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# A Pitch Deck for Each Stage of Your Company's Life

Your pitch deck is your company's story. Make it impactful and relevant. Let it evolve with you and your business.



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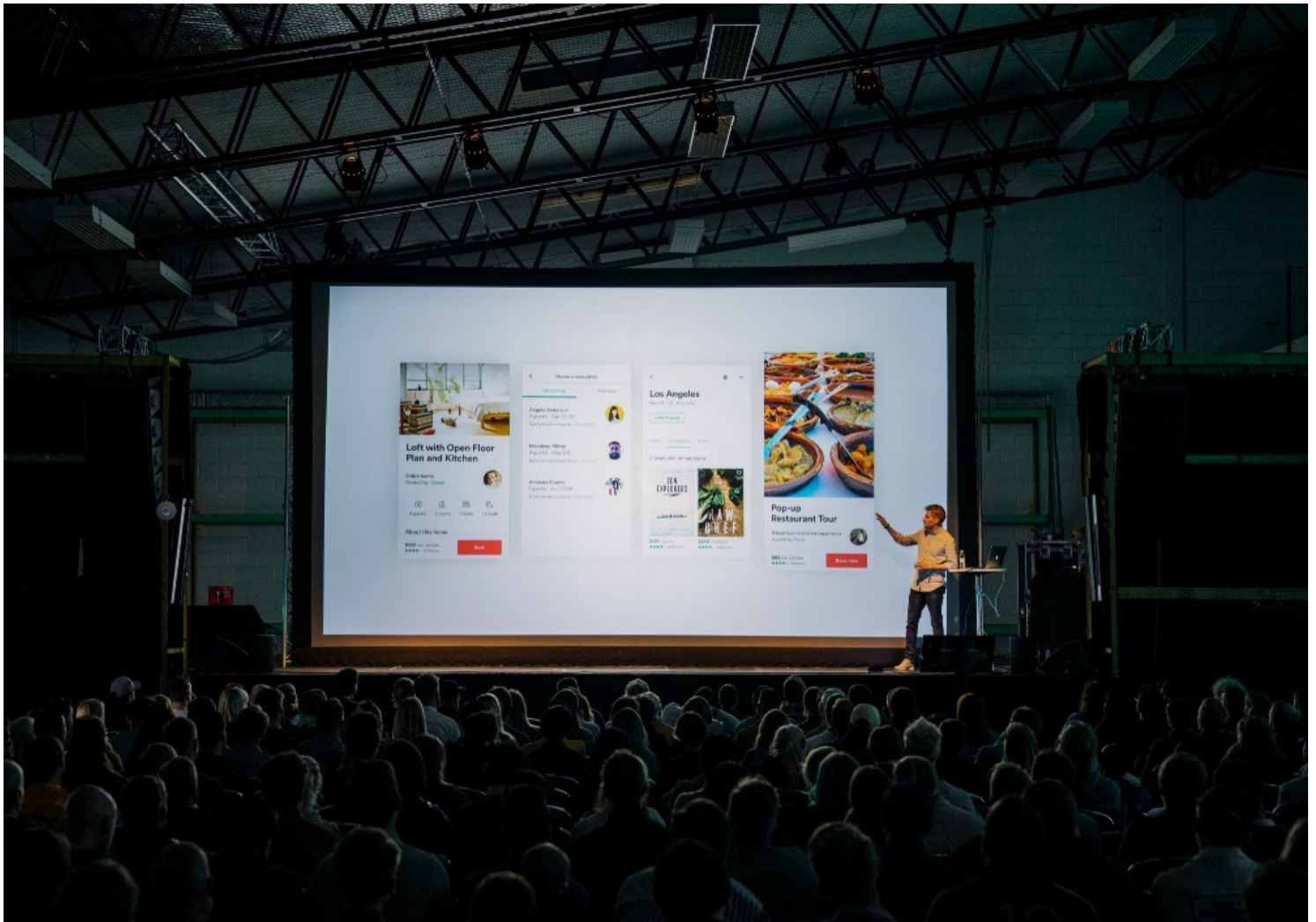


Photo by Teemu Paananen on Unsplash

**A**s an entrepreneur, **storytelling is one of the most important skills** you need to master. Your ability to deliver a compelling **story about why and how** you do what you do will persuade people to work for you and investors to fund you.

