation that explains your business to investors, lenders or grant reviewers.
- Aim for **10 to 15 slides**. Each slide should make **one point**, with as few words as possible.
- Lead with the **problem and your proof**. Investors remember a clear story backed by numbers.

Why it matters

Investors may spend only a few minutes on a deck before deciding whether to meet. A clear deck gets you the meeting. A confusing one, even for a great business, often doesn't.

The 12 slides

#	Slide	What to show
1	Title	Business name, one-line description, your name and contact
2	Problem	Who has the problem, and what it costs them. A real customer story helps.
3	Solution	What you do, and why it's better. A photo or screenshot.
4	Customer and market	Who you serve, and how big the opportunity is. See **I-04 Sizing Your Market Without Fancy Research**.
5	Traction	Your proof: sales, growth, customers, users, pilots, reviews
6	Business model	How you make money: prices, margins, how customers pay
7	Go-to-market	How you'll reach customers
8	Competition	Who else is out there, and why you win. See **I-05 Checking Out the Competition**.
9	Team	Who you are and why you're the right people
10	Financials	Past results and a simple 3-year forecast
11	The ask	How much you're raising, on what terms, and what it will achieve. See **R-25 Use-of-Funds Plan**.
12	Close	Your vision and contact details

> TIP
>
> Use the **Pitch Deck Template** (**R-24 Pitch Deck Template**) to start. For main-street businesses, put extra weight on traction, profits and the use of funds. For tech startups, emphasize growth, the market and the team.

Design tips

- **One idea per slide**, with a clear headline that states the point: "Sales grew 3× in 12 months," not "Traction."
- **Big numbers, few words.** Use charts for trends.
- **Real photos** of your product, customers and team.
- **Consistent, simple design.** Two fonts, a few colors.
- **Readable on a phone.** Many investors read decks on small screens.

Two versions

1. **Send-ahead deck:** a bit more text, so it stands on its own when emailed.
2. **Presentation deck:** fewer words, because you'll be speaking.

EXAMPLE

Marisol's first deck had 28 slides and paragraphs of text. Her mentor helped her cut it to 12. Her traction slide headline became: "10-week pop-up: sold out 9 of 10 Fridays, 600 customer sign-ups." A lender who saw it asked for a meeting the next day.

Common mistakes

- **Too many slides and too much text.**
- **No proof**, only plans.
- **Unrealistic forecasts**, such as huge growth with no explanation.
- **"We have no competition."**
- **Not saying how much you're raising** and what it's for.

Your checklist

- ☐ Draft the 12 slides using the template (R-24)
- ☐ Write a headline for each slide that states its point
- ☐ Add your strongest proof to the traction slide
- ☐ Make a send-ahead and a presentation version
- ☐ Test it on a mentor who doesn't know your business

Key words, explained

Word	What it means
Pitch deck	A short slide presentation for investors.
Traction	Proof that customers want what you sell.
Go-to-market	Your plan for reaching and winning customers.
The ask	How much money you're requesting, and on what terms.

Where to go next

- **R-24 Pitch Deck Template**
- **R-19 Telling Your Story: The Pitch**
- **R-25 Use-of-Funds Plan**

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