

# THE FIVE ESSENTIALS OF SUCCESSFUL PITCHING

## AN OVERVIEW OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND TOOLS



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea for this toolkit was developed by Susann Tischendorf, iBAN Director for Communications and Digital Innovation, in collaboration with Andrew Kaiser-Tedesco, iBAN Director for Company and Investor Engagement. We would like to thank Felix Beideck who laid the in-depth research fundament for the document. Further thanks go to Alexandra Harris, Katharina Münster, Lisa Goellert and Lena Jukna for editing and layouting.

## FOREWORD



Dr. Christian Jahn,  
Executive Director,  
Inclusive Business Action Network

As an entrepreneur, you may have just a few minutes to pitch your idea at the right time to the right investor. This initial impression can make a considerable difference to the sustainability and trajectory of your business. However, despite the importance of the pitch, information about it is often scattered or not publicly available. We developed this toolkit as a concise guide to support businesses with pitching their business model to investors to obtain the support and financial means they need.

*Royston Braganza, CED of Grameen Capital told us that the pitch is key to obtaining financial support. "Sometimes, the companies that pitch to us have really innovative business ideas, but struggle to articulate them. I am sure this guide will greatly support them in formulating their pitches and securing the funding they need."*

The tools on the following pages will help you formulate your value proposition in a clear way to help investors understand you better and develop an interest in supporting your initiative. We curated the content in this guide to highlight some excellent resources that stand out among those available online. This toolkit provides a one-stop shop to help you structure your pitch, make it visually appealing, and tailor it to your specific audience. We hope that this guide will provide you with all the resources you need to hit the ground running!

### WHAT IS PITCHING AND IN WHAT SITUATIONS DO YOU USE IT?

*A pitch is a short presentation of a business or business idea to an audience. There are plenty of opportunities for pitching. You might pitch a new idea to a supervisor, pitch your product to consumers or pitch your business venture to potential supporters. This toolkit focuses on the latter and specifically on pitching to investors.*

In order to scale your operations, diversify your company, and invest in the future, your company requires some sort of funding. This funding can be obtained from a variety of sources. You can focus on **internal** sources and just reinvest your earnings, if your business is profitable enough. Still, many companies look for **external** sources and approach banks or investors to obtain additional capital. These additional external resources enable investments into new inventory and machinery, new revenue streams or just economies of scale, which otherwise would not be possible.

To approach these external sources of financing, you must be able to convince people who know neither you nor your business model to believe in your company. You must **pitch your business**.

This document will provide you with guidance to design your own pitch, show you valuable resources, and prepare you to convince external players to invest in your company.

# THE ESSENTIALS OF PITCHING

## I DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE

- WHAT IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION?

## II STRUCTURE YOUR MESSAGE

- STRUCTURE OF YOUR PITCH
- WHAT INVESTORS WANT TO HEAR

## III TELL YOUR STORY IN A PERSONAL PITCH

- STORYTELLING AND ADAPTING TO YOUR AUDIENCE
- TIPS AND TRICKS

## IV DESIGN YOUR PITCH DECK

## V CLEAR CALL TO ACTION

### WHAT IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION?



*Value Proposition - a reason given by a seller for buying their particular product or service, based on the value it offers customers."*

*Cambridge Dictionary*

Knowing your value proposition and idea of impact will help you to more effectively convince others. The TED Talk by Simon Sinek linked on the right margin illustrates why you should "start with WHY."

The value proposition of your company should be unique and clearly define the value added by your business. These tools help you to formulate your unique value proposition:

This Ashoka Worksheet helps you to become aware of your impact and to formulate the way in which you tackle the problems of your customers.

Strategyzer offers this free download of a Value Proposition Canvas, a tool to visualize your thoughts. You can use the previously gained knowledge from the Ashoka Worksheet to fill out the canvas and formulate your own value proposition.



**Watch his Ted  
Talk on YouTube**



**Ashoka Worksheet**



**Free Value Proposition  
Canvas**

# I. DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE

*Now, you can go into more depth. Are you aware of your surrounding environment and your competitors?*

Watch the tutorials by Techstars to confirm your previous ideas and make sure, you did not forget about an important aspect. Afterwards fill out the Techstars Lean Canvas.


