



BLUE MOON PITCH

David Beckett

Designed by Elvina Yuliana



For the **BIG** moments
that can change your life

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BIG OPPORTUNITIES
don't come along every day

Investors, executives and customers
see pitches all the time.

Some are good. Some are great.

And once in a blue moon, there's an amazing pitch
that truly stands out and compels action.

Make yours a

Blue Moon Pitch



David Beckett is an international pitch coach, who's trained over 1500 startups. By day, he coaches professionals and startups to communicate their story in no time at all. In the evening, he spends time with his kids and wife. And by night, he creates content (online courses, books, podcasts, videos) to help people find their voice for their great ideas.

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best3minutes.com



Elvina Yuliana is a visual designer and UX specialist. After designing countless decks and digital products under an Eindhoven based agency called OWOW, she's now pursuing a Business Communication and Digital Media master's degree at Tilburg University, and is expected to graduate in Summer 2022.

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To **Sheila**,

whose never-ending faith and support
are at the heart of everything.



To **Coltrane** and **Neve Niobe**,

the best son and daughter I could
ever wish for.



**This is a
complicated world,
it's a very noisy world**

**And we're not
gonna get much
of a chance
to get people
to remember much
about us**



**So we have to be
really clear
about what we want
them to know
about us**

**People want to know
who we are and
what we stand for**

Steve Jobs

You've got an idea!



I believe we all have the potential to achieve great things.

But we can't do them alone. That's why we all need to pitch our ideas, our work, and ourselves, to create belief in what we do.

The question is: **CAN WE CONVINCE OTHERS?**

Can we help them understand the value we want to bring into the world? To take action, and support us to reach our goal?

If we don't convince, that amazing thing inside us can be lost. If we do, there is a chance of bringing our audience along with us, and something great happening.

It's a challenge that often terrifies us. Public speaking makes many of us sweat, have sleepless nights and even shake while awaiting our turn.

Deep down, we fear failing so very badly. And I know what that feels like. Years ago, I stood in front of 200 people from all over Europe, stumbling and bumbling my way through twenty minutes of saying... well, not much at all.

Why did it happen? Because **I didn't have the tools or the proper guidance to find my voice.** I'd opened up PowerPoint, just like everybody else, and assumed the bullet points I typed would get me through. *They didn't.*

Today, I'm more confident when faced with the task of talking to an audience, in person or online. I'm also confident that my clients will succeed too. That's because over the last nine years and 20,000 hours of coaching, presenting and learning, I've built a set of actionable tools that work.

I've shared these tools with thousands of startups and over **25,000 professionals** in major companies, across all kinds of industries. They've used them to deliver amazing clarity and absolute certainty in their pitch; make the time pressure seem non-existent; and flourish under the eyes of the audience.

These approaches and strategies have been tried and tested by experienced executives, product specialists, marketing managers and young startup founders. They'll also work for you.

This book is about helping you take control of the process of building and delivering your story, so that you too can **find your voice for your great ideas.**

I think you're going to surprise yourself with just how great your pitch will be.

YOU TOO CAN REACH THAT LEVEL OF THE BLUE MOON PITCH.

The age of the pitch

The biggest macro trend in the world is a **lack of time**. Everyone is full to the brim with input.

Too much detail in the pitch? We simply check out.

In my twenty year corporate career, I delivered over 1,000 presentations, and attended over 25,000 - with an average length of 43 minutes per presentation.

Man, we could have saved a lot of time!

Today we all want to find out **as quickly as possible** whether the proposition being presented to us has value.

"Will I learn something new? Or gain an opportunity? If I invest my time in listening to this pitch, will I be faster, stronger, sexier, smarter? Because, you know, I'm kind of busy..."

Here's my personal definition of a pitch.

A TIME-PRESSURED PRESENTATION, WITH A CLEAR ASK, AND A PERSONAL EDGE.

It taps into the zeitgeist because usually you have no more than **1, 3 or 5 minutes to share your whole story**. In that time, the task is to communicate the key issues, what you need, and (since there's no time for the details) why we should trust you.

That lack of detail suits your audience just fine at this early stage. If they're interested to know more, they'll ask.

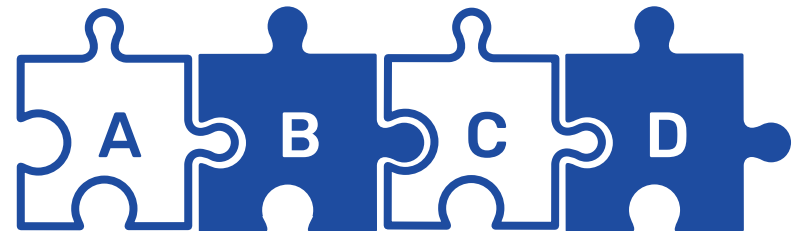
And if they're not, you'll all have saved a lot of time.

A great pitch moves people to the next stage, without boring or confusing them with all the details. You'll find it easier to move them when you narrow down to the true essence of your story, and tell it like you mean it, **because you mean it**.

WHAT I WANT TO TELL



WHAT I NEED TO TELL



It's all about attitude

My first advice on pitching was given to me in my early 20s by my first boss, Lance Miller. He spent his career in advertising and communication, and is a master presenter. Lance instilled in me an attitude and a set of standards, which I live by every day.

He told me: **Don't just knock it out on a sheet of A4.**

Lance went on to demand;

- ✓ If they ask for a page of A4, give them a **document**.
- ✓ If they ask for a document, give them a **presentation**.
- ✓ If they ask for a presentation, give them the **best pitch** they've ever seen.

This attitude of over-preparing and over-delivering led to me working many long hours on every presentation.

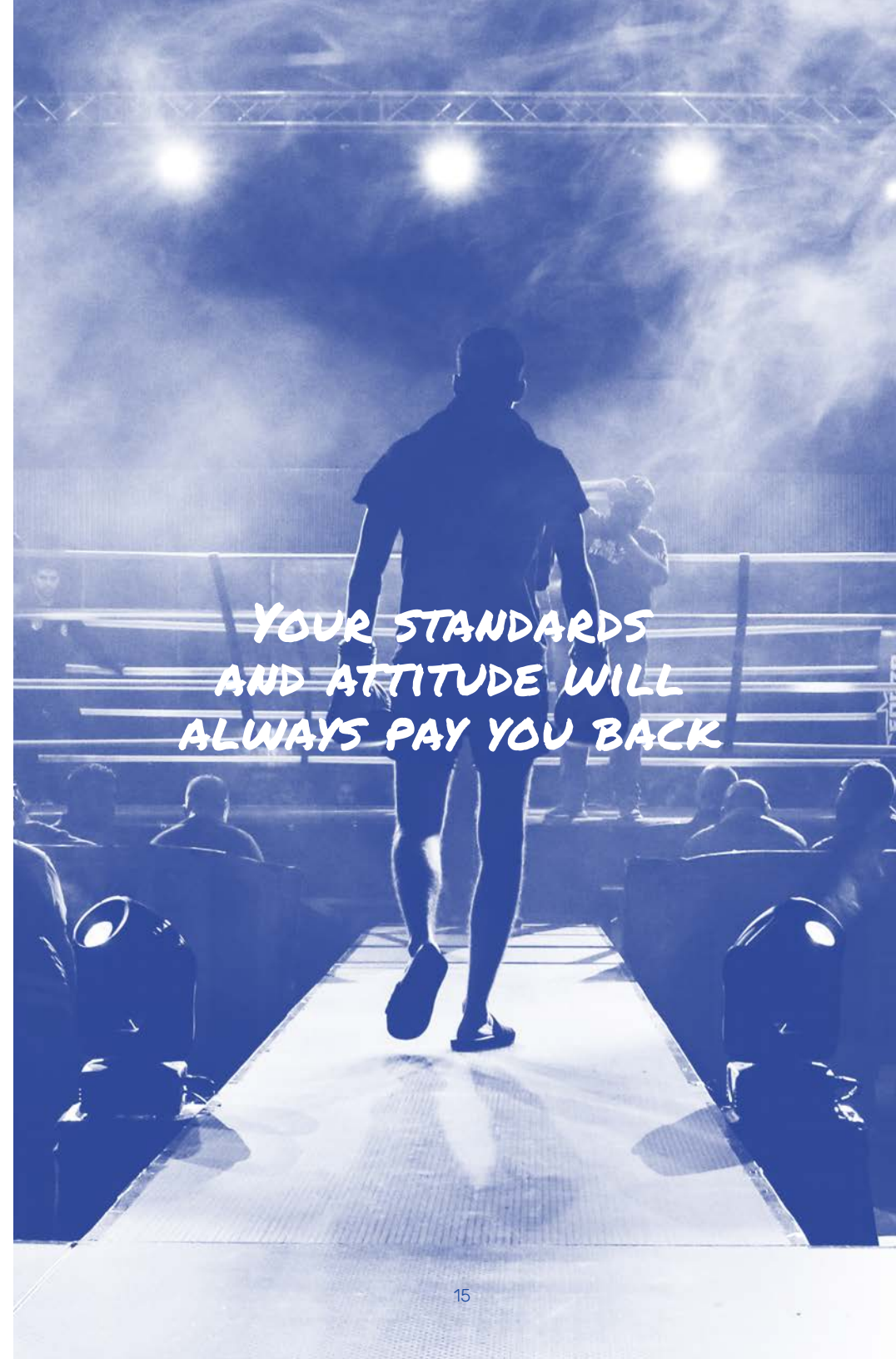
IT WAS WORTH IT.

I saw how people reacted when they received better work than they expected. Doing my job with that attitude of reaching for the highest professional standards gained me trust, and that trust propelled me round the world.

A question I hear regularly is: **How much time should I spend on preparing my pitch?**

Another question gives you the answer. **What level do you want to reach?** Good enough? Quite OK? Or the highest possible level?

Follow Lance's advice: show a professional attitude, put the extra work and time in, and make it the best pitch they've ever seen.



“But some people are born to pitch.

I’m *not* one of them”



I’ve learned one big thing while delivering my workshops over a thousand times, to all kinds of professionals with a variety of characters and temperaments.

ANYONE CAN LEARN HOW TO PITCH.

Most of us are not the type who stride on stage and deliver with no preparation, succeeding through sheer confidence and charisma (*which is what it looks like at times with some great speakers*). But we can all **work hard** and **learn**.

You can do this. Everyone can do this. All the greatest speakers in the world work hard at it. Every TEDx talk is the result of months of preparation. The tools those speakers use to become great are in this book, and you can choose to follow in their footsteps.

I’m often asked: what’s the best pitch you’ve ever seen? My answer: a demo day pitch by **Juan Zamora**. He’s won prestigious

pitch competitions across Europe, and today he is an outstanding communicator of the amazing value his company brings.

The real reason I choose his pitch is: I know **what it took him to reach that level**. When I met Juan in 2014, he was halfway through the Startupbootcamp accelerator program in Amsterdam. Having messed up a number of pitches, he was struggling.

So Juan and I **took control of the process**. We worked together, and he put the tools I shared with him into practice. Again, and again, and again, and *again*, and **again**.

I have never seen anyone work so hard. In six weeks, he journeyed from barely being able to speak in front of a dozen people, to owning the stage before an audience of 400 as if it was his home.

Juan didn’t suddenly unearth some undiscovered, born-to-pitch talents. **He worked hard** - using the tools you’ll find in this book.

YES, ANYONE CAN LEARN HOW TO PITCH.



f o c u s



I've
always **considered**
myself
to be
just **average**
talent

&

what I
have is a
ridiculous
insane
obsessiveness
for practice &
preparation



Will Smith

Don't open PowerPoint (yet...)

PowerPoint was launched in 1987. Since then, tools available for communication have come a long way. The Personal Computer, Email, SMS, The Cloud, Slack and Signal help us share our ideas. So what's become available to help us with our presentations?

Yep, you've got it. Old Faithful. **PowerPoint**. 500 million users, creating 300 million presentations every day. (Yes, you read that right. *300,000,000!*) There's only one problem with PowerPoint.

IT DOES NOT WORK.

Or rather, it doesn't do the job we wish it did.

(For the record, neither do Prezi, Keynote or any other slide software available.)

Firstly, PowerPoint assumes that you know what you are going to say, and in what order. If that's the case, it's a perfectly useful tool to create visuals that support and clarify your story.

But most of us *don't* know, and that leads to the second reason why we find PowerPoint so hard to use when building our story: **it is linear.**

Unlike our brains which, when we are in the early stages of creating a pitch, are in random mode - with ideas flying round our head in all directions.

"Well, obviously I have to tell how big the problem is... oh, hang on, yesterday, we got that new market data, maybe we can use it? And the sales team got a great new deal last week, must mention that... Ah, and we're introducing a new feature at the beginning of next month, so... what should I put on slide 2, bullet point 1?"



RANDOM, CREATIVE, AND ALL OVER THE PLACE.

That's how our brains work when creating a storyline.

Our thought process just doesn't match the way PowerPoint is set up. By the time you've typed your first thought, formatted it into the right type size, aligned it left, added bold and all capitals... your second thought is lost to the wind.

We need a tool to capture all your creative ideas as they happen: **quickly, with as little formatting and editing as possible,**

A tool without which there would be no innovation. A tool for all ages.

I'm talking about **The Post-it® Note.**

The ultimate random capture time-saving machine (A.K.A. THE POST-IT)

In this chapter I am going to give you **days of your life back**.

That's because using Post-its instead of PowerPoint to build up your story will save you 20-30% of preparation time for every pitch or presentation you make, for the rest of your life.

When your brain is in that random, creative mode, Post-its are the quickest and easiest way to capture and organise your ideas.

