



THE STARTUP PITCH COMPETITION PLAYBOOK

*a guide to maximizing the impact
of investor pitches and demo days*

THE STARTUP PITCH COMPETITION PLAYBOOK



SOCIAL MEDIA & PR OUTREACH

WEBSITE PRESENCE

COMPANY PROFILE

NETWORKING

PRESENTATION

DEMO

BUILD A WINNING PITCH THAT ATTRACTS INVESTORS

Follow our proven preparation process and pitching best practices to maximize the visibility of your startup, tell the right story to potential investors and improve your chances of winning the competition and ultimately getting funded.

0.1 *spread the word with social media and PR outreach*

0.2 *prepare your website for increased industry attention*

0.3 *position your company for maximum investor interest*

0.4 *plan ahead to get the most of your networking*

0.5 *design and deliver an effective pitch deck*

0.6 *develop compelling demos and answers to follow-up questions*

0.1

SPREAD THE WORD WITH SOCIAL MEDIA AND PR OUTREACH

After being selected to pitch at a startup competition, showcase your product at a demo day or present at an investor conference, it will be important to leverage social media and PR outreach to generate visibility for your company. Knowing who you need to contact can make all the difference.



FIND THE INFLUENCERS

It is important to know who writes about your industry in blogs, trade publications and social media. You should already be familiar with the sites that cover your industry, but if not, build a list of publications, media organizations and individual reporters who write about your space. Read their articles and posts regularly so you become aware of what topics are of interest to them.

TAILOR YOUR PITCH

It is important to emphasize different aspects of your story depending on which reporter or publication you're pitching. General business reporters will need a unique local angle or compelling fact, whereas a trade magazine reporter might be interested in an in-depth product review. Be sure your story angle is newsworthy to that reporter, because one size does not fit all.

SPREAD THE WORD

Company growth and market momentum, product launches and customer wins, even an addition to your executive team, can all be of interest to the right reporters, bloggers or Twitter followers. Once you have a relevant story to share, begin your outreach by sending a targeted e-mail, submitting blog comments, posting on Twitter or updating your LinkedIn or Facebook status.

TEMPER YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Good relationships with the media take time and consistency to cultivate. Not every interview will be published and not every quote will be used. If a blogger e-mails you back or a reporter calls with questions, be receptive and refer to your key messages and talking points. Stay on message, avoid going too far off topic and only share information that you are ready to release.

CATCH THE COVERAGE

Utilize tools like Google Alerts, Hootsuite or Hubspot to regularly monitor any online coverage and conversations about you or your competitors. You can measure the impact of your social media efforts by analyzing your coverage for tone and accuracy. You should also be able to track whether these articles or mentions generated any additional referral traffic to your website.

Knowing which key messages are most compelling to reporters, bloggers, Facebook fans and Twitter followers will increase the success of your story appearing online or in print.

"With few exceptions, editors and journalists across the board agreed that e-mail pitches should be more relevant to their beat or area of interest."

*"How the Press
Uses and Values PR"*

0.2 PREPARE YOUR WEBSITE FOR INCREASED INDUSTRY ATTENTION

As soon as the selection announcement is made, your website will be the first place potential customers, investors, partners and future hires will look for details on your company, management team and products. Is your current website ready for the attention?



PREPARE (YOUR HOMEPAGE) FOR LANDING

Too often, tech company websites fail to articulate clearly what they do, let alone what makes them different or better than the competition. Your initial site visitors may spend as little as five seconds on your homepage before deciding whether or not to move on. Make sure the headline, text, graphics or explainer video quickly explains why your company matters or is worth watching.

BUILD A COMPELLING CASE FOR YOUR COMPANY

Typically the most visited internal pages on a website are the corporate overview, management and board bios, solutions and contact pages. Build a strong case for why your company is positioned for long-term growth by clearly defining the need for your product, properly describing its benefits and fully highlighting the industry expertise of your key executives.