Until you accumulate a few years of relevant (and successful) financial data, you and your story are your company's strongest assets. That's why you need an effective and easy way to share your story with the world. In that regard, your most effective storytelling tool is a well-crafted and impactful **pitch deck**.

In this article, I will share with you the knowledge and expertise I have acquired in over a decade of working with startups and SMEs in various executive positions.

Together we will address the **content of your pitch deck**, based on the stage of your company.

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But first, an important PSA:

## Keep Your Deck Updated





Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

**I**t is a mistake to think of your deck as a one-off document that you write for the purpose of a fundraiser and discard afterwards.

Your deck is a **fundamental corporate document** that you must maintain at all times, much like your financials.

It is the summary of your past achievements, your current situation, and your future targets. As these evolve, so must your deck.

Keeping your deck up-to-date has multiple advantages:

- **Practice Makes Perfect** — You will improve your storytelling and find new ways to answer questions and tackle issues.
- **Helicopter View** — A pitch deck simplifies the complexity of your company in a few words. This approach helps you take a step back and reassess your business from further up. You might see things differently, which can improve your day-to-day business.
- **First Mover Advantage** — Having your deck ready means you're able to share it with a click to a potential investor you've just met. This will make you look professional, on top of your game, and will give you a clear advantage over your peers.
- **Shared Values and Mission** — Your team will only achieve your strategic plan if you, as a founder, can share your values and your mission in a clear and motivating way. Your deck helps you simplify your message not only to outsiders but also to employees and stakeholders.

Now, let's take a look at the content of your pitch deck.