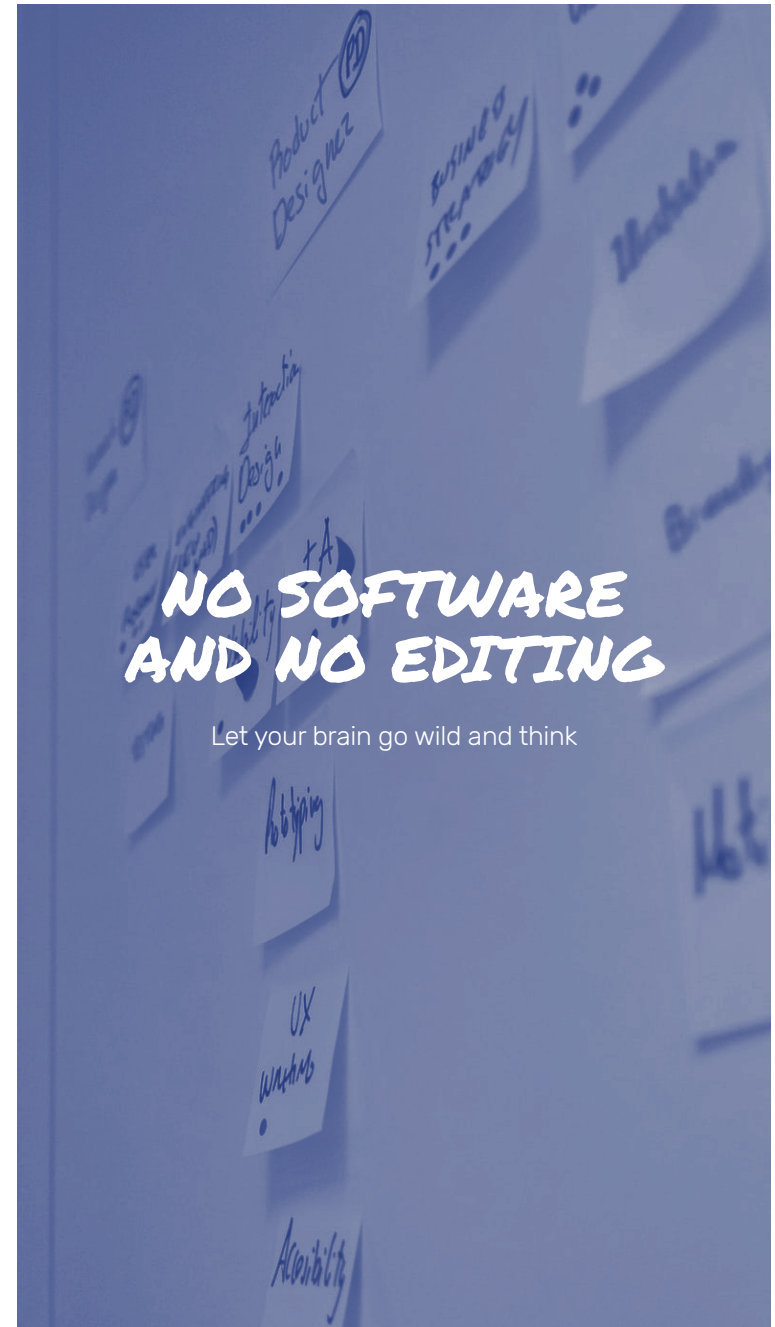
THINK OF AN IDEA? > WRITE IT DOWN! > NEXT

These simple analogue stickies work like your mind does. You can write an idea down on a Post-it and move on to the next idea almost as fast as your brain can think. Whereas, if you're working in PowerPoint, you're still formatting the text when three more ideas have passed you by.

Trying to jam your thoughts directly into software doesn't work. Give your brain some air, and your thoughts a little space. Write them down. Take a look at them. Organise them into a beginning, middle and end. Say the stuff you've written down, out loud.

Do the analogue work first, and then get digital once you've mapped out your storyline. Creating slides becomes so much easier once you have your Post-It note storyline.

So, do we jump into the content yet? *Hold on...* There are a couple of key things to think about first.



Start with the audience in mind

Most people start preparing a pitch or presentation by thinking: *What's the story I want to tell? What have I been working on? What do I want to put in my slides?*

But you don't want to be like most people. In the words of Uncle Steve, **Think Different.***

Put yourself into the world of the receivers of your pitch. Do some research and write down what you know about the people you're trying to convince. This will have a positive influence on the content, style and effectiveness of your persuasion.

WHO'S YOUR AUDIENCE?

What do they care about? What's on their mind, and what are their biggest challenges?

Are they creative, or more numbers focused?

Do they care about social or environmental issues? Or are they only interested in money? If so, what are they looking for: Growth? Cost reduction?

Are they innovative, or conservative? Do they want big bold ideas to change the world, or simply build on what they have?

Do they like process? (Think Project Managers and Engineers.) Or just the outcome? (Think Sales and Marketing.)

Perhaps most important of all: **what is their biggest objection?** What's the No.1 reason why they think this proposition will fail? You'll need to take this perception head-on, and blow those objections away.

Make a profile of your audience before you write anything. This will steer your content, shape your language, and help move your story into the world of the listener.

**To be grammatically correct, Steve should have said 'Think Differently'. But what do you prefer: good grammar, or genius?*





Anything is
possible



if you
have enough
nerve

J.K. Rowling

Communication is what the listener does

The last word of that title sentence is the key.

DOES.

Most presentations share information and leave the audience to make up their mind about it. A great pitch has a clear ask, and is focused on action. Not just handing the information over, but rather using it to steer your audience towards a compulsion to take action.

Something the listener... **Does.**

Often, when I ask clients,

'WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PITCH? WHAT ACTION DO YOU WANT THEM TO TAKE?'

I get these kinds of answers;

"I want them to have a more agile mindset."

"They need to support us in our journey."

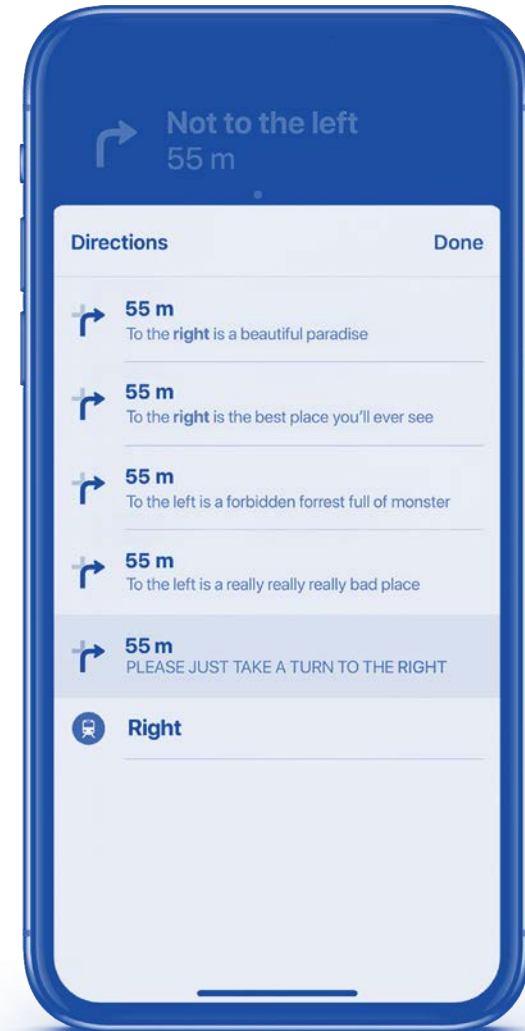
"We want them to believe in the project."

These are noble first-step, think different objectives. But we want our audience to **Act Different** too. Once we've got them to think in a different way, what action will they take?

Meet you after the pitch so you can arrange a follow-up meeting? Visit your website? Download your app? Connect you to someone in their organisation? Give you advice? Agree to provide more resources? Sign a cheque?

If you struggle to make the objective a concrete action, think of it like this: **what could they do on a Monday morning at 09:30?**

The more you focus on what the audience cares about and what you want them to do as a result of the pitch, the easier it will be to decide what to say.



The Pitch Canvas[®]

There's a canvas for everything these days. **The Pitch Canvas[®]** was one of the first. Here's how it came to life.

At the end of the first startup accelerator program I coached on (Startupbootcamp, Amsterdam, 2014) the CEO of one of the teams, Geoffroy Simon, casually mentioned: "There's a Business Model Canvas - why don't you create a pitch canvas?"

A month later, after that thought had constantly swirled around in my mind, I wrote the first draft on Post-its.

YES, OF COURSE, I WROTE IT ON POST-ITS!

This is what it looked like.



At that stage, I had worked with around 50 startups, and attended numerous network events, asking what investors and mentors thought about the pitches they saw. I shaped my learnings into a one-page design (with the help of Geert van Vlijmen, plus illustrations by Birgit Smit) and set about validating the content by working on the two sides of the story.

The entrepreneurs and professionals who pitch.

And the investors, board members and pitch competition jury members who hear pitches.

Nine years later, after coaching over 1500 startups and having countless conversations with their audiences, The Pitch Canvas[®] has gone through over forty different versions. In mid-2019, I felt version 7.91 was as near to complete as any innovation ever is.

At the time of writing, it's being downloaded over 200 times per week by entrepreneurs around the world. They get it for free, which is my way of helping aspiring, penniless entrepreneurs to get started with finding their voice.

The Pitch Canvas[®] is now a fully validated entrepreneurial brainstorming tool that will help you think through and organize the right content for your pitch.

And when you combine The Pitch Canvas[®] with The Post-it Note, you have a powerful yet simple combination that will enable you to supercharge your pitch into the *stratosphere*.

*You can download it free at best3minutes.com/the-pitch-canvas.

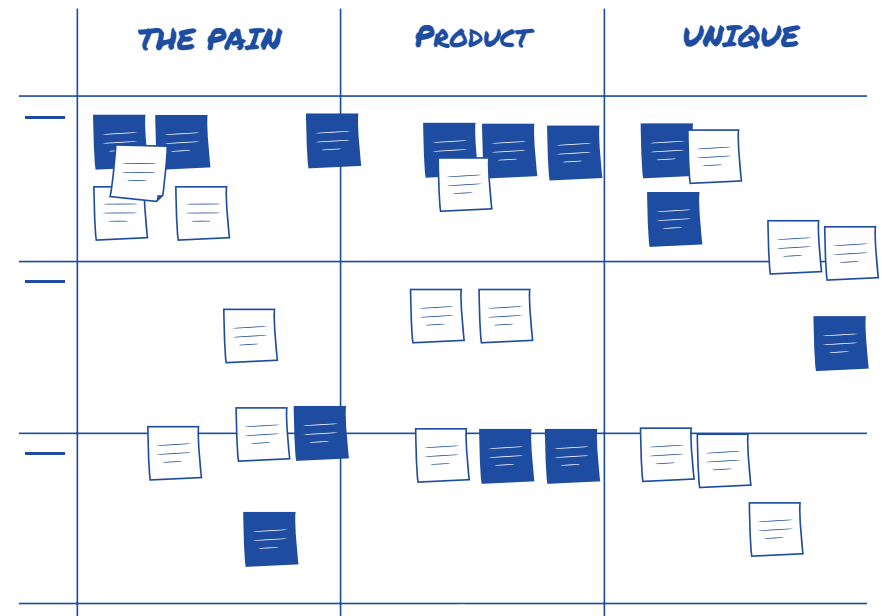
The Post-it meets The Pitch Canvas[©]

Now is the time to start putting it together to build your storyline.

- 1 Get a nice shiny new pack of Post-its (*and the original 3M Post-its really are the best. It's the way they stick*). Take hold of a beautiful new marker pen. Keep a copy of The Pitch Canvas[©] close at hand. Ideally you have a table, a wall or a flipchart to put your Post-its on.
- 2 This can be a **solo task**, or you can get together with **your team**. Just make sure everyone has the tools to write their thoughts. Avoid 'loudest voice wins'.
- 3 Begin thinking through what you're going to talk about. **Let your brain go wild**. What's everything you could say? When you're struggling, check The Pitch Canvas[©] and see what questions or content pieces trigger new topics to tell.
- 4 The only rule: **one idea per Post-it**. Avoid writing five sentences on one sticky. It's easier to move your random thoughts into a logical order with one idea per note.
- 5 Once you have a lot of ideas, take a step back. Remind yourself; **Who's the audience? What's the objective? And how long have you got for the pitch?**
- 6 Identify the big topics you need to talk about - e.g. Pain, Product, What's Unique, Team, etc. - and make these the **chapter headings** of your pitch.

- 7 Review what you've written down about each topic and select the **most important messages** per topic. Cluster them around the chapter headings.
- 8 Select the number of messages you will tell depending on the **length of the pitch**. It's hard to cut out content, but be ruthless. You need to finish on time.
- 9 This process will enable you to see the **beginning, middle and end** of the pitch, which will help you feel whether the flow works or not. You can instantly move the order of the content around and review the new flow, so you can get closer and closer to the story you really want to tell.

Still need a bit more help with this? Check the video at best3minutes.com/bmp-tpc.



QUALITY UP. TIME SAVED. STORYLINE DONE.



You can't
think
yourself
into a great pitch



You have to
talk
yourself
into a great pitch

Michael Dooijes

Ouch!

Pitch the Pain

You'll undoubtedly hear someone tell you one day,

START WITH WHY.

This is valuable advice: watch **Simon Sinek's TED Talk** on the topic for the concept's origins.

If you begin your pitch by telling what you've been working on, they'll zone out. Example: "We created a platform, using Artificial Intelligence, implementing sensors and blockchain, combined with open APIs..." You get the picture: instant switch-off!

We don't want to know what you worked on. We want to know **why** you built what you built: what problem are you solving?

Did you build a parking app? Or set out to solve the time lost and the hassle caused when looking for a parking space in a big city?

Your product and market approach are the **What** and the **How**. The pain you solve is the **Why**.

Products are very specific, and hugely interesting to the people who create them. **Pain and problems are universal**.

Time lost, unnecessary cost, complex processes – or just being downright furious with some stupid thing that should take no time at all and is driving you NUTS!

Those are the issues we want to hear about:

WE LOVE TO HAVE THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS SOLVED FOR US.

Once the audience understand the problem you're fixing, their minds are opened up to hearing information about your product.

PITCH THE PAIN BEFORE YOU PITCH THE PRODUCT

It always works better



OUCH! That REALLY hurts!

(MAKE THE PAIN HUMAN)

I once coached a team in a large company, working already for two years on a project to reduce the number of data systems from six to one. At the beginning of my coaching, I asked the project leader, "Why are you doing this?" with deliberate naïveté.

We went in circles for a while as it became clear the team had worked endlessly on the details, yet forgotten their starting point: the negative impact of the six systems on real people.

Finally I said to him:

LOOK, JUST TELL ME WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU.

It's designed for consultants, right? You're a consultant. Why do you need it?

He said, "I'll tell you why! Because every Monday I commute for an hour on the train to this office, and I can't get any work done on the way because none of the systems are mobile-friendly.

I get to the office and I have two computers – can you believe it? – and I have to log in to all these different systems to do my work. The data from one system doesn't match another, and every week I spend at least two hours reconciling the numbers. There are hundreds of us doing the same thing, which costs the company thousands of hours every month - *and it drives us all absolutely nuts!*"

When he'd calmed down, I said: **Well, pitch that.**

The pitch was not six systems into one. The real pitch was the



human story of complexity and frustration, coupled with the business issue of thousands of hours wasted.

Turn the technical problem into a human one: what's happening for one typical customer, right now? Give a 'Day In The Life Of' description of what users are experiencing with current solutions, so that we can feel the pain and associate with the problem.

Six systems to one: who cares? **Save time, reduce cost and take a load of frustration out of the workplace:** now that's a pitch they want to hear, and a problem they want solved!

This is not a product pitch



How engaged are you right now, reading the above? Does this make you want to know more about this company's people, progress, impact, motivation?

Of course not. That's because this is a product pitched from the point of view of the creators.

IT SAYS: 'HERE'S WHAT WE DID'

A truly engaging pitch connects with the interests and point of view of the audience, and the users of the product.