INCREASE YOUR FANS AND FOLLOWERS

For those visitors that do spend time on your website, give them a reason to come back. Make it easy for them to keep track of your milestones and progress, follow your updates on Twitter, like your company page on Facebook or become a connection on LinkedIn. You should also encourage them to subscribe to your blog updates, e-mail newsletter or product announcements.

TRACK YOUR VISITORS (BY NAME)

If you're not doing so already, add Google Analytics to your website to monitor the increase in traffic prior to the show, as well as the most popular pages, keywords and referring links. For deeper insight, sign up for a LeadLander trial to identify the specific companies who are spending time on your site and see if you're attracting attention from investors, prospects or competitors.

MONITOR YOUR COMPANY'S SEO RESULTS

Remember that potential investors, customers, employees and partners will spend time researching your company and its competitors online. To avoid any unexpected SEO surprises, review the first few pages of search results for your company, products, keywords and management team to focus your ongoing content strategy and SEO efforts moving forward.

Your website is your most visible marketing tool for generating investor excitement and industry momentum around your participation in a pitch competition or venture capital conference.

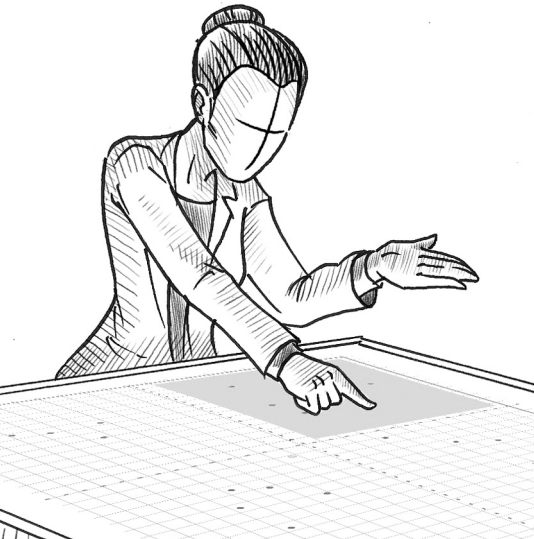
“ The first paragraph of your home page should explain concisely what you do.

The next paragraph should set you apart. ”

Web Marketing Today

0.3 POSITION YOUR COMPANY FOR MAXIMUM INVESTOR INTEREST

Your company profile is referenced by investors and attendees throughout the pitch competition, demo day or investor conference to determine whether they are interested in watching your presentation. A well written overview and executive summary helps put the odds in your favor.



REFINE YOUR POSITIONING

A positioning statement is not a tagline. It is the process of creating an image or identity in the market for your product, brand or organization. It is a focused, concise description of your customers, their problem and the solution your product offers them. The strategic purpose of positioning is to increase your relevance to a market segment by choosing where you can win.

AVOID USING TECHNICAL JARGON

Avoid using too many technical terms and industry jargon when describing your products and solutions. Use simple sentences and relevant analogies to convey the benefits of your product or overall reach of your technology. If it takes longer than 30 seconds for someone to understand what it is that you do, you haven't taken the time to learn how to explain it clearly enough.

CALCULATE MARKET SIZE

Your company's recent successes are only part of the equation. Investors want to know the expected size of your market and why your company is strongly positioned to take advantage of that growth. This can be challenging if you are competing in a relatively new or rapidly changing market, but this uncertainty might be why such a large opportunity exists in the first place.

EMPHASIZE YOUR MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

Highlight your management team's background and industry expertise, along with any relevant experience, recent accomplishments or recent exits from any previous tech companies or startups. The purpose is to convince investors that your management team has the credibility, qualifications and ability to execute your go-to-market strategy and pivot as needed.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMPETITION

Don't just list the competition, explain how your approach to the market is unique and different. Too many technology companies sound exactly the same instead of articulating what makes them better. Whether it is your intellectual property, experienced management team or tight product focus, your goal is to highlight your competitive advantage and industry expertise.

By persuasively positioning your company as a potential market leader you are building a compelling case for why your company should be a VC's next investment.