Are you looking for additional support to formulate your value proposition and your impact? Are you struggling to specifically determine the environment in which you are operating?

Mindtools offers an overview of a variety of resources to conduct, for example, a SWOT and PEST analysis. Never heard of these types of analysis? Look at the provided tutorials and gain important knowledge that not only your pitch but also your entire business plan will benefit from.

Do you need more assistance? Smartsheet offers you a vast variety of alternative resources. However, these might be less intuitive or extensive compared to those provided to you above.

 **Techstars Lean Canvas**

 **Variety of resources at Mindtools**

 **Different templates to formulate your Value Proposition**

## II. STRUCTURE YOUR MESSAGE

### THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR PITCH

---

*When you have formulated your value proposition and can articulate the value added through your business, you are ready to transport this message to external investors and supporters. Since every good pitch starts with a structure, this document provides you with the essentials of how to structure your pitch . This is important for several reasons:*

#### LIMITED TIME.

If you are at a matchmaking event, at a public pitch or pitching on private invitation by an investor: Time is scarce, and you want to use yours efficiently. Not pitching in person, only sending out your pitch deck to externals? It doesn't matter! Investors receive a variety of pitch decks every day and can't afford to spend too much time on every single one.

#### ATTENTION.

Catch the attention of the audience by pitching your story in a coherent structure, guiding your audience through your pitch and evoking interest.

#### MAKE YOUR OWN LIFE EASIER.

Pitching in front of an audience is exciting but can also be intimidating. Give yourself a rope to hold on to, in case you struggle and forget what you wanted to say. A structure helps you stay on track.



## II. STRUCTURE YOUR MESSAGE

### EVERY GOOD PITCH SHOULD BE STRUCTURED AROUND THESE PILLARS:

---

1. What is the **problem**?
2. **How** do you solve it?
3. Give an example of a **situation** or a **struggle** you **resolved**!
4. Explain your **business model** and how you plan to make money.
5. Show your **overall impact**. Do this quantitatively but also qualitatively: Give numbers of products sold, customers helped, merchandise distributed ... but don't forget the overall change you caused, how your business impacted the life of your stakeholders.
6. Show the **market** you reach and the **opportunity** you want to use with your company. Show why it is you that can reach this market by highlighting what makes your team and resources stand out from competitors.
7. **Call to action**. What do you want, what do you need from your audience and WHY? Be specific and say how much capital you need, which kind of financing you are looking for and what you are going to do with the money.

## II. STRUCTURE YOUR MESSAGE

*To go more into detail, have a look at these resources to structure your pitch and learn, what to include, where to focus and what aspects to avoid.*

Techstars provides a detailed and lively guidance to structure your pitch. Nicole Glaros explains each segment of a pitch structure in short videos.



**Techstars Toolkit -  
Master your pitch!**

The Pitching Guide by Ashoka explains these segments in a clear and clean clickable webpage. Each aspect is explained briefly with references to more exhaustive explanations. While the Techstars Toolkit looks at the structure from a normal business perspective, the Ashoka Pitching Guide specifically addresses impact-oriented ventures.



**Ashoka Pitching  
Guide**

Board of Innovation provides some great resources for companies. You can register on their webpage for free and receive documents like the Pitching Canvas, which covers the perfect structure for your pitch in a nutshell.



**Pitching Canvas**

## II. STRUCTURE YOUR MESSAGE

### WHAT INVESTORS WANT TO HEAR

---

*When pitching your business to investors, it is extremely important to tailor your pitch specifically to them and give them the information they are looking for. They want to see that you have a plan. Listen to a Ted talk by David Rose, who gives an insight into what investors are looking for.*

If your potential investor is an impact investor, read this article by Duke University. It explains the market and the perspective of impact investors.

Innovations Against Poverty compiled a brief document on what impact investors are looking for, what they want to hear, and how to demonstrate that you are investment-ready. Look at the bottom of their page for the download of the document.

Read this article by the Founder Institute on **how to find** Impact Investors and **how to prepare** for meeting them.