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## Pitch Deck Length

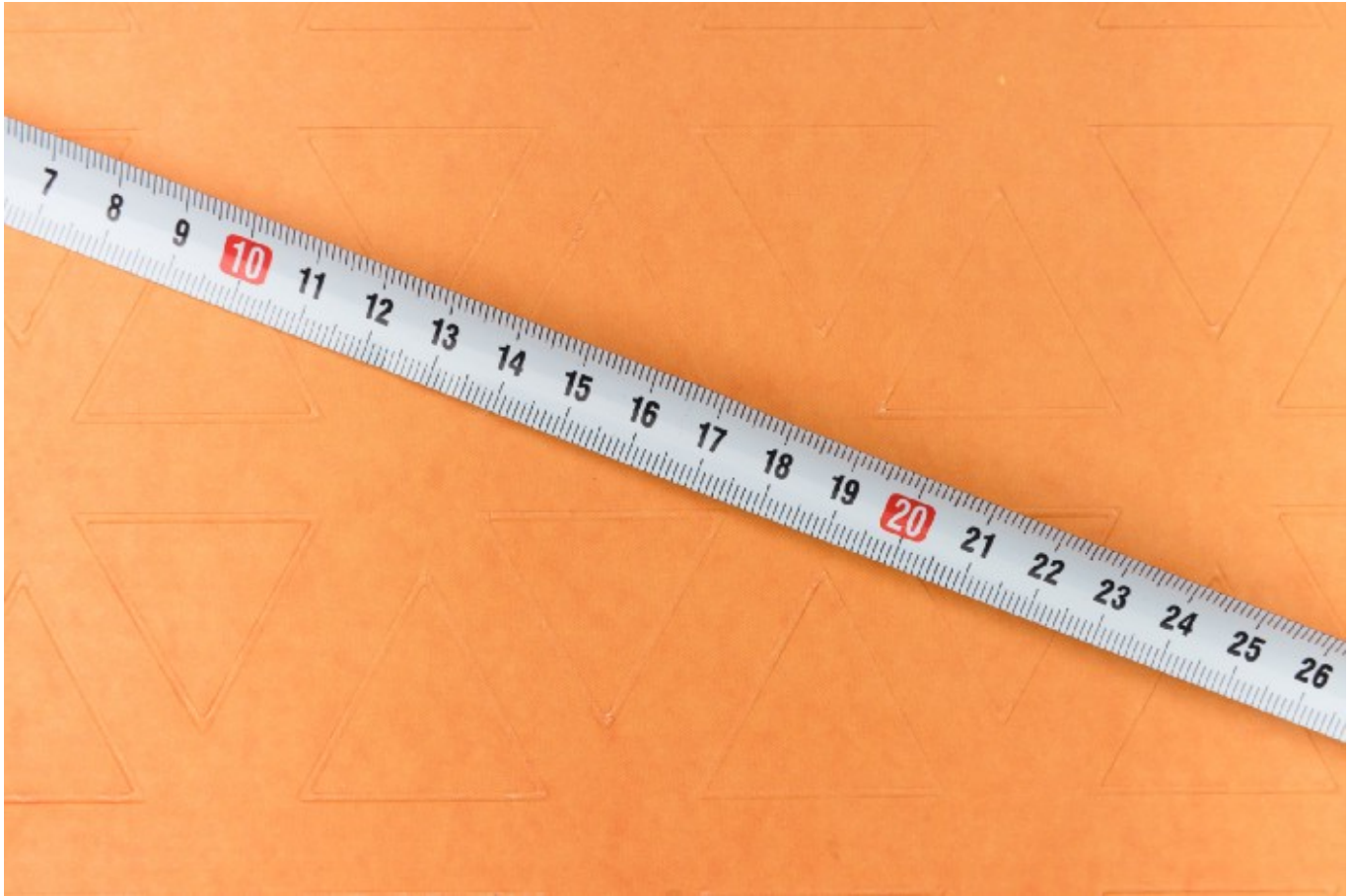


Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

**If** you're searching online for resources on investor decks or pitch decks, you must have encountered countless articles claiming that your deck must be 10, or 12, or 15 slides long! These articles tell you that if your deck is longer, investors will not read it. From my experience, this is simply not true. Of course, people prefer shorter documents, but there is no standard number of slides to a deck. You need to use common sense and keep in mind the following principles:

- A deck should **be as short as possible, but as long as necessary** (© Alain Berset)
- Consequently, **each slide should deliver value to the reader.**

- Arrange your slides in an **order that makes sense**, organising them in coherent sections.

Underpinning these principles is the most important one: **keep your deck interesting and entertaining from slide one till the end**. Be a ruthless editor, and your deck will be just the right length.

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## A Pitch Deck for Each Stage



Photo by Liane Metzler on Unsplash

Not only is there no universal slide count, you should also keep in mind that your deck will have to evolve with your company. Not only that, but your deck will also be different from one industry to another. Each company has its own story to tell. Therefore, there are as many different pitch decks as there are companies.

The stories might all be different, but they all share the same fundamental elements and they all follow one of a few “shapes”, as Vonnegut elegantly put it.

In this article, I will identify three stages of company growth and will discuss the best pitch deck structure for each stage. The three stages will be defined as follows:

1. **Development** — An early-stage company (or startup) with a limited track record, a powerful but vague vision, simple product or prototype. Founder-driven.
2. **Growth** — A growing company (or SME) with a revenue track record, a clearer vision, a short-term tactical plan to grow the business. Process-driven.
3. **Expansion** — An established company with a proven track record, a mid-term strategic plan to expand the business into new verticals/geographies, data-driven.

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## Development Stage — Story & Characters



Photo by Ian Schneider on Unsplash

**A**t this stage, it's probably you and your co-founders doing all the work. You're motivated by a powerful mission, but you are still vague as far as how to accomplish it. It doesn't matter, you have all the skills required to achieve it nonetheless.

You have a product or a prototype. Since you're so young, you only have a limited track record and little to no revenue but the first user/customer feedbacks are encouraging. There is traction in a small / niche market.

In this setup, **your story and your characters matter more than ever** because this is all you have to sell at this point. You must convince people that your vision is the right one and that you are the right people to execute it.