" Assess what positions exist in the market and then determine which of those you have the best chance of occupying and defending. "

MarketingProfs

0.4 PLAN AHEAD TO GET THE MOST OF YOUR NETWORKING

Depending on when you present and what time you go on, your networking activities may result in a few more presentation attendees or product demonstrations. Here are a few things to consider when planning your overall conference strategy:



KNOW YOUR GOALS FOR THE EVENT

Not all companies have the same agenda at a pitch competition or investor conference. Whether you need to raise capital, seek out strategic partners or round out your management team, it is important to establish your goals for the event ahead of time. This will help maximize your productivity so you know where your time is best spent and minimize wasted activities.

RESEARCH THE RIGHT INVESTORS

Angel investors, venture capital firms and private equity funds target certain tech sectors, check sizes and stages of growth. Within each firm, individual partners specialize in different areas of expertise. Take the time to research the names and faces, bios and board seats of partners who might be the best match for your company based on your industry and capital requirements.

ASK FOR INTRODUCTIONS

Based on your research, explore your contact list, LinkedIn connections or AngelList syndicates to see who might be able to help you reach out to a particular investor. Your attorneys, accountants and fellow entrepreneurs may be able to make a valuable introduction for you prior to or during the event, so be sure to create opportunities for discussion when the time is right.

TAILOR YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Depending on who you're talking to and for how long, you'll want to work on different versions of your elevator pitch. If your 30-second intro is successful, you'll be able to deliver your 5-minute follow-up with more detail. You'll still need to work on a more in-depth 15- or 30-minute presentation for future meetings. But don't buttonhole an investor who clearly isn't interested.

FOCUS ON QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Your goal should be to make the best business connections, not just collect the most business cards. Spend more time having meaningful conversations with fewer individuals and write down a few memorable things about each on the back of their business cards. You'll have something to reference when you reach out to them again after the show.

While not every discussion will generate investor interest, follow up promptly with those you meet. A positive impression now and a few milestone achievements later could lead to a future term sheet.

“ Whatever it is
that you want
to achieve,
it's going
to happen with
and through
other people,
so be purposeful,
be directed ... ”

Keith Ferrazzi, Author
“Never Eat Alone”

0.5 DESIGN AND DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE PITCH DECK

Your startup pitch is your biggest opportunity for exposure, but don't let too much text, too little focus and lack of preparation come between you and your future investors. Make sure your presentation is polished and professional and that you've taken enough time to practice your pitch.



SCHEDULE ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE

One of the most common reasons that presenters fail to connect with their audience is that they are too busy running their company to spend time preparing themselves. Don't let this happen to you. Block off time on your schedule for you and your management team to pull together the most persuasive stories, graphics and financial figures to build a compelling company narrative.

FOCUS ON YOUR AUDIENCE AND ITS NEEDS

Investors are not your customers. They don't want to know every detail about your technology. They do want to know the size of the market opportunity, the qualifications of your management team and why investing in that team could deliver an exceptional return. Remind yourself of this while customizing each slide and resist the temptation to re-use your latest sales presentation.

REMEMBER LESS IS MORE

Presenters tend to fill every slide with information “too important” to exclude, often overwhelming their audience in the process. Your slides should reinforce your words, not repeat them. Try using a photo, graphic or chart in place of text where possible. And when you must use bullets, keep them to five or less, no longer than one line and no smaller than 24 pt. font size.

DESIGN YOUR SLIDES WITH DISTINCTION

The purpose of your presentation is to set yourself apart from the competition. Therefore your slide background should reflect your brand, not a default PowerPoint template. Avoid cheesy clip art and generic photos. Purchase professional stock photos from iStockPhoto, explore slide layouts on SlideShare and watch some TED presentations to see what works and what does not.

PRACTICE YOUR DELIVERY

Nothing kills a presentation faster than reading your bullet points like a teleprompter. Practice rehearsing your pitch with a remote until you are comfortable delivering the simplest of slides. Use a video camera instead of looking in the mirror to hear how fast you’re speaking and see what you’re doing with your hands. And never try to include more than your time limit allows.