BETTER TO SAY: 'HERE'S WHAT CUSTOMERS CAN DO AS A RESULT OF WHAT WE DO'

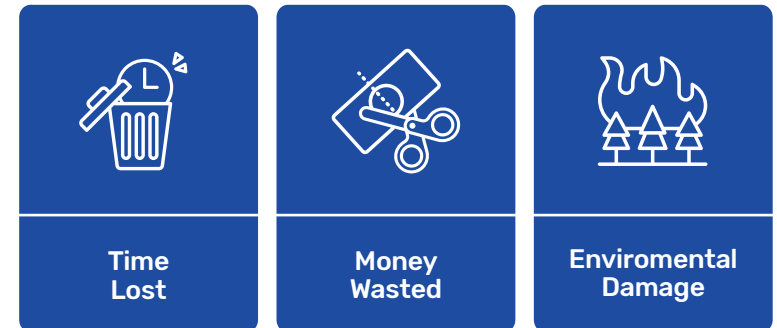
Naturally you need to tell about your fantastic product or service. Yet what you're pitching **is a business, not a product**.

We already established:

PITCH THE PAIN FIRST

(but I say it again, since it's so important).

We also need to quantify **how big that problem** is and **the size of the impact it has on the world**:



Yes, we need to explain what the solution is, what the product is all about - but we need to **avoid** the temptation to wander off into every technical detail. Your audience will want to know more about your business than just the product. Things like:

DO YOU HAVE SALES ALREADY?

WHAT'S UNIQUE?

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE BEHIND IT?

WHO ARE YOUR COMPETITORS?

WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT THIS?

Product is not unimportant, and you need to demonstrate you can deliver on your vision and promise by creating - at the very least - a decent solution. Nevertheless, this is not a product pitch.

Communicate **the value of your business**, how you help your customers, and your personal motivation to create something great. That's a pitch that engages.



**I've always been a bit of
an introvert,
but just because you don't fit the
classic mould
doesn't mean
you can't be a leader**



**You just need to
find your own style,
and someone with
a similar style
who you can learn from**

Jess Lee – Sequoia

What's unique?

The soap powder industry has a decades-long history of its major players communicating what's unique about their offering compared to others in the market.

Even with a product so simple, where differences are so minimal, massive brand value has been built on a chosen distinctive value, helping buyers to choose more easily.

"Persil washes whiter."

"Omo adds brightness to whiteness."

"Ariel washes cleaner because it washes biologically."

You can create the same value by focusing on a small number of **key differences** compared to the competition.

Is it the technology, which you have patented?

Is there a new application of existing technology?

Did you develop solutions with a trusted industry partner?

Is it faster, easier to use, quicker to implement?

Watch out for the statement,

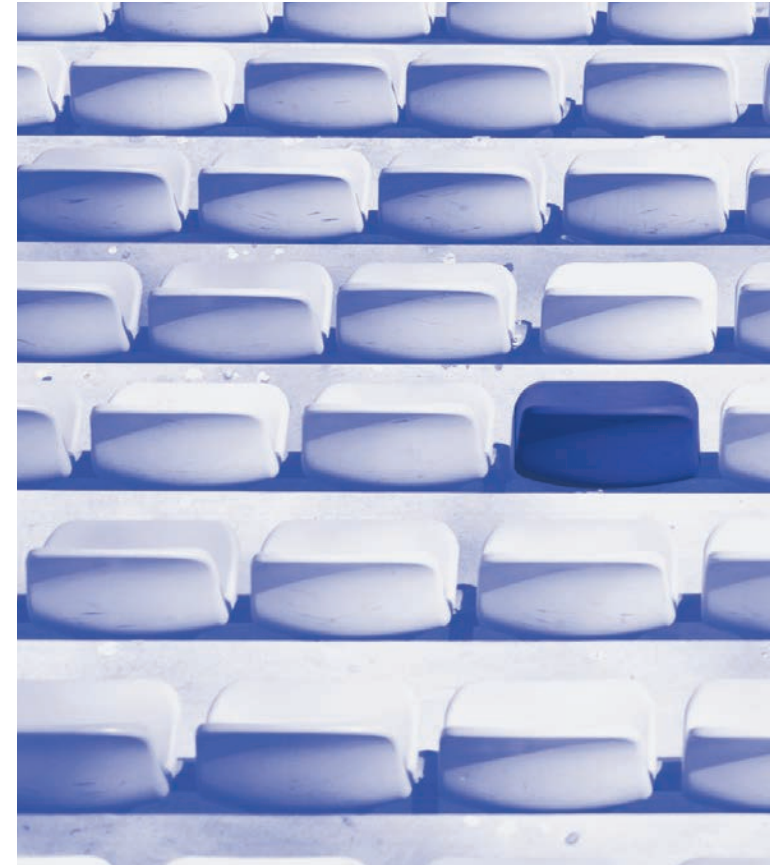
"WE HAVE NO COMPETITORS."

Investors get prickly when they hear this, and make it their mission to prove you wrong. If you are pitching your new product to your sales team, they want an honest benchmarking against other available products. You need to show you've done your research.

Even in what seem like Blue Ocean opportunities, there are solutions available in some shape or form. Make clear how you **connected your proposition** more closely to the real needs of customers.

Don't give too much mindshare to competitors, though. Talk more about your strengths, less about the good or bad qualities of others.

Often there are solutions available for part of the customer journey, and users have to patch together 3-4 apps to achieve their goal. If you bring all that functionality into one easy to use tool, that is a powerful differentiation too.

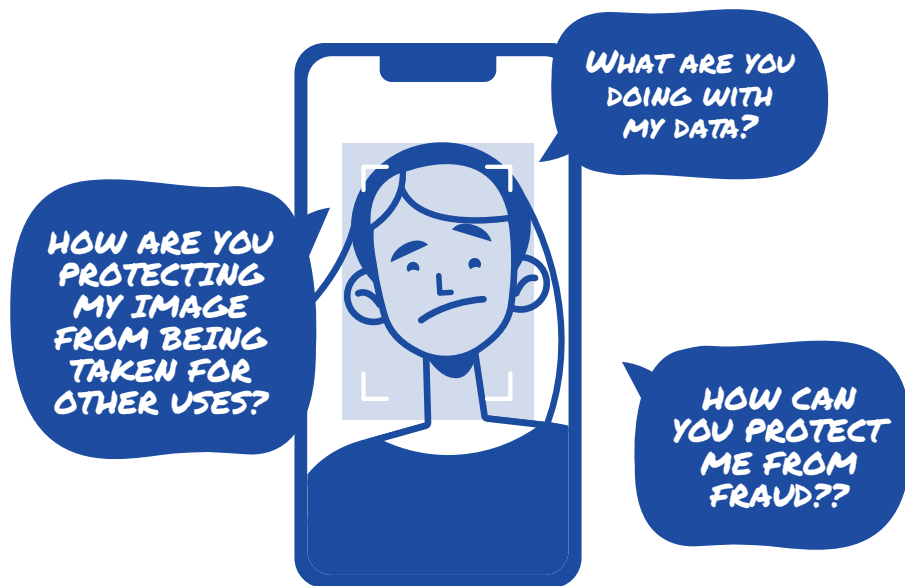


The hanging question

When profiling your audience, consider carefully what might be **their biggest objection**. If you don't get face-to-face with their perceived problem, they may not listen properly to your pitch, since the only thing they can think about is *why it won't work*.

An example. If you have a Payment By Face Recognition app, and you present that to my business partner Sheila, you need to deal with the topic of data privacy.

Sheila is extremely careful about her digital privacy. She refuses to use Google, and switched from WhatsApp to Signal when Facebook bought the company. In the first thirty seconds of the pitch, Sheila will be wondering:



If you don't deal with this objection, it's as if there is a huge question mark hanging in front of her, blocking her eyes and ears. She won't be able to listen to anything properly, because the hanging question continues repeating...

WHAT ABOUT MY DATA? WHAT ABOUT MY DATA?

If you keep hearing the same objection and questions when you pitch, it means your audience is **getting blocked from seeing the value of your proposition**.

Put that objection into the pitch. **"You might be wondering: what about data privacy? Well, here's what we do to protect you."** That way you put their objection on the table, deal with it, and blow that hanging question away.

Listen out for repeating reasons not to believe from investors, mentors, customers, colleagues - and recycle them into the pitch. **A concern answered is an objection removed.**

INSTANT CREDIBILITY BUILDER #1

Demo the product

Everyone listens to pitches as if they are nothing more than an **idea**.

The problem with an idea is that each person has an opinion on whether it's good or bad. One goal of your pitch is to convince the audience that you don't just have an idea. You have a **business**.

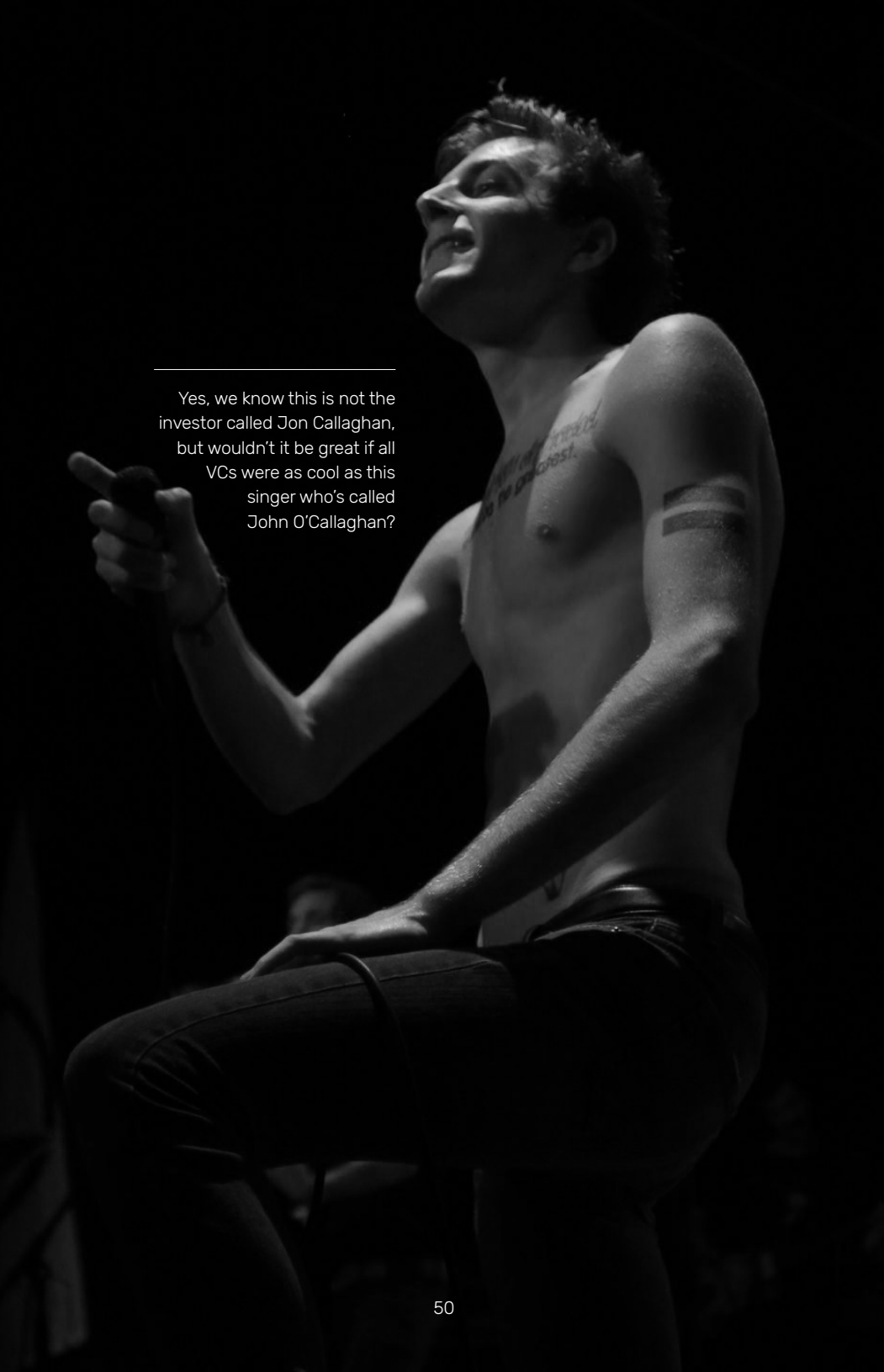
The first major factor in this transformation is proving that you can execute on your vision by showing **a working product**. I've seen pitches where the product wasn't shown working, and later I quizzed the team: **How far are you?** When they then showed me a working app, I was amazed. My opinion immediately changed, as I saw them not as people hoping on a **dream**, but rather, as builders of a **business**.

You can demo the product live. Just be aware that if for some reason things go wrong – even something that's clearly not your fault, like the internet dropped or electricity cut out – the only thought the audience go away with is, “Nice idea, but I don't know if it's any good, because it didn't work!”

You're on safer ground showing a movie of your product in action. Keep it short, though. They don't need to see the sign-up process, or any other standard part of the product. Show them **a taste of the coolest stuff**, for **15-20 seconds**, and **frame the movie in a device**: a laptop, mobile phone or tablet. That way they see the demo as a real product, not merely a concept video.

Showing your working product early in the pitch gives an instant credibility boost; it moves your story from idea to business; and your audience considers you as a team that can not only create a vision, but also execute on that vision.





Yes, we know this is not the investor called Jon Callaghan, but wouldn't it be great if all VCs were as cool as this singer who's called John O'Callaghan?

**The best
entrepreneurs
made me
feel like
the train
was leaving
the station
whether I got on board
or not**

• ——— ◆ ——— •

(the investor) Jon Callaghan

INSTANT CREDIBILITY BUILDER #2

Who's buying now?

At a network event some years ago, I sat listening to Pitch No.9. The pitcher was presenting some kind of digital assistant for hotel guests. It was a three minute pitch, and for the first two minutes I found myself thinking:

THIS IS A TRULY TERRIBLE IDEA.

Isn't all of this functionality in Google already? How come they are even on stage pitching?

Then two minutes and twenty seconds into the story, the presenter said: **And we already have deals signed with all of these hotels.** She then showed a list of 17 logos: Accor, ibis, Kempinski, etc.

I could feel my brain shift in seconds, and a new thought came into my head.

'OH, I GUESS I'VE MISUNDERSTOOD.

If these companies are buying it, they trust them - so it must be a good idea.'

And that's the value of showing traction. It's the second thing that changes perceptions and immediately boosts credibility.

If people or companies are buying, then the audience's first judgement of the proposition becomes less relevant and **they're forced to think again.**

Share the success you've had already, the brands you've sold to, the growth in users, the pilots you are running and the pipeline you're filling. Show how the momentum is building around your business. You can include one or two quick metrics of success early in the pitch, and add more detail later.

This helps set a different tone for your audience. You tell them:

WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT A CONCEPT. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A BUSINESS.

Nobody wants to be operated on by a first time surgeon. We want to be dealt with by the surgeon who's performed this operation hundreds of times before.