**Ted Talk by David Rose**



**Duke University on Perspectives of Impact Investors**



**What Impact Investors want to hear**



**Founder Institute Hints on Finding an Impact Investor**

### III. TELL YOUR STORY IN A PERSONAL PITCH

## STORYTELLING

*When you pitch your business to an audience, telling a story, **your story**, is a great way to engage your listeners and make a lasting impression.*

“*Every good invention needs a good story. Hone in on your message and make it as clear as possible by going back to the basics. Think about who, what, when, where, why, and nail all that down first.*”

Danielle Cohn, Executive Director of Entrepreneurial Engagement and Head of LIFT Labs at Comcast NBCUniversal

The following two tools provided by Siemens Foundation and Ashoka do not only help you to tell your story but also take a step back. They help you to identify your own milestones, turning points and achievements. Once you have these clearly formulated for yourself, you will be able to communicate them to others more boldly.

The **Siemens Storytelling Toolkit** helps you tell your story in a broad array of pitching situations. It gives instructions on pinning down your **company's unique story**, provides **exercises** on formulating this story and gives **practical advice on** how to apply storytelling.



**Siemens Storytelling Toolkit**

The Ashoka Storytelling Toolkit is less extensive but covers the basics in a short and precise manner and has a focus on impact-oriented ventures.



**Ashoka Storytelling Toolkit**

You might want to alternate your storyline slightly when pitching your idea to different audiences. Here are some more storylines by Acumen for your alternative pitch and details you can alter:



**Acumen Alternative Storylines**

### III. TELL YOUR STORY IN A PERSONAL PITCH

## TIPS AND TRICKS

The difference between a good pitch and a great pitch lies in the details.

The Nasdaq Center for Entrepreneurship provides helpful hints and useful phrases to include in your pitch. It also covers questions and topics around presenting in person, from the perfect appearance on stage to choosing the right outfit.



**Nasdaq Center  
for Entrepreneurship**

### YOUR BUSINESS OPERATES IN A SPECIAL SECTOR?

### MAKE A SPECIAL PITCH!

If your business comes from a sector such as the creative industries make sure your pitch shows that!

Let's say you want to open a cinema or expand your communications agency, then show your talent! You can use your design skills to portray your fancy idea in a fancy way!

Especially in the creative industry, it makes sense to point to your past work and show your creativity, rather than go into every last detail of your current endeavour. It might even be beneficial to you, if you leave your business idea some space for development and pinpoint to this free space for creativity.

**But remember:** you still have to convince investors of your business case because in the end, they want to make money by investing in you.

### III. TELL YOUR STORY IN A PERSONAL PITCH

If the previous resource is too extensive and detailed for your taste, have a look at the Ultimate Pitching Guide by The Entrepreneur's Handbook. In an eight minute read, you learn about the basics around pitching and receive a very visual guidance on the structure of a pitch and its different building blocks.



**Entrepreneur's Handbook**



**Acumen Details of a Pitch**

This article by Acumen summarizes the previously mentioned aspects of a pitch and introduces you to the topic of designing a pitch deck, an aspect we will focus on in the next chapter.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

*Joseph Campbell analyzed the storylines of modern and ancient stories that are familiar to us, from the Bible to modern fairytales, and described the unifying element within most of them: "The Hero's Journey".*

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

## IV. DESIGN YOUR PITCH DECK

*The best designed content of a pitch is not convincing without the right layout and appealing slides. If you're not presenting the pitch personally but just sending it to an investor who looks at it, the design is the first impression a potential investor gets from you before even reading a word — make it a good one!*

Whether you design the slides with PowerPoint or use other tools to create your pitch deck, your slides should be brief and on point while covering everything an investor needs to know.

You should be able to explain your business and its potential in around ten slides. Stick to the so-called **30 – 20 – 10** rule by Guy Kawasaki: No font smaller than **30**, no pitch longer than **20** minutes, and no pitch deck longer than **10** slides. Let yourself be guided by the two examples on the right.

Of course, this rule is **just a guideline** and if you have good reasons to use 14 slides or even 20, do so. But ask yourself with every slide you add, whether it is necessary. There is a difference between pitching to customers or co-workers and pitching to investors. Investors want to see that you have a viable business model, that you are honest, and that you know about the potential of your business while also being aware of current shortcomings. Use this article to **adapt** your pitch deck accordingly.