**Fundraising at this stage is a people's business.** You most probably know your potential investors very well: they are your friends, your former colleagues, your family. Their investment decision is motivated by you and your story. They are not professional investors, and as such don't really care about your financial projections or business plans. What they care about are you and your story, and this is what your deck must highlight.

For the in-depth guide on pitch deck content, please read my article **Pitch Deck Ultimate Guide: Story & Content**

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## Growth Stage — Tactics & Processes





Photo by jasper benning on Unsplash

**A**t this stage, your company has grown already. You have hired a team and built on your product (extended your range, developed new features, and so on). After a few years in business, you have a proven track record on traction, customer acquisition, and revenue growth.



Your vision has coalesced into a more specific, more objective vision. You know where you want to go, but you still face many day-to-day challenges in your organisation. Your strategy is starting to take shape, but your focus is still on tactics.

The investors you face are now professionals, either in the investment industry or in your industry. Their focus will now change.

**Fundraising at this stage is all about tactical execution.** As a founder, you're still an integral part of the business plan, but what matters now is your ability to deliver mid-term, tactical growth plans. **Your story becomes process-driven** and you face objective, numeric goals (target sales, EBITDA,...).

For the in-depth guide on pitch deck content, please read my article **Pitch Deck Ultimate Guide: Story & Content**.

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## Expansion Stage — Strategy & Data



Photo by Maarten van den Heuvel on Unsplash

**F**inally, at this stage, your company is established in a given market (segment, geography, product line), has sales in the millions and has reached (or will reach soon) EBITDA profitability. You have a large workforce divided into teams or departments. Your processes are well-oiled and the day-to-day business is taken care of by middle management.

You are now in an expansion phase. It is the moment to either attack new verticals or new geographies, to launch new product lines. The choices you face are strategic in nature, not tactical anymore. These choices are evaluated over a 3 to 5 year period, and with your experience, you are able to forecast financial needs and targets.

Investors are now professionals (VCs, Private Equity Firms) and care about your strategic plan leading to a highly profitable exit. Your ability to execute on a 3- to 5-year strategy and position your company as an acquisition target or an IPO candidate is what matters.

Your **story is data-driven**, rooted in analysis and fundamental knowledge. You're now in the Big League, and your job is to lead your tens (or hundreds) of employees to success.

## Conclusion & Learnings



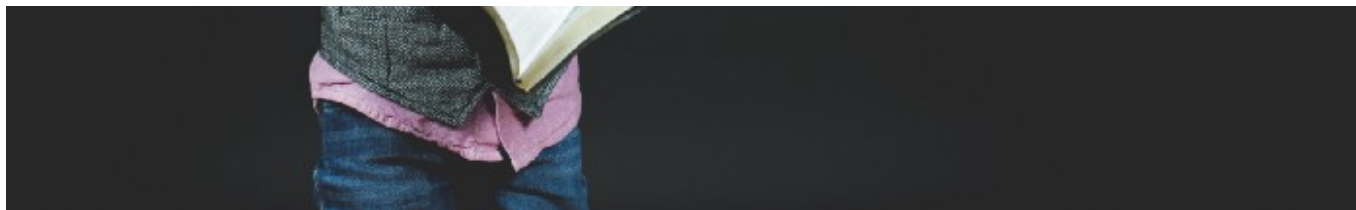


Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

**Your greatest asset as a founder/company executive is your storytelling ability.**

This is true at the start of your company life when your financials are not convincing on their own. It is true later on too. I would contend that a great part of your valuation at any stage is your story. Your ability to sell your story to investors will make the difference.

**Your best tool to tell your story is an always updated pitch deck** designed to be short, with each slide delivering value and concise information.

As your company evolves, as you refine your business model and master your operational processes, your deck must evolve too.

It will start as a character-driven story, become a process-driven tactical document, and will end up a data-driven strategic plan. And so will your company mature.

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If you liked this article and would like more information on pitch decks, read my piece on how to design eye-catching decks:

### **Designing an Amazing Pitch Deck**

How to capture your reader's attention in 15 seconds or less

medium.com

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If you would like to discuss your pitch deck further and get professional advice on how to tell your story and raise funds, contact me via [Medium](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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