Customers are the same. They want a proven **path of success.**

Investors also want to see take-up by customers, so they can bet on a horse that may not be winning yet, but is **definitely in the race** and accelerating well.

BE BOLD. SHARE YOUR SUCCESS. IT WILL BOOST THEIR TRUST IN YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS.



On that note: awards won and investments raised make a solid
credibility builder #3!

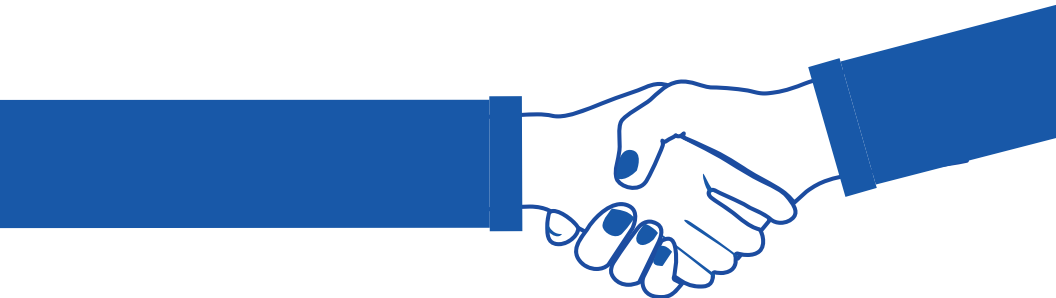
An ask, a milestone, and something they can say yes to

Now it's time to ask for the **money**.

Whether you're pitching for investment into your startup, or for resources within a company, be clear and specific about what you need to make it happen. People don't like spending money though, so they need to understand the **cause and effect** of the investment or money and resources.

CONNECTING YOUR ASK WITH A MILESTONE GIVES THEM WHAT THEY WANT.

- 1 Tell the amount you need: as a startup, that's a specific financial number, and as an innovation team, that might be development or sales **resources** on top of budget.
- 2 Follow up with the three big things you'll spend the money and resources on: give three headlines for the pitch, and have the details ready for a more in-depth conversation.
- 3 Round it off with a milestone: something you can achieve with their commitment.



No milestone? No investment. They want to know what you'll do with the money, and how far it will take you.

What if you're pitching to customers? Then **ask clearly for the first next step**. A working meeting with two key people from their organisation; a feasibility study; a first low-budget pilot, in anticipation of a larger roll-out.

KEEP THE PROCESS MOVING, AND GIVE THEM SOMETHING THEY CAN SAY YES TO.

The most important thing in a startup?

Ask anyone in innovation this question, and you will receive one answer: The **team**. *Why?* Because products are temporary, but **skill and character are permanent**.

When things go wrong (as they always do at some stage in any new project or startup), only a strong team with a good balance of skill and character will succeed.

People believe in people, not products or projects.

This tells you why investors and customers want to know;

WHO IS IN YOUR TEAM AND WHAT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE BACK UP THE PROPOSITION.



It's a kind of 'de-risking' of the investment. Before they give you the money and support you need to go to the next step, they need the reassurance that their resources are **in good hands**.

The challenge is: you **never have enough time** in any short pitch to walk your audience through all the experience and qualities of each member of the team.

That means you need to communicate something short, sharp and memorable – ideally no more than a couple of sentences. Something that says: "This is the right team to manage and grow this business." Tell them that one thing that **stands out** about the people behind the idea.

Have you got a combination of different **skills** – for example, marketing, financial and technical skills? Share that clearly.

Are you **experienced**, worked together on previous projects, or worked for major companies in your industry? Explain that in two or three sentences.

Or maybe you have an inexperienced team? Then tell them you're young and hungry, with a **shared passion** to solve the problem you're addressing.

Every team has power at some level. Identify that power, and give your audience reasons to believe that you are the **right team for the task ahead**.



I don't
think
anyone
ever
gets over the
surprise
of how
different **One**
audience's
reaction is
from another



Dick Cavett

How big can this thing go? *The opportunity*

There's an old film called **Something Ventured**, which features interviews with successful investors from the early days of Venture Capital. These are the guys (and sadly, *only* guys) who got in at the very beginning with companies like Apple, Cisco, IBM and Microsoft. One investor called Tom Perkins explains;

I don't know how to write a business plan, but I can tell you how we VCs read them. We open it up at the back, and if the numbers are big enough, we look at the front to see what kind of business it is.

It means those with money and resources want to know **how big the opportunity that you're pitching really is.**

How many people experience the pain today? Is that number growing? What trends in the world mean this proposition matters to the world? Which part of the market will you start with, and how will you scale to take a bigger piece of the potential pie?

BE CAREFUL TO AVOID GENERALITIES

Just because the worldwide parking market is worth \$60 Billion doesn't mean *your* parking app has a \$60 Billion opportunity.

Sometimes it makes sense to quantify the market first in your own country, next your continent, and finally the world. Demonstrate **you know what's changing in the market**, which segments are growing and why you are ideally placed and able to capitalise on these developments.

Presenting the opportunity connects with your investor's interests, and makes them more likely to remember your proposition.



Pitching Purpose: the impact pitch

At last, people are waking up to a fact: endless consumption and growth is impossible. Circular economy, social conscience, reducing waste - these concepts are (slowly, but surely) creeping into the collective consciousness. Purpose is a positive trend.

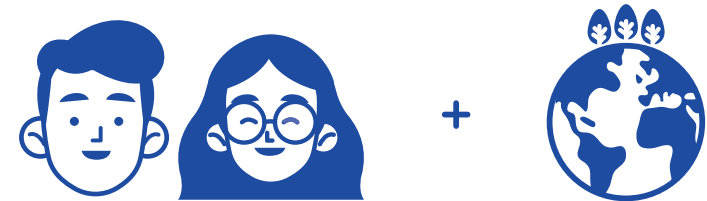
That means there has never been a better time for ideas that make real change in the world. **So how do you pitch a business that's not about millions of users, or 10x returns?**

The answer:

**FOLLOW THE STEPS YOU'VE READ SO FAR,
AND THE STEPS YOU'LL FIND IN
THE REST OF THIS BOOK.**



But there's **one big difference** compared to typical tech startups. Instead of dollars and users, talk about:



People impacted and environmental damage reduced

- 1 Quantify how many people you've helped to get **back into work**, or **saved from poverty or abuse**. Put a number on how many tonnes of **CO2 reduced**, or volume of **plastic or water are saved** as a result of your proposition.
- 2 Make the **impact** quantified too, when you talk about the **pain**, your **progress**, and **how much more** you could do with the right resources and investment.
- 3 Finally, share the **business model**. Your audience wants to invest in your ability to create impact in the long term, not give a one-off handout to charity.

Show them you understand the *balance* of business and impact. Don't be afraid to say, we can make money through doing good!

As the amazing impact investor **David Batstone** points out:

**"WHY IS IT OK FOR COMPANIES WHO
SCREW UP THE WORLD TO MAKE BILLIONS,
WHILE THOSE WHO DO GOOD
ARE EXPECTED TO DO IT FOR FREE?"**

Why You?

Share your passion

I've spoken to hundreds of people who listen to pitches, across dozens of industries. And I made one amazing discovery about Investors, board members, customers, and even your boss. They all want the **same thing**.

Every person I interviewed said a version of this.

"Of course, I want the functional stuff. What problem do they solve? Is it a proven, unique product? Is there a strong team behind it? What will it take to make it happen? All of that's very important. **But the real decider?**

The enthusiasm of the person pitching the proposition.

I want to see the passion in the eyes of the pitcher. Why are they committed to what they offer? Why do they believe this is an amazing opportunity for me?"

We are not only rational beings. Emotion matters, and highly influences all kinds of decisions we make.

THE BIGGEST WAY TO CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE'S HEART IS TO PUT YOURSELF ON THE LINE AND SHARE WITH THEM YOUR PERSONAL MOTIVATION.

What got you started? A personal experience of the problem you're working to solve? What made you continue when things went wrong? What gets you up early in the morning after working until 2 a.m. the night before? **Why?**



Plan your opening and make the first word count



The first twenty seconds buy attention, and have a massive influence on how attentively your audience will listen to the rest of your pitch.


So imagine what happens when a pitch starts like this?

“Hi, it’s great to be here! Thanks so much to the organisers for arranging such a great opportunity to tell what we’ve been working on - and I know it’s sunny outside but it’s great that you took the time to come and hear how hard we’ve been working...”

Simple. Audience attention has not dropped. **It’s evaporated.**

Everyone who listens to pitches has two questions in their mind. **‘Is this person professional?’** And; **‘Do I want or need to know more?’**


If you can answer these two questions effectively in the early stages of your pitch, you have the best chance of high attention.



1 - PROFESSIONAL

Have a plan and make a conscious decision about what you will say in the first sentences. Show you’re taking your audience’s time seriously by proving your preparation from the **first word.**

Having a plan for those initial seconds also keeps your nerves in check. The beginning of your pitch is the moment of maximum stress. Being well organised, prepared and practiced will ensure you are in control and deliver a clear message. **‘I’m professional, so pay attention.’**



2 - KNOW MORE?

Give them a reason **why they should want to know more.** Share a surprising statistic about the size of the problem, or how many customers you already have. Ask a question that intrigues.

Be bold and challenge them. Make a promise they think can’t be kept, or share a new angle on a known problem.

Simply being professional will get you a good pitch. Adding intrigue into the mix within the first three sentences will take your story to the level of a Blue Moon Pitch.



**Your
story is
what you have,**

**what
you will
always have.**

**It is
something
to own.**



Michelle Obama

Storytelling and the pitch

Some years ago, I was coaching a group of students to prepare for a 2 minute pitch for their early-stage ideas. Halfway through the workshop, an energetic student raised his hand and asked;

“Does storytelling work in a pitch?” I gave him the view I held at the time.

“Maybe: but with so little time? I think it’s best to focus on the pain you solve, the product you created, how you’ve validated it and why you’re committed to the idea.”

He listened to every word attentively - and proceeded to **ignore the advice**. When it came to testing out his pitch, the student said;

‘Hi, I’m Malik. I’m from Israel, and since coming to study here in the Netherlands, I’ve been homeless. I’ve been sleeping on people’s floors and sofas, because I couldn’t find anywhere to live. And there are thousands of overseas students just like me, looking for accommodation.

Yet wherever I go, I see empty buildings all around me.

That’s why I’m building a platform to bring together all these students, and all these empty buildings, to put an end to this unnecessary homelessness.’

Boom! That’s how to tell a story in a pitch.



Let’s take a moment to break down what Malik told.

He shared the **pain**, making it clear and present so we could imagine it. He **made the problem personal**, describing his own situation, helping us **empathise with the problem** he’s chosen to address. And Malik showed that the **problem is big**.

The story is also **short** - 80 words, 35 seconds.

Naturally we are **left with all kinds of questions**. What does the platform look like? How far have you got: sales, growth? Is it the first or are there competitors? And what do you need to make it bigger and better?

A great story can do that:

HOOK THE AUDIENCE AND LEAVE THEM WITH A TON OF QUESTIONS.

A story about the pain, why the team is committed, a customer who loved the product, or why you started the company. It can **capture your audience’s hearts**, as well as **their minds**.

Do questions work in a pitch?

If a hundred people hear the following two ways of telling the same information, there is a massive difference in attention.

30 people understand, and agree.

THE AMOUNT OF WATER IT TAKES TO PRODUCE ONE CUP OF TEA IS 30 LITRES.

HOW MUCH WATER DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO PRODUCE ONE CUP OF TEA? WHAT IF I TOLD YOU IT WAS 30 LITRES?

90 people understand, and are with you.

Why the difference? When we humans hear a statement, we don't automatically believe it. Instead **we listen with a critical mindset**. Yet when we are asked a question, the curious part of our brain that seeks solutions to problems is triggered.

A QUESTION IS A FORM OF PUZZLE, AND WE WANT THE RIDDLE SOLVED.

Even if we know it's a rhetorical question **our attention grows** and **we listen more closely**.

Questions can also go wrong, so here's how to make them work for your... (*Hang on, that's a statement... let's try that again*).

How do questions go wrong? And how can you make them work for your pitch?

An example. If you ask an audience, 'What do you think of World Peace?' anything can happen. The audience doesn't know what is expected of them. **They wonder** - should I shout something out? Should I put my hand up? **The silence** as they try to work it out is awkward for the listeners - and for the pitcher.

What's the solution? I call it Digital Questions - an ask where **the audience only have two options**.

In the example, a better question would be: 'Who believes World Peace is important? Raise your hand if you agree it's important.'



Hand up, or hand down. The decision requires almost **no thought**. It's a digital decision, triggered by a digital question.

Asking questions connects your audience more closely to your topic. Making it **easy** for them to answer, with clarity on **how** they should answer, leads them smoothly into the next part of your pitch, with their full attention.

Put a number on it: Quantify the problem

If I would tell you: **'Lots of people don't drink cola because of its colour. That's why we think our green cola will win the market.'** Would you believe me?

Probably not. General statements, such as 'lots of people', 'most customers' and 'our best guess' simply don't convince. They feel poorly researched and based on uncertainty.

As soon as you put a number on it, everything changes.

Putting that into practice, I could tell you;

'We interviewed over 11,000 non-cola drinkers around the world, and discovered that 73% were negatively influenced by cola's colour - they don't like brown drinks. We also found that over 81% would be willing to try green cola.'

Suddenly the case for green cola starts to look promising.

When explaining the pain, numbers help the audience get to grips with the problem, and the level of impact your solution could have. Sometimes it also helps to put numbers in context by adding an image that is easy to imagine.

For example: you could say, **'Coffee waste is a huge problem and creates loads of CO2.'** Yet the audience may be wondering: 'Really? How big is that problem? How much CO2 is loads?'

Instead, the founder of **bio-bean** said;

'One tonne of coffee waste being burned creates seven tonnes of CO2. That's the same impact as driving a car from London to Beijing - and back - twice. And there are 500 million tonnes

of coffee waste burned every year in the UK alone.'

(By the way: Arthur Kay won €500K for his company in a pitch competition, with this as part of his story.)

One pitfall to look out for: **don't give too many numbers at once.** If you give more than three numbers in a short space of time, the listener's brain automatically goes into analysis mode, trying to see the connections between the numbers. Either that, or the audience lose the thread and tune out.

**KEEP THE NUMBERS
SIMPLE, CLEAN AND SPECIFIC.**



Clear. Focused. Memorable. The Power of Three

It's 47 BC. Julius Caesar has just gained a great victory and writes a letter to the Roman Senate.

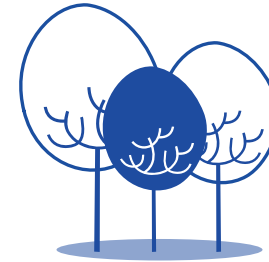
He doesn't write; **"It was a tough battle, we had to do our best, but we just about managed to get through. Thank goodness we won in the end."**

No. Instead he writes three words that reflect the human brain's ability to process information.