**Other Tools to create your Pitch Deck**



**10 Slides for a Perfect Pitch Deck**



**Sequoia Capital Pitch Deck**



**Silicon Valley Bank Study on Investor's Central Interests**



**Pitch Deck Template for Pitching to Investors**

## V. CLEAR CALL TO ACTION

*At the end of every pitch, regardless of whether it's a personal pitch or a sent pitch deck, there should be a clear call to action. You have to leave your audience with a strong message of how they can support you and why they should support you.*

A call to action is an individual and short statement that differs from company to company. You know calls to action from Facebook ads and webpages with clickable buttons like: "Subscribe now!", "Shop Now!", "Open your account!" A similar statement should be at the end of your pitch, giving a clear and concise statement to the audience telling them what they should do.

Investors can be tempted by a clear call to action such as "Approach us after the pitch for a personal talk!" You can also telegraph confidence by stating "Invest in us now and shape the future of our industry!" In any case, be precise in what you're looking for and reach out to the potential investors. Tell them what sort of capital you are looking for, what conditions you have broadly in mind and when they can meet you.

### IMPORTANT ASPECTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Use **active** language ("Support us..." / "call us..." / "fund...")
- Be **clear** ("Visit our webpage for more info")
- Create sense of **urgency** ("Don't miss out on..." / "call now!")
- Say how to reach you and when ("I'll be in town until..., so let's schedule a personal meeting")
- Be **specific**! State the exact amount of money you are looking for, which type of financing you need and what you are going to use this money for
- Be **coherent**: Your call to action must fit into the rest of your pitch
- Imply a **low barrier** to action to the audience ("Start now by..." / "register today..." / "contact us for...")
- Be **personal** and address the audience **directly** ("Make your voice heard. Register to vote in less than 2 minutes!")



## V. CLEAR CALL TO ACTION

As with your entire pitch deck, your call to action slide should be tailored to your audience.

Find a helpful overview of different types of calls to action in the resources on the right!

Now you have all the tools you need. Before you put them to work, take a look at these outstanding examples of social venture pitches. You will see that none of these adhere to all guidelines mentioned before, and this is good!

Your pitch should be individual, and the toolkits and guidelines provided in ***The Five Essentials of Successful Pitching*** should **guide** you in creating your own pitch, not **direct** you. You have seen that pitching is all about portraying your business in a relatable manner, sharing the important reasons why your business works, and finally engaging your audience to support you and your business.



**Different Audiences for your Call - To - Action**



**Here you find some examples of different last slides.**



**Watch some outstanding social venture pitches**

## READY TO START WORKING ON YOUR OWN PITCH? GREAT!

## SAMPLE PITCH DECKS:

---

*Sample Pitch Decks to Be Inspired*

*Free Pitch Deck Templates (Part1)*

*Free Pitch Deck Templates (Part 2)*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

---

*"How to Pitch" - Tutorial by David Beckett*

Renowned pitching coach David Beckett gives a free overview of how to pitch and what to keep in mind. It takes 30 minutes but sums up central aspects to keep in mind when pitching.

*Free Business Model Canvas*

This free set of management tools provided by strategyzer allows you to describe, design, and pivot your business model.

## ELEVATOR PITCH

---

*"How to" – Elevator Pitching*

*Founder Institute Elevator Pitch Template*

*<https://pitcherific.com/>* - Pitcherific lets you practice and time your pitching in an online tool. It offers a seven-day free trial

*<http://www.pitchskills.com/how-to-improve-my-pitch/>* – 40 hints on how to improve your pitching

## ABOUT iBAN:

The Inclusive Business Action Network (iBAN) is a global initiative supporting the scaling and replication of inclusive business models. Through its strategic approach iBAN supports companies with tailor-made investment readiness programmes and develops national inclusive business policy strategies with policymakers. On a global level iBAN manages the largest online knowledge platform ([www.inclusivebusiness.net](http://www.inclusivebusiness.net)) on inclusive business.