Your presentation is like a movie trailer. Its purpose is to get the audience excited to see the movie (your demo), but leave them wanting more. Don't try to say too much.

“ Make slides
that reinforce
your words,
not repeat them.

Demonstrate,
with emotional
proof, that what
you’re saying
is true, not just
accurate. ”

Seth Godin, Author
“Really Bad PowerPoint”

0.6 DEVELOP COMPELLING DEMOS AND ANSWERS TO FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

After you finish your pitch, interested investors will find their way to you or your booth to see a demo, ask in-depth questions about your product or customer traction and seek to learn more about your company. But do you have what it takes to land a follow-up meeting?



DEVELOP YOUR PRODUCT DEMO

Next to your presentation, an impressive product demo is a critical step in moving an investor closer to scheduling a follow-up meeting. Make sure your demo looks professional and that you highlight key benefits and features effectively, whether you create an explainer video, corporate overview, product animation or are prepared to deliver a live demo back at the booth.

SIMPLIFY YOUR BOOTH PRESENCE

Companies have a tendency to fill their booth graphics or banner stands with too much text and too many graphics without realizing that anything below waist level cannot be seen. It's better to place your company logo, tagline and product name at eye level so investors or attendees can easily recognize your booth from a distance and know where to find you, especially in a crowd.

PREPARE ANSWERS FOR CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Investors look at hundreds of deals each year and are notorious for poking holes in companies, trying to find reasons not to invest in order to make their due diligence easier. Anticipate the tough questions investors might ask in advance and prepare concise answers. Move the conversation away from your booth if possible to keep their attention on you and not catching up with colleagues.

SUMMARIZE COMPANY FACTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to your corporate overview, product collateral or customer logos, prepare a one-page handout or fact sheet that summarizes key information from your presentation, including the size of your market, makeup of your management team and existing capital structure. Bring more than you think you may need — so you don't run out — along with plenty of business cards.

PLAN YOUR BACKUP STRATEGY

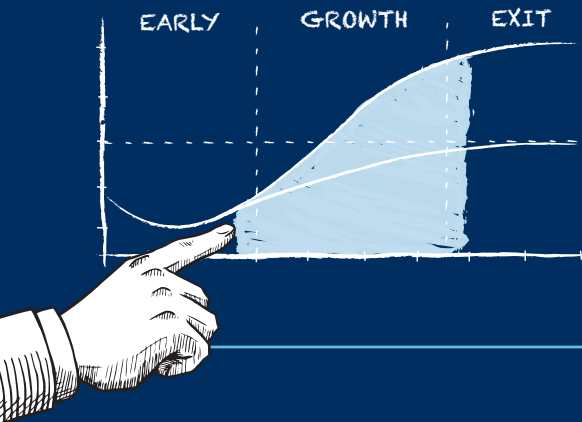
This is not the time or place to experience equipment failure. Prepare a backup demo in case your software, video player or Internet connection doesn't work properly. Bring extras of all equipment — laptops, power cords, USB drives, tablets and smartphones, whatever your demo requires. If all goes well, you won't have to use it, but if it does not, at least you'll be prepared.

If your conversation goes well and an investor is interested, the next step on your way to a term sheet is a meeting with their partners. Congratulations, you're one step closer to funding and good luck!

*“ Stop
jawboning and
start demo'ing ...*

*... if your demo
is good, they'll
hunt you down
to get your
whole story
later. ”*

Guy Kawasaki



READY TO INVEST IN THE
NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH?

THE CHOICE IS EVERCLEAR.



HIGH-GROWTH MARKETING FOR VENTURE-BACKED TECH COMPANIES

It takes clarity and focus to capture a growing market. Everclear Marketing® translates complex technology into enterprise value so venture-backed companies grow faster. When your company is ready to invest in high-growth marketing to accelerate sales and drive revenue, the choice is Everclear.

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