VENI. VIDI. VICI.

I came. I saw. I conquered.



Fast-forward through time and we can find countless examples of the same **three-part structure**.

Faster, higher, stronger.

Liberté, égalité, fraternité.

Ready, steady, go.

BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END.

Bronze, silver, gold.

The Power of Three comes to our aid when we want a key message to land and remain in the audience's mind. **How do you apply this to a pitch?**

Imagine I say to you; **"There are eleven things I want to tell you about my product!"** What happens in your brain and body?

Now imagine a different scenario. I say to you; 'There are **many things** I could tell you about our product, but there are **three things you really need to know**. Here's the **first...**'

Your attention is **hooked** and you are ready to listen.

I've read various theories on why threes are so powerful. Here are my favourites.



Three is the **smallest number with complexity**. It's enough to show a pattern, but not too much to overwhelm with data. Two is thin, four starts to get too detailed, and three gives enough depth to **understand, believe** and **move on**.



It's **easy to remember**. We have a lot going on and three is a manageable amount of data to **retain and repeat** when required.

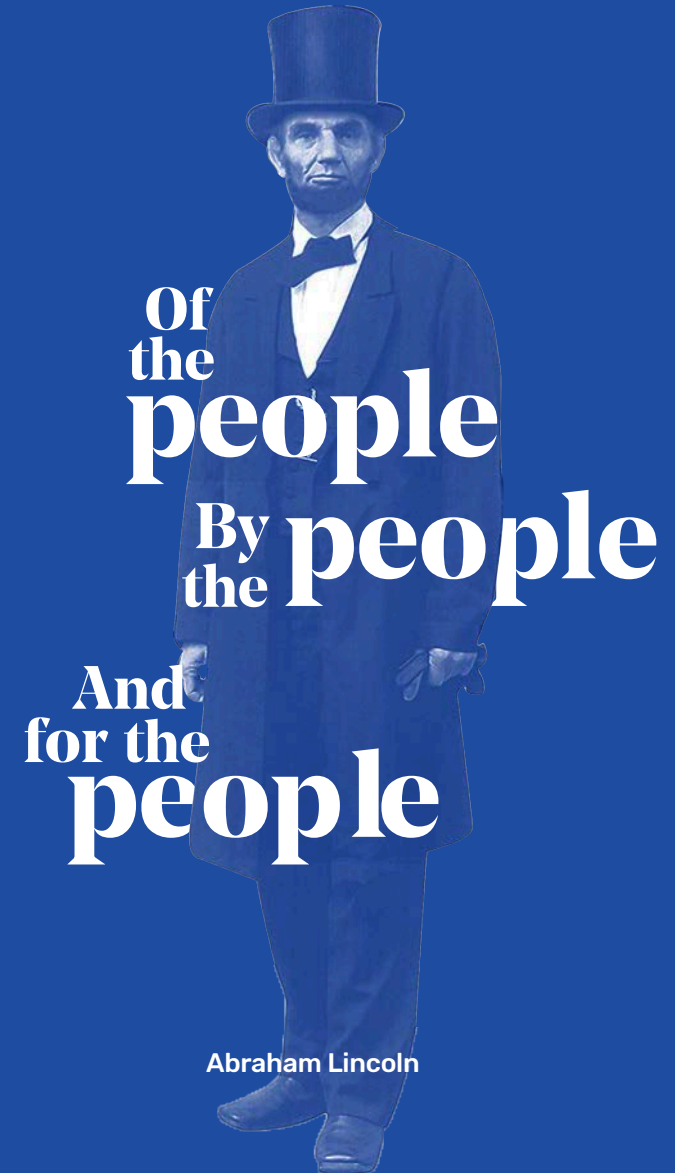


As human beings, we are **filtering everything** through the most primitive part of our brain (*the so-called crocodile brain*). It's constantly trying to assess: am I going to be **more powerful or successful** as a result of what's going on, or am I **under threat**?

When things get complicated (i.e. more than 3), the overloaded croc brain assumes we're under threat. It **stops reasoning** and prepares to **fight or flee**. (*The modern-day equivalent of 'fight' is 'argue with the data': the equivalent of 'flee' is 'check Insta'.*)

THE FINAL RESULT? WE LOVE THREES.

Breaking your whole story down into three main chapters; focusing on the three main features of your product; or giving three statistics about the pain you're solving. These are all ways to make the Power of Three work for you, for your audience, and for the better of mankind. **That's the awesome Power of Three.**



Abraham Lincoln

The certain tense. Make your message solid

Having a new idea means **uncertainty**.

You are creating a new proposition for a customer, a new startup concept, a new innovation for your company. It doesn't yet exist as a fully rounded product or service.

Deep down in your soul, **you know it's not perfect**.

That's why we say things like, 'We are trying to build a platform which we hope will...' or 'We should be able to launch in January next year.'

Trying. Hope. Should. This is your uncertainty speaking.

It's also your **honesty**. The fact is, the product *is* not perfect. You *are* uncertain about that launch date. You do *hope* you'll succeed but you're not sure.

If this appears in your pitch, that uncertainty and honesty can undermine your message and communicate the shifting sands of doubt to your audience - and they feel it. **Budget holders and investors don't invest in uncertainty.**

Does that mean we should not be honest? Not exactly.

There is a tightrope you need to walk - between what could be, and what is now. And here's some news: every single well-funded startup or company innovation was not perfect when investment was pitched for, and committed.

People who listen to pitches are not expecting perfection: **they know your idea is not immaculate**, otherwise you wouldn't need investment. What they do expect is a decent assessment

of progress so far, a vision of where you are going, and to feel your conviction and your determination that you will get there.

Of course, **don't make stuff up!**

But if you truly believe you are on a path to making something great, give them a picture of that future with certainty.

**THAT MEANS : MAKE YOUR LANGUAGE
PRESENT, FIRM AND SOLID.**

Sample 01

We hope to

WE WILL

Sample 02

We're trying to build

WE ARE BUILDING

Sample 03

We should be able to launch

WE CAN LAUNCH

APPROVED VERSION 93 FT BLUERPRINT

PROOF OF CONCEPT
Serial : 1237098457203984

POC 2022 | WE WILL | WE ARE | WE CAN
NOTES | Make your language present, firm and solid.

100/100/many vs. 70/70/3

When pitching, we want our audience to listen, understand and remember what we say.

In the ideal world they listen to each word, understand everything, and remember all our key messages.

Yet we live in the real world: a place where **everyone has a lot on their mind**. While your pitch is the most important event of *your* day, it's just another small part of *theirs*. So...

How much do people listen in the real world?

A maximum of around 70%.

And how much do they understand?

Around 70% maximum of what they hear.

How much will they remember?

Around 3-4 points.

This is shocking stuff for any presenter! Yet also liberating. It means you don't need to explain every single thing in your pitch.

Keep your story to key messages and don't bore them with the details - they won't understand or remember them anyway!

You may ask: 'Well, what's the point of spending so much time on my story?'

Because even if they don't consciously listen to every word, subconsciously they feel the **coherence** of your complete story,

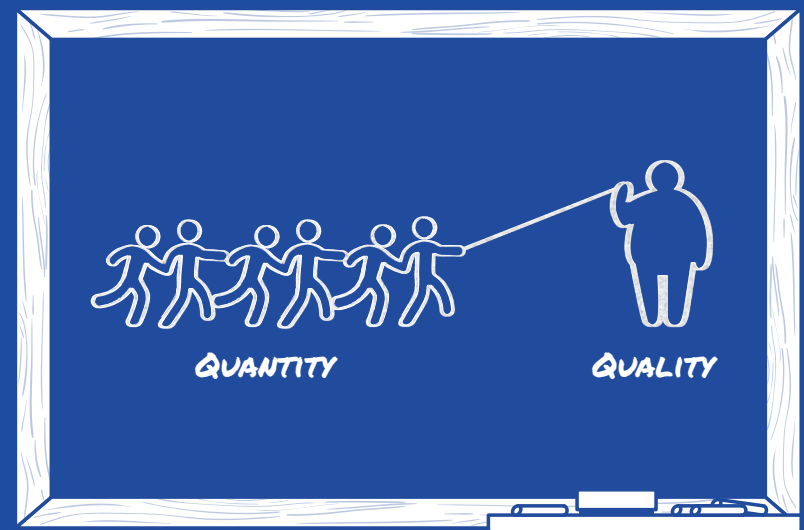
the **certainty** of how you deliver, and the **professionalism** of your approach to the pitch.

As you build your story, whenever you find yourself thinking, 'If I don't put these details in, they won't understand,' take a step back and consider this.

**THEIR LEVEL OF BELIEF IN YOUR STORY
AND CONFIDENCE IN YOU IS NOT CREATED
BY THE DETAILS.**

They are more likely to follow and understand you and your proposition through **key messages, big highlights** and your **conviction** in how you tell it.

Your goal with the pitch is not that they understand everything. Instead, the goal is that they **feel enough connection** with you and **understand enough about your idea** to engage further. Don't worry. They'll ask about the details later.





**I realised that if
I was willing
to step up and
be in the spotlight,**

• ——— ♦ ——— •

**I'd be able to
make everyone else
around me much more
powerful as well**

Alaina Percival

One at a time

CAN WE PITCH WITH MORE THAN 1 PERSON?

This question comes regularly, because of;

- An uncertainty about who in the team is best suited to do it
- A wish to show the wider strength of the team
- A desire to share the limelight amongst colleagues

Nevertheless, in **a short pitch** (*up to 7 minutes*) I would always recommend only one pitcher.

You ask more of the audience with two. In so few minutes, they have to tune in to the voice and character of two presenters.

One is a lot easier for the audience.

You also make it more difficult for yourselves. The two pitchers need to **practice the handovers** to ensure they are seamless and professional - and that takes a lot of time.

If you want to show the team or share the limelight, involve your colleagues during the question and answer session after the pitch.



WHAT IF THERE IS NO OBVIOUS CHOICE FOR WHO SHOULD PITCH?

Start with whoever wants to do it most: a desire to take it on is half the battle. If still no clear choice arises, have the team vote. If that doesn't work - then just choose one person to pitch and run with it! Until that decision is made, it's hard to focus 100% on the job of preparing the pitch because it's only **theoretically** your job. Once it's concluded that you will pitch, you focus in a different, more **intense** way on the task.

My caveat: if the pitch is longer than 7 minutes, you can consider having 2 presenters but **minimise the switches between you**. Jumping back and forth can confuse the audience: 3 switches per 10 minutes is a good guide. Split the pitch according to knowledge areas and keep it simple, so that each pitcher's professionalism shines through.



How to manage a Q&A session

After your pitch, it's time to answer **questions**. Whether that's in a sales meeting, a pitch competition or a presentation to the board, your audience has questions on their mind. **It's your chance to shine, if well prepared.**

If your team members are with you, share the questions among them. This will help the audience to get to know the people behind the proposition, which makes your story stronger.

Ensure you're **organised as a group** and **avoid talking over each other** by **appointing one person** to receive and distribute the questions. "Jill, perhaps you'd like to take this one?"

Discuss in advance who will answer what type of question, so that each member of the team knows what is expected of them.



I have six golden guidelines to offer you, that have worked for hundreds of teams in Q&A sessions.

- 1 Listen to the last word of the question. **Don't jump in before they've finished** the last two words may change the meaning of the question.
- 2 **Take a moment before answering** Give your brain time to engage with your answer, and stay ahead of your speaking apparatus (your mouth).
- 3 Make a list of the questions you **DON'T want to be asked**. You have weaknesses, of course. Think through the questions that might pinpoint those weak points so that you are **prepared**. (*I once saw a person blurt out, 'Oh, I was hoping you wouldn't ask that question.' Ouch!*)

ANSWERED / QUESTIONS? ANSWERED / QUESTIONS?

- 4 **Never argue**. If they have an opinion, denying or refusing to accept that opinion will cause them to fight. Absorb the feedback and tell them you'd be happy to discuss later.
- 5 Use **weaknesses as learning opportunities**. If you're asked a question that highlights a weakness, acknowledge it and show you are open to learn. You don't need to have all the answers instantly: you do need to show a willingness to find them.
- 6 Make a list of questions you **DO want to be asked**. Write down the topics you couldn't fit into the pitch. This helps you make **conscious decisions** to steer your answers, and the conversation, towards subjects *you* want to discuss, and helps you take control.



**Communication
is about
getting others
to adopt your
point of view,
to help them
understand
why you're
excited**



**If all you want to do
is create
a file of
facts and figures,
then cancel the
meeting
and send in a
report**

Seth Godin

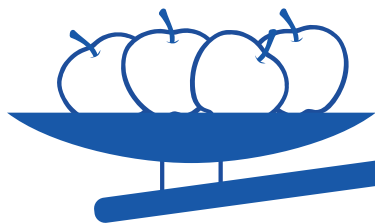
Slides as a support, not as a crutch

We present with slides so that we can **engage two senses**. The audience's sense of hearing is engaged when listening to you: their visual sense is engaged when seeing your slides.

However, these two don't work at once, because we can't read and listen simultaneously. If there is a lot of text on the slide, **they will read before listening to you**. If you say different things to the text written up on screen, the audience can't follow.

For anyone used to presenting with a lot of bullet points and text, this is a shock. And that means: **this is a shock to 90% of presenters** (*so don't worry, you are not alone*). How do you deal with this and adapt your slides to support your story?

MAKE YOUR SLIDES VISUAL.



Images, icons and a few key words, together with a limited number of short statements, give the audience the context of your message. They **absorb this visual information** in a heartbeat and are then ready to hear this part of your story.

Our brains process images many thousands of times faster than text. We have an instant reaction to visuals, and remember far more of what we see than of what we hear.

Free images can be found at sites such as **Pixabay**, **Pexels** and **Unsplash**, offering pictures with **Creative Commons Commercial Use** licenses (*that means you won't get sued using these pics*).

Icons are ideal for **communicating abstract ideas**, and we see them everywhere in our daily lives: on our phones, in instruction manuals and on street signs. You'll find thousands of excellent free or low cost icons at **thenounproject.com**.

Images and icons can replace a lot of unnecessary text in your slides, and that allows the audience to focus on listening to you and your pitch.

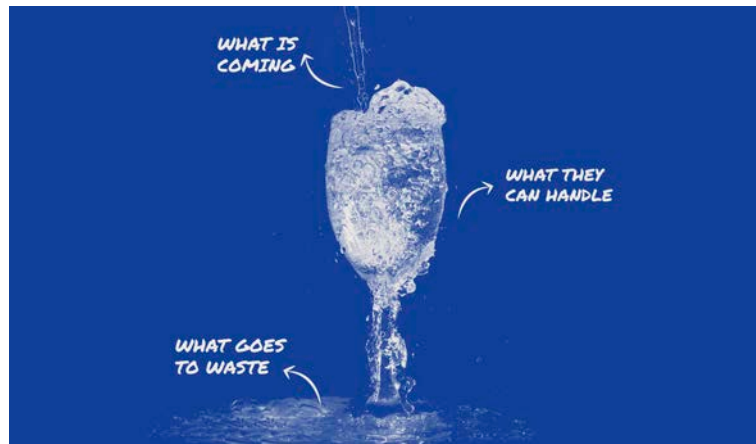
A-P-P-L-E-S



One slide, one idea

PowerPoint. Keynote. Prezi. Slidebean. Canva. They all work fine. What doesn't work is **how we often use them**.

It's tempting to jam a lot of information onto one slide – **bullet points, data, headlines, and graphs**. 'Cos, if we throw enough information at them, they'll think we know a lot, and at least some of the info will stick... *right?*



Unfortunately, the result is the opposite. As counter-intuitive as it may sound, more information on your slides often means **less understanding**.

Crowding details upon details makes it really difficult for the audience to **identify the important information**. The message that matters is lost among the less relevant filling. There seems no cure for this. Each time a young professional joins a company, they see the crowded slides of their experienced colleagues, copy their approach, and the overload method is perpetuated for another generation.

You've probably heard of Death By PowerPoint: but this way, PowerPoint will never die.

Is there no saving us from this endless cycle of confusing slides, wasting time for all?

Luckily there is. Step forward **Robin Dohmen**.

When it comes to slide design, Robin is **the** underground design guru of the Netherlands. He's worked on hundreds of startup pitch decks, transformed countless scale-up investor decks, and even helped corporates win half billion projects with his unique work.

And he has one single principle which can help you elevate your slides. It's called;

ONE MESSAGE, ONE SLIDE.

That means: if you find yourself combining a number of messages on one slide, **spread the information across two or more slides**.

Robin works with **Elvina Yuliana** (she's the genius who designed this book). Together they helped me understand that having a lot of slides is not a bad thing. Talking 10-20 seconds per slide and clicking on to the next, allows each message to breathe, and to land.

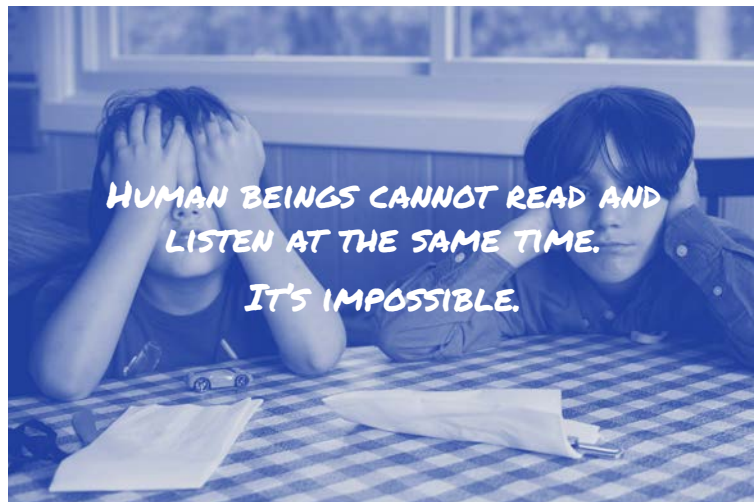
Ask yourself: **what is the message?** Keep each slide simple, focused only on that key message, and cut out anything that does not support it.

One to Present, One to Send

When I encourage presenters to reduce content in their slides, I'm often told; **'I can't because I need to send the slides after the pitch.'** This gets to the essence of why slide presentations often create confusion instead of clarity.

When a presentation is sent, we are not there to give context and explain the story. Therefore we load our slides with text and data to fill in the gaps. This makes sense, as the audience is going to read the content.

In contrast, **the audience comes to a presentation to listen, not read.** They want to focus on you, the presenter, and hear your story. Yet when you present the same slides as you plan to send, complete with bullet points, graphics and words galore, the audience **can't deal with it** and get confused because;



Each person has to make a choice when faced with information overload. Read? Or listen?

PowerPoint is good for creating presentations, and by chance, really good for creating documents too. It's far easier to combine text, graphics and data in PowerPoint than it is in Word.

Presentations and documents have blended, because the same software happens to be good at doing both. But they are **two very different communication media, with different purposes.**

The solution? It's something I learned from Robin Dohmen (again), and it's called:

ONE TO PRESENT, ONE TO SEND.

Create two decks. The **Present** deck is simple and clean; key words, short statements, icons and images, minimal data. The **Send** deck is complete with more text, more data, more details.

Present deck



Maybe you're thinking, 'Create two different decks? But that's more work!' Well, you're absolutely right. It **is** more work. (Sorry.)

However, that work is **worth every extra minute** when it results in greater understanding, your audience taking the action you need, and you getting the deal.



Investors
don't look at
pitch decks
for very
long: just
3 min **44** sec
on average

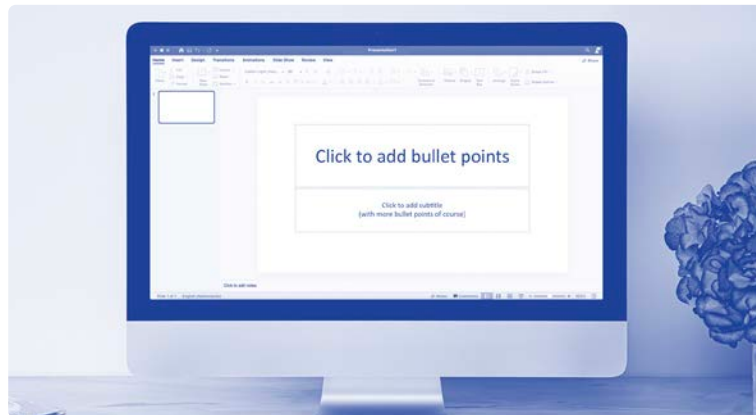


TechCrunch

Shoot the bullet points

Here's a challenge:

- 1 Open PowerPoint.
- 2 Create a new presentation using any template from the stylish (okay, let's be honest... *horrible*) selection available.
- 3 Click in the main text box, and start typing.



What happens next? Hey presto! As if by magic, **bullet points** appear with each line of text you type! And this will happen no matter which template you choose. Bill and the team at Microsoft ensured you have ready-made bullets. *But why?*

Let's go back a step. **What is the point of bullet points?** To make clear that one statement is separate from another statement.

In documents to **send**, this works well, making it easier on the eye when reading. In **present** decks, it's a **disaster**.

Something about bullet points causes human beings to type lots of words – and as we've seen, listening and reading don't mix.

THOSE BULLET POINTED SENTENCES INCREASE THE DETAILS, YET DECREASE UNDERSTANDING.

Let's face it. We've all sat through numerous terrible bullet point presentations. As soon as we see those dots on the screen, our brains sigh, and say almost audibly;

'Oh, this is a **bullet point presentation**. I've seen lots of these before. What were all the other ones like? **AWFUL! Total waste of time**. OK, body? New plan. Please reach for the phone and engage with something useful, or entertaining, or... or... please, anything to **take my attention away from this pitch!**

Here's my guiding principle on this topic. If you need bullet points, you probably have **too much information on the slide**. The way out is to reduce content,

- 1 Change three sentences into three icons, with a couple of words per icon.
- 2 Replace text with an image and one big headline, along with three key words or short phrases.
- 3 Make the information bigger and spread it out over more slides.

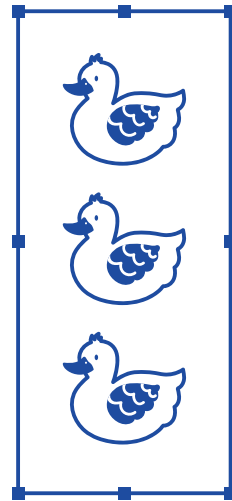


Take this new challenge. **Remove every single bullet point from every slide in your next deck**. Doing this will immediately make your pitch more engaging.

Line it up, again and again

We love order. Chaos causes stress. Order creates calm.

We love phrases like, **'Put our ducks in a row'**, and **'Let's get all the noses pointing in the same direction'**. They reflect our need and desire for order. It makes us feel in control.



How can you create a sense of order in your slides, to give your audience that calm feeling of control?

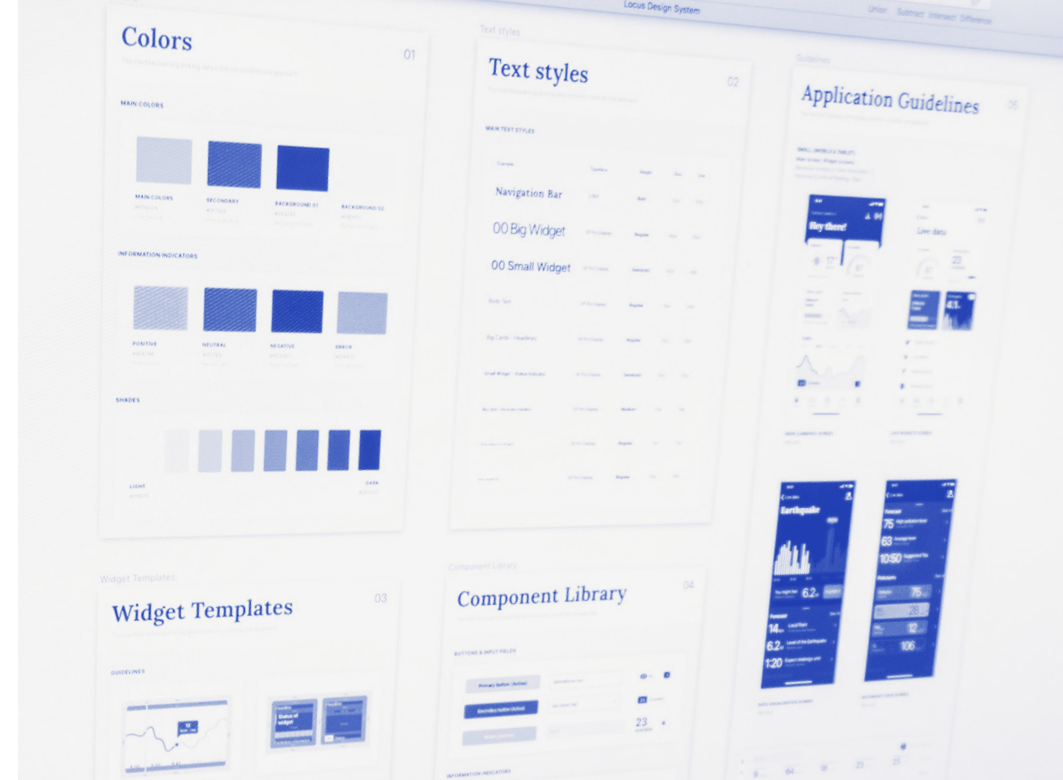
ALIGNMENT AND CONSISTENCY.

Start by ensuring the elements of your slides are **well-ordered**. Similar size of icons and images, positioned at the same height, with equal spaces between pictures. If there are two text boxes, either align the top of each when side by side, or align to the left or centre when one is above another.

In PowerPoint, Keynote and most other slide software, you'll find the Align function. This will help you impose accurate order in seconds.

On top of this, be ruthlessly consistent.

One font and size for the headline, one font and size for the body text. Select a single highlight for images. Drop shadow? Or a thin white frame? Once you've decided, stick with that style for all images in the presentation.



The same rule of consistency goes for **animations**: make one simple choice of animation for text, and another for images.



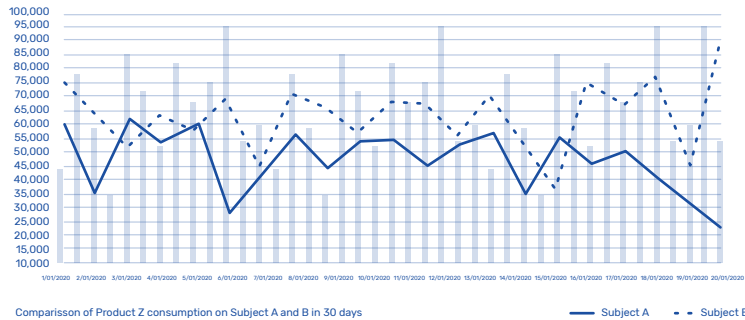
Icon styles thick or thin? Detailed, or simple? Choose, impose. Accent colours, position of your logo, image style, background colour, transition between slides... **Consistency will add that extra polish to your pitch.**

When combined with alignment, consistency elevates your presentation, and the audience's trust in you as a professional.

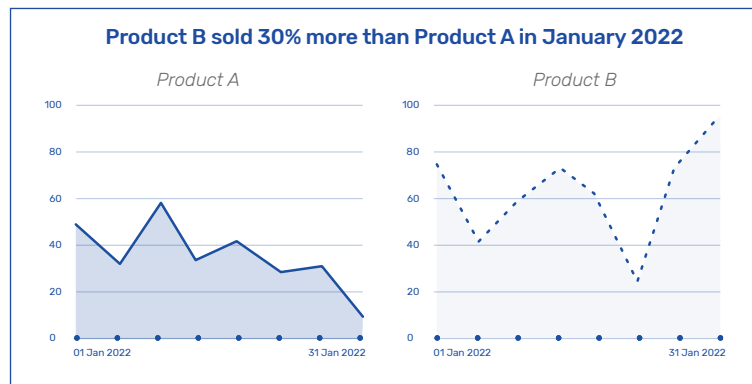
Numbers for show, conclusions to go



Take a look at this graph. Tell me what you see.



Hard work, isn't it? There's **a lot to take in**, and your brain needs time to process the data, see the connections and arrive at some conclusions. Doing all of that while someone's talking is almost impossible. Now try this data.



It's much easier, right? There is **a single message**, and all the unnecessary details have been stripped out. The trend is clear, our point emphasized and the conclusion explicit.

Often we feel the need to present the complete data in all of its glorious detail. If we don't, **how will they know what we say is true?** Yet lots of numbers, lines and bars are overwhelming and cause a surprising result among the audience.

THEY FEEL THREATENED.

They have a strong need to make sense of the information – and start to analyse. They look for the connections between the data points and try to **come to their own conclusions**.

This is the opposite of what you want them to do – **come along with you on the journey**, as they follow your reasoning. You don't want them to spend time investigating a different logic to yours.

Here's how to change the dynamic:

FOCUS LESS ON DATA, MORE ON CONCLUSIONS.

What does the data show? How does it support your message?

To do this, follow our Power of Three rule, which will lead you to simplicity. **Never** show your audience **more than three data points** at any one time.

Up to three and they will listen, process easily and come with you to your next point. More than three and they start to think.

We don't want them to over-think during the pitch! The goal is: they **listen, feel** and **follow** our story, and **take action** at the end.

TOO MUCH THINKING GETS IN THE WAY!



Words mean more than
what is set down **on paper**



It takes the **human voice**
to infuse them with **deeper meaning**

Maya Angelou

Avoid pitch karaoke. Say it out loud



I used to work for Canon, a Japanese company. That meant I had an obligation to sing karaoke.

The first time I joined my Japanese colleagues to visit a karaoke bar in Tokyo, I wondered, 'What on earth am I going to sing?' Then I found it: Carole King's 'It's Too Late'. 'I love that song - it's gonna be great!'

As I sat and awaited my turn, I went over the song in my head, thinking it through. I even wrote down a few notes. In my mind, it sounded pretty good.

My turn came. I started to sing. And that's when the trouble started.

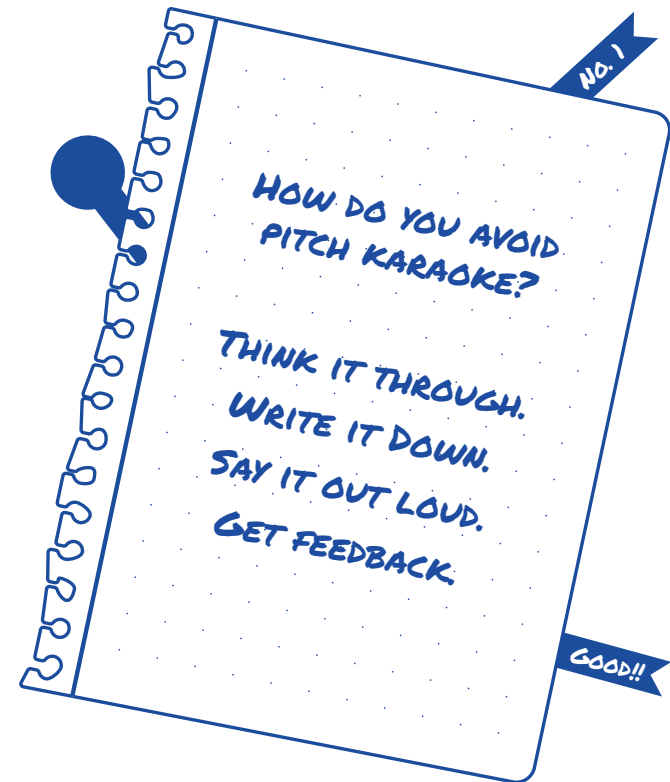
I thought I knew the lyrics, and how it would sound with my voice singing instead of Carole's. But to my surprise, it turned out I didn't know the lyrics at all. You see, I had never sung a word of the song out loud.

After murdering the tune, I sat back down. Japanese people are very kind, and never intentionally embarrass you. My colleague looked away into the distance and said, mournfully, 'That's a very difficult song to sing.'

THIS SAME EXPERIENCE CAN HAPPEN WITH YOUR PITCH.

You're building your story, using Post-its to brainstorm and work out a strong beginning, middle and end. Pain, Product, Traction, Team and Why You are forming nicely in your head.

Yet until we say it out loud, we have no real idea how it might sound to the audience. Worst case? We find out in real time, in front of the audience, the truth. It doesn't sound nearly as good when it's out in the world, compared to how it sounded in the safety of our own head.



Four steps and three questions for five star feedback

When most people prepare for a pitch or presentation, they:



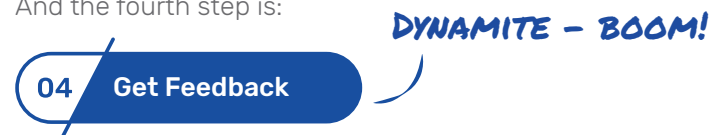
Everything changes when you add a third step before jumping into slide design:



Once you start speaking out loud and hearing yourself, you'll know whether the words you plan to say tell the story you really want to tell. You'll find out if you have formal written language, instead of spoken. You'll be able to adjust sentences and use **more natural words and phrases** – the kind you might say when explaining your idea to a friend over coffee.

Simply saying it to the cat or your one year old kid will help you **raise the quality of your pitch** (and avoid pitch karaoke).

And the fourth step is:



This helps you learn what people listening to your pitch **like**, what

they **don't understand**, and to get suggestions for **improvement**.

At least you **hope** that's what you'll find out. But the problem is:

MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT EXPERT FEEDBACK GIVERS.

They might tell you: 'Oh, that was nice!' But you can't do much to improve your pitch based on **'nice'...**

Or – because they don't know what else to say – they become **hypercritical**, and start explaining that the opening was terrible, the main message was unclear, and how they would tell the middle bit completely differently...

When you ask for feedback, use these **three magic questions**:

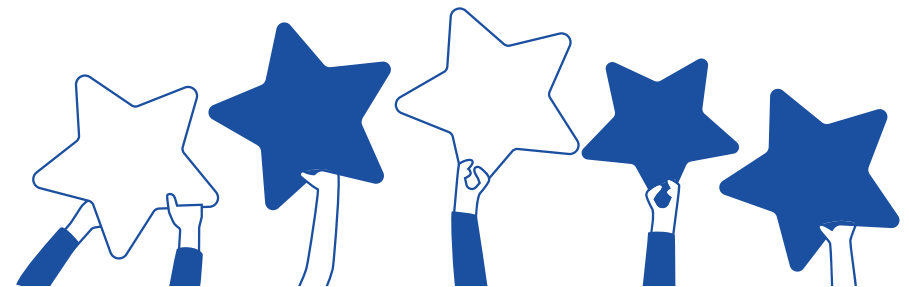
WHAT STOOD OUT? ✨

WHAT DID YOU NOT UNDERSTAND?

HAVE YOU GOT ANY FRIENDLY ADVICE FOR IMPROVEMENT? ✨

(Notice the word 'friendly': that sets the tone for the kind of guidance you're asking for – **constructive and supportive**.)

With these three questions, the person you ask for feedback knows what they should look out for – and you'll get **structured feedback** that you can work with. Everyone happy!



What do you *really* want to say?

When you meet a friend for a coffee, do you think about **how** you tell them a story? Do you analyse your speech and search for the emphasis in your sentences, to assess if they will truly understand your meaning?

Of course not. You simply tell them what's on your mind, and bring them along with you and your story.

A talk with a friend is **personal**, and when we share what upsets, surprises or excites us, we naturally put **energy and emphasis** on the words that matter, to bring out our **true meaning**. We don't have to think about it.

The goal in any communication is to **guide your audience** on what to **think and feel** at any one moment. But unlike a coffee conversation, this doesn't happen so easily in a pitch.

Our words are less likely to come over with that same energy and emphasis, because it's business and not personal. We have to think it through and make some conscious decisions about how we'll guide our listeners.

Here's how to get closer to that **atmosphere of a coffee chat, when pitching:**

Print out your pitch script, and take a look at every sentence.

WHICH WORDS MATTER?

Ask yourself: which words do I need to tell with more focus and energy, so that the meaning is properly understood? There are usually **two or three words** in each sentence that steer its meaning. **Underline those words.**

Now take your phone, and **record yourself pitching** the first minute (yep, no one likes it, but this works), with special emphasis and energy on the key words. Listen back and ask yourself:

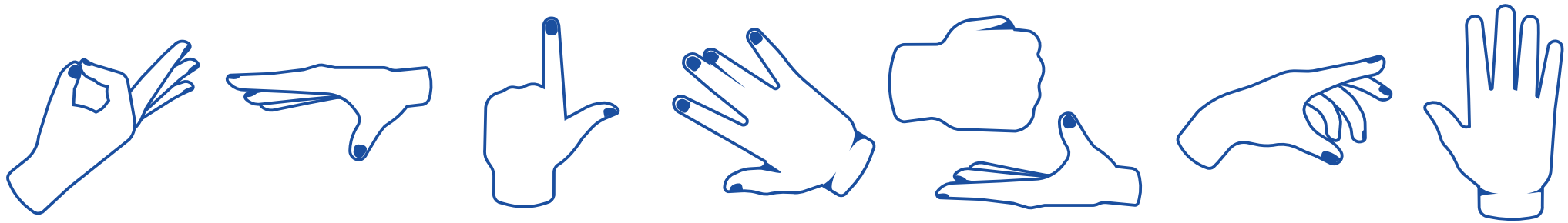
IS MY TRUE MEANING COMING ACROSS?

How can I say it differently, so that my message is clearer? Make some notes, do another recording, and listen back. Repeat this until you feel your message is truly landing.

Most of all, get **connected to the content**. Remind yourself why you're working on this, why you care, and what makes you excited about the business – and bring all of that into the way you tell your pitch.



What about body language?



In 2016, I was working for a startup called Quiver (for just 2,5 months, so you can imagine, it didn't work out well!) 10 days before getting fired, I pitched at a competition called 'Dell for Entrepreneurs'. It was a two-minute pitch, and the pressure was on. The founders didn't seem happy with me, and **I felt I had something to prove**. So I put everything into that pitch. And – we won – hooray!

Later, I watched the video of the pitch, and noticed that I did **something really distracting with my hands**. I gestured on every single syllable to emphasise my message. Problem is,

**IF YOU EMPHASISE EVERYTHING,
NOTHING STANDS OUT.**

The most ironic thing about this? I had coached two founders in the previous few months to stop doing exactly the same thing!

How can that be? I'm a pitch coach, aware of the pitfall, already coached two people to stop this distracting habit – and I did it too. It just shows, **when under pressure**, we can end up doing things we don't intend to do, without even realising it.

This is where **filming yourself works**. By reviewing a video of a real pitch, you may discover things you do which are distracting for your audience; in the way you stand, speak, or use your hands.

Often, **you can be completely unaware**. In my case, pressure caused me to over-emphasise. I discovered this by watching the video, and was able to practice for other pitches by putting emphasis with hand gestures only on the important words.

You can do the same. Not many people like seeing themselves on camera! But try to forget whether you like it. Focus on whether you are distracting your audience, and **emphasising** your story.



**I always did something I was
a little not ready to do.
I think that's
how you grow**

**When there's that moment of
'Wow, I'm not really
sure I can do this'**

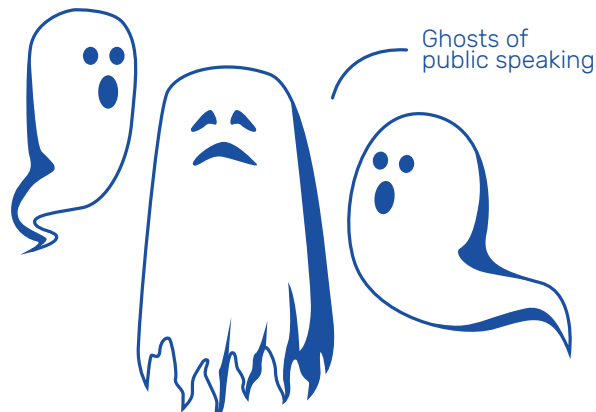
• ————— ♦ ————— •

**and you
push through
those moments,
that's when you have
a breakthrough**

Marissa Mayer

Keep calm... and pitch!

'HOW IS IT THAT SOME PEOPLE SEEM INCREDIBLY COMFORTABLE ON STAGE - AND I DON'T FEEL THAT WAY AT ALL?'



Ghosts of public speaking

Public speaking is popularly known as one of our **biggest fears** – and we kind of despise ourselves for it! We mistakenly believe that nerves are a weakness, and tell ourselves we should be completely in control.

Let's be a bit kinder to ourselves.

Nerves are nature's way of helping us **focus and operate at the top of our game**. Those comfortable ones are not simply uber-confident. Rather, they have learned to manage their anxiety, and turn their nerves into energy.

You can too. Here are some of the most powerful things you can do to take back control.

LEARN THE FIRST 60 SECONDS

And I mean, learn it so you could repeat it if someone woke you up in the middle of the night. Success in the first 60 seconds will help you get into your flow, so that your adrenaline reduces, your body temperature normalises and your brain fully engages.

TAKE A MOMENT

When you walk out on stage, or start your pitch in a meeting, don't start talking without a clear beginning. Step on stage or to the front of the room. Take a moment. Look at the audience. Then start. This helps your brain keep pace with your words.

JUST BREATHE

As you are waiting for your turn to present, get some air into your lungs. Breathe in through your nose – out through your mouth – and repeat. This helps reduce stress, and helps you build and keep composure.

PREPARE, PRACTICE, PERSIST

And finally... there is nothing quite like hard work to overcome anxiety. Prepare, practice out loud and do one more run-through. Every extra minute you invest in preparation will pay you back in more mastery of the task.



Up or down? Dress for comfort

Clothes communicate something to your audience. Just as important: they influence how you feel when pitching.

Here are three theories on how to dress.

1 PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE LIKE THEM.

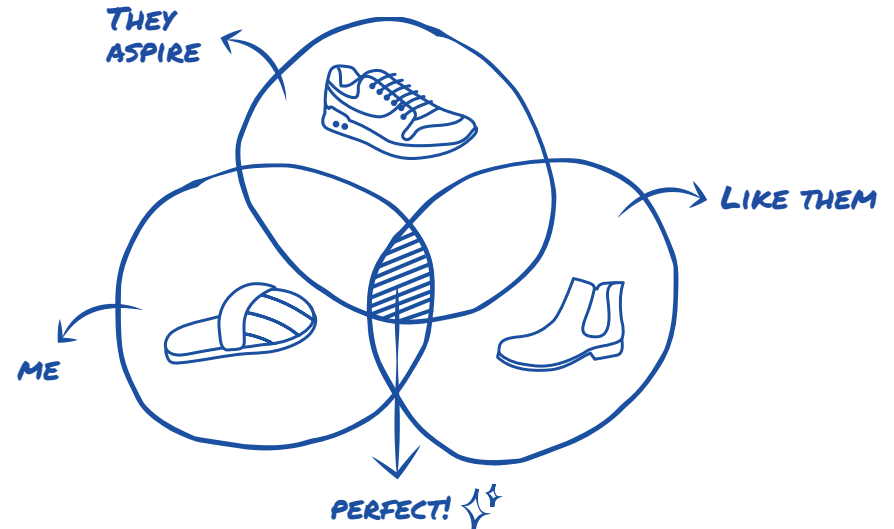
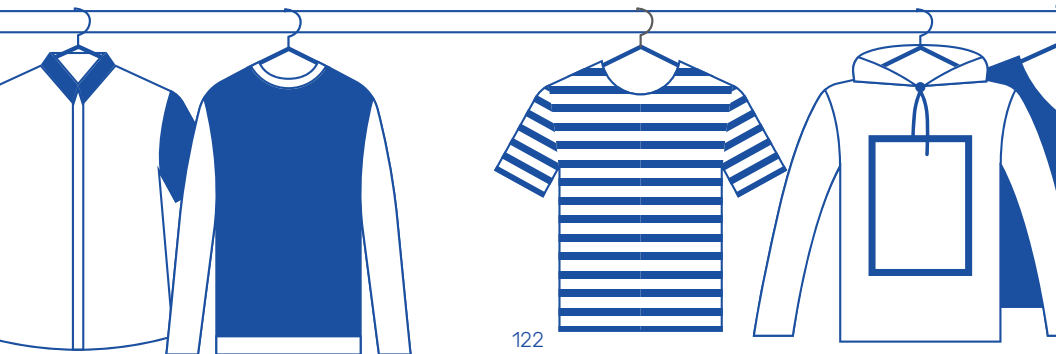
If your audience or customer is wearing a suit and tie, dress up to match them.

2 PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE THEY ASPIRE TO BE.

Those suited and booted smart dressers you're pitching to wish they could spend their days wearing hoodies. You're living the life they want to have – so dress down.

3 WHO CARES WHAT THEY THINK? JUST BE YOURSELF!

Dress how you like, and don't let anyone tell you what to do – be as outrageous or as boring as you like.



My advice? Go for **somewhere in between**.

If your audience is in suits, don't be too casual. Equally, if you very rarely wear a suit or a very smart dress, then being too formal will look... well, just weird. You'll visibly be uncomfortable in those clothes, so go for a smart pair of jeans, a casual jacket, or your smarter-than-usual dress.

If your audience is in hoodies, don't wear a suit! Even if your usual clothing is pretty formal, dress down at least a little, to be closer to the people you're pitching to.

More than anything, you need to **feel at ease**. Put something on that makes you feel:

OK, I'M RELAXED, IN CONTROL, I'M HERE TO DO MY JOB. I FEEL READY.

Zoom and the art of online pitching

As I write this, we are in the middle of the COVID crisis. When you read this, I hope this crisis is a distant memory. However, online pitching will be a part of your future business communication, and it throws up a few challenges.

First, let's get a couple of tech issues out of the way. Make sure you have **a tidy background**, the **camera is at eye level** (so that you don't look down at the audience) and you don't have a bright backlight – they need to be able to **see your face**.

Don't get too close to the camera, and **put your video on**. But not if you're still in your pyjamas...



Now let's deal with the biggest issue: how to engage with the people you're pitching to.

CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE REGULARLY.

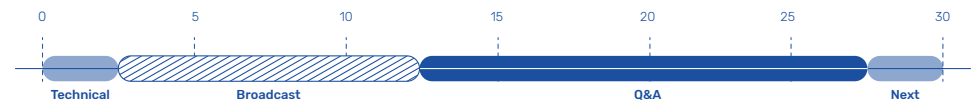
If it's a longer meeting, cut out of the presentation every **8-10 minutes** and check in with your listeners. Do they have questions? This way they have **a moment to process** what they've heard, ask what's on their mind and get ready for the next part.

LESS BROADCAST, MORE INTERACTION

If you have a meeting of 30 minutes, **don't plan a 25 minute presentation**. One technical glitch, 2 minutes over time with the pitch and before you know it, they'll be saying, "Got to go to my next meeting, bye!"

Plan for 2-3 minutes of tech issues, and a maximum of an 8-10 minutes pitch. This is the **Broadcast** part: "The way we see the world." Then get into the Q&A: the **Interact** part. Finding out what's on their mind and responding to their questions is just as important as sending out your message.

Finally plan 3-4 minutes to discuss **next steps**, so that there is an outcome from the meeting.



DON'T WORRY IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG!

Everyone's in the same online boat. Everyone knows the wrong button can be pressed, unmute can be forgotten, and the camera can be left on when you're in the toilet! (OK, maybe try and avoid that one...) **Keep it light and own the awkwardness.**



Simple

can be harder
than complex:

you have to

work hard

to get your
thinking clean

to make it simple



But it's **in the end**
worth it

because once
you get there,

you can move
mountains

Steve Jobs

The 5-sentence email pitch

How many emails and LinkedIn messages do you receive a day? How many are requests to do something? And **how many do you act on, or reply to?**

Not many, because you're busy, right?


It's the same for anyone **you** ever email or message with a request. At that moment, you're **pitching for attention and action.**

We can never respond to every request, and the difference between archive or response is related to length and clarity.

Guy Kawasaki told the story of having 600 emails in his inbox – all read, but all unanswered. He explained why he didn't answer.

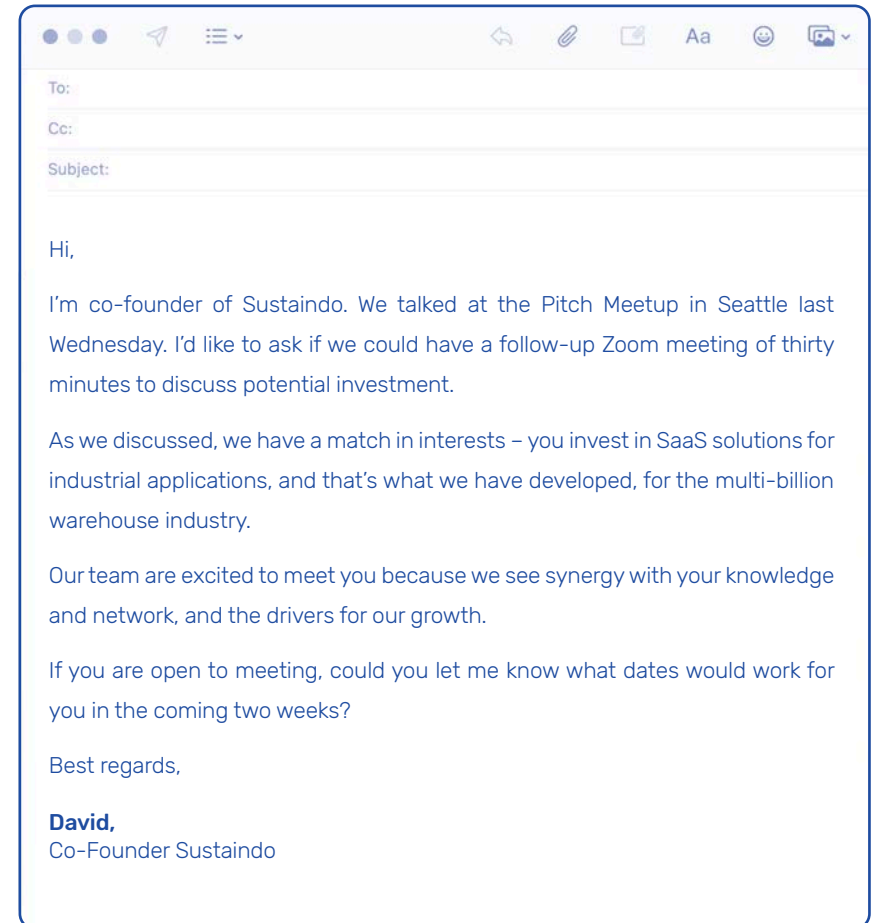
The emails were too long. And it wasn't clear what he should do, or why he should do it.

His formula for a successful first email is this;

- 
- 1 WHO ARE YOU?
 - 2 WHAT DO YOU WANT?
 - 3 WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?
 - 4 WHY SHOULD I DO WHAT YOU'RE ASKING?
 - 5 WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

Sentences count: 5

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE OF A STARTUP FOLLOWING UP WITH AN INVESTOR.



Try this 5-point approach next time you send a cold message requesting action, when you're at the early stage of contact. **Brevity and clarity** will increase the chance of the receiver taking the next step.

So, erm... that's my last slide... any questions?

This is the way a lot of pitches finish: without a plan or a bang. And that's a pity, because **the last thing you say is the first thing they will remember**. Part of being a professional and creating trust with your audience is to deliver the beginning, middle **and end** at the top level.

Think through; what are the **three most important messages** you want them to go away with? Package those into a 3-point, one sentence summary. For example:

"WE'RE ADDRESSING A MULTI-MILLION PROBLEM; WE'VE CREATED A UNIQUE SOLUTION WITH TRACTION ALREADY IN THE MARKET; AND WE'VE GOT THE MULTI-TALENTED TEAM TO MAKE IT HAPPEN."

Then give them **the call to action**.

"IF YOU BELIEVE IN OUR VISION, TALK WITH US AND LET'S ARRANGE A FOLLOW-UP MEETING TO DISCUSS INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES."

Finally wrap it all up with a big **Thank you** – which means, 'I've finished, you can clap now!' With no final word, it feels awkward. 'Thank you' gives the audience a clear **sense of completion**, and you may just get the applause you deserve. The end of your pitch is not to be underestimated. It's the part that's often forgotten, and that means **if you get it right, you'll stand out as a professional, with a plan**.



**HAVE A PLAN FOR
WHAT TO SAY RIGHT UP
TO THE LAST FULL STOP**

**KEEP YOUR ENERGY
GOING TO THE
LAST FULL STOP**

Three things I want you to remember

What you've seen is:

FIRSTLY, THE IMPORTANCE OF PITCHING.

Clarity about **the pain** you are solving, **the solution** you've created, **who's buying**, **what you need** to make it happen; plus who's in the **team**, **why you** are enthusiastic about the proposition... If you have all this clarity, together with commitment, confidence, and keep the story short, you have the best chance to move your audience to the next step.

1

SECONDLY, IT'S NOT ALL EASY, BUT IT'S ALSO NOT COMPLICATED.

Every piece of advice in this book is something you could apply in your next pitch. **The tools are simple** (Post-its, pens, brain), the process takes some time but it's not hard. Once you succeed, the work you put into it will be forgotten.

2

AND THIRDLY, SIMPLICITY WORKS.

Whether that is in the level of detail you tell, or in the slides you present, remember that **complexity is the enemy**. Keep content simple, give clarity on the key issues, and focus on what matters to your audience. Putting even a few of the tools from this book into place will help **you succeed**.

3



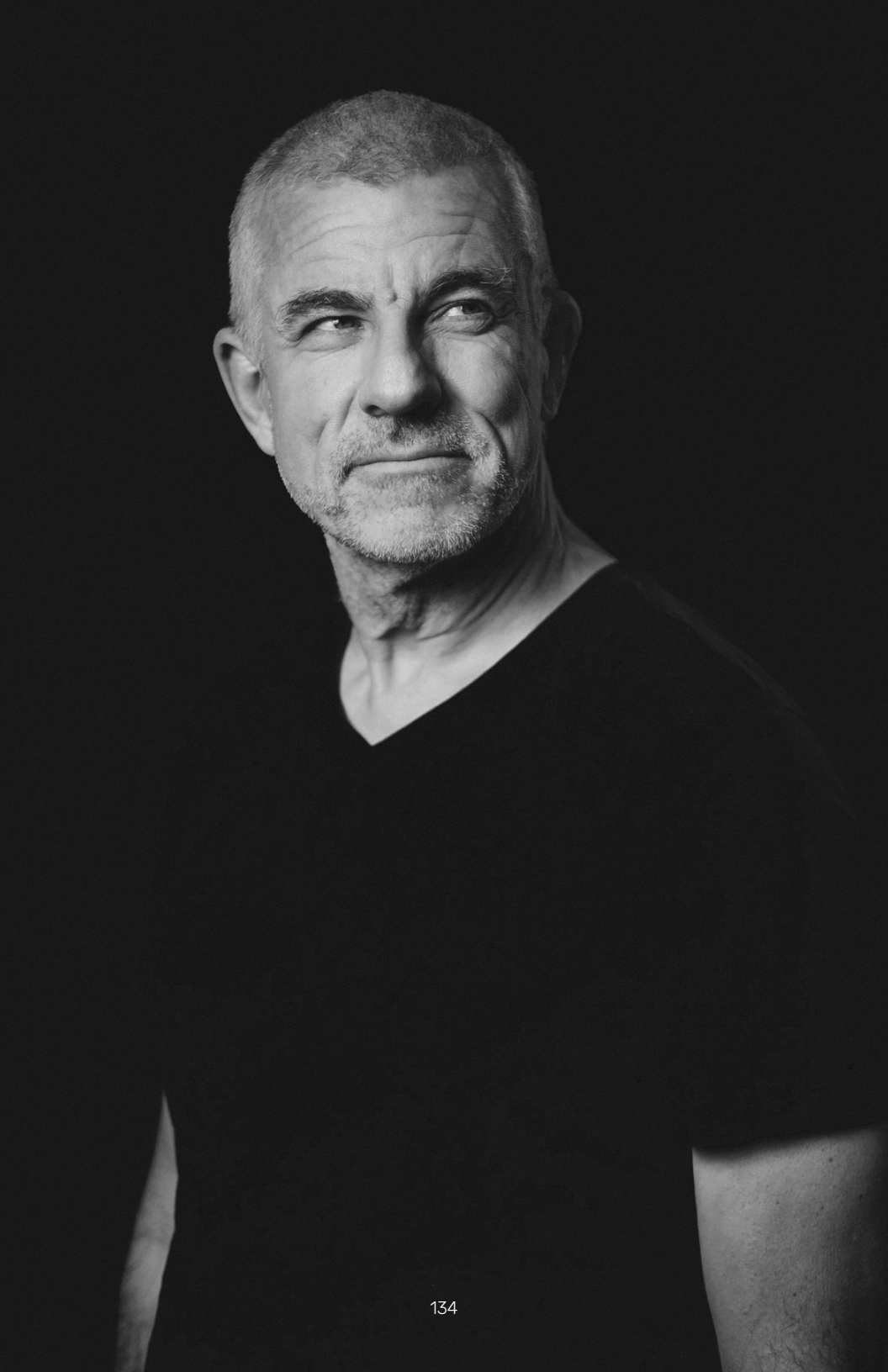
What I would love you to do is this.

Open the book at a random page. Read the advice. **Put it into action** the next time you are preparing a pitch or presentation.

Just try it. And keep trying it each time you pitch, adding one improvement at a time. You will surprise yourself how far you get with these tools.

And you might just reach that moment of delivering a pitch that stands out from all others. The one that comes along only rarely.

YOU TOO CAN DELIVER THAT BLUE MOON PITCH.



**Big opportunities
don't come along every day**

**So when one arrives,
you want to be ready
to make the best pitch
they've ever seen**

**To place you,
your ideas and your talents
in the perfect position
to capitalise on a
life changing opportunity**



**Blue Moon opportunities
deserve an amazing pitch**

A Blue Moon Pitch

David Beckett



Find out more about our
pitch training, online courses
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[best3minutes.com](https://www.best3minutes.com)



BIG OPPORTUNITIES don't come along every day

When you're pitching for investment and resources, you need to stand out. In this book, Europe's leading pitch coach David Beckett shares the actionable tools and strategies you need to make a lasting impression, by delivering a

BLUE MOON PITCH



I've seen dozens of ordinary presenters transformed into fantastic pitchers with the tools in this book.

Patrick De Zeeuw, Co-Founder Startupbootcamp and Innoleaps

David's powerful coaching has helped numerous startups, professionals and innovation leaders improve their pitch.

Ilja Linnemeier, Chief Digital Officer, PwC NL

David is the best pitch coach in the world.

Michael Dooijes, Startup Liaison NL Consulate, San Francisco



David Beckett has coached over 1500 Startups to raise more than €360Million in investment, He's also trained over 25,000 professionals at companies like Netflix Tommy Hilffger and Booking.com, and over 30 TEDx speakers. He's the creator of The Pitch Canvas®, host of The Essential Pitch Podcast, and is passionate about helping anyone with a great idea find their voice.