



The Pitch Clinic eBook

>> hustle fund



Eric Bahn, General Partner



Here's the truth: the majority of founder pitch decks that have hit my desk are terrible.

As of this writing, Hustle Fund is reviewing close to 12K pitch decks per year, and consistently I notice slides and storylines that are straight-up cringe. They are often difficult to read; non-sensical in narrative; or, just really, really ugly.

But here's another truth: it's not your fault.

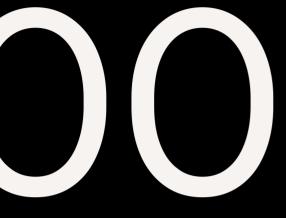
When you were a kid in school, or possibly college, there wasn't a class that taught you effective storytelling via pitch decks. And while there is plenty of free information on the Web or ChatGPT, it's hard to discern if information is pertinent or preposterous.

At Hustle Fund, we asked our colleagues at Deck Doctors to put together this e-book to show examples of what 'good' pitch decks looks like. Our goal is for you to draw inspiration from these examples, so you can apply these mental models of excellence toward your own pitch decks.

The Deck Doctors team are the strongest narrative and slide designers I've ever worked with. We work with them on our own decks, and we recommend all our founders at Hustle Fund to work with them too.

We hope you find a lot of value in this book. And, when you're ready, please share your pitch with us at Hustle Fund (<u>hustlefund.vc</u>). We'd be honored to have the chance to serve you.

- A note from Hustle Fund's founder, Eric Bahn



The pitch deck is a poem, a pixel portrait, a habit, a reduction, a companion.



Hey there! We're the Deck Doctors. We help founders, like you, craft killer pitch decks. Our friends at Hustle Fund asked us to share our pitch deck secrets with you. At first, we were like: no chance! After all, we might put ourselves out of a job if everyone starts dipping into our secret sauce. But like all good things, the idea got better with time (and a bribe or two didn't hurt...). So, we decided to go for it. It's an honor to contribute to Hustle Fund's mission of democratizing wealth through startups, by democratizing our pitch deck expertise through this book... we just said "democratizing" twice in one sentence... where's our check @ web3 VC?!

There is no right or wrong way to build a pitch deck, just better and worse. How do we establish if one approach is better than another? Fundraising results.

There are endless Twitter threads on "how to make a great pitch deck." These resources typically focus on general tips and important slide types. Tactical questions like "what does a great slide look like?" or "how do you string great slides together to create a winning story?" are left unanswered. This is likely the fault of the medium, not the authors. To solve this, we've decided to show and tell. We will spend most of this book displaying and discussing strong decks, slides, and practices.

An elite pitch deck sits at the intersection of storytelling, strategy, and design. Miss one leg and the stool falls over. Sound like a lot? That's why we wrote this book. Without further ado...

- A note from The Doctors



Journey to the Center of the Pitch Deck

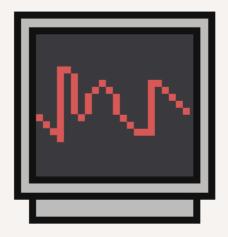


A pitch deck is a living, breathing document.

It's an ever-evolving representation of your company and the magic you're bringing to the world. Part of the reason it's "ever-evolving" is that everyone (and their mother) will try to give you feedback on it. We call this feedback overload! It's an occupational hazard in our line of work.

So our goal can't be to craft the perfect pitch deck. There's no such thing. But what we CAN do is share a number of tools we've sharpened by working hand-in-hand with incredible founders. Our tools give us guardrails, ensuring the pitch deck consistently ends up in a (much) better place than where it started.

Foundational tools is where we'll begin, as we take you on a journey to the center of the pitch deck.









01

TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

Baking A Story

Our first tool is a simple reframe — consider your pitch deck a story rather than a list. Lists are static, standardized, and boring. Stories are dynamic, unique, and gripping. Here are five traits of good stories that hold true with good decks:

Every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. So why doesn't your pitch?



- A Relatable Protagonist Your protagonist can be you (the founder),
 a technology, or an uncommon belief. Regardless, the protagonist is on
 a mission to create change. Unfortunately, every protagonist is also
 flawed. He, she, they are not omnipotent, and instead, are limited by
 strengths and weaknesses. Addressing weaknesses head-on builds
 trust with your audience. Avoiding them entirely is suspicious and
 raises eyebrows. Lean into your weaknesses to establish credibility.
 And of course, flex on those strengths... tastefully.
- A Special Power Characters with unique qualities pique interest.
 Consider the lightning-bolt scar, a sixth sense, white-as-winter hair, the ability to fly. Figure out what your unique qualities are and celebrate them. Don't be afraid to be different. What makes you different will help an investor separate your story from the stack on their desk.
- A Story Arc Every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
 So why doesn't your pitch? While there's no need to overdo it on the setup, without a clear beginning, your story shifts into a list of facts.
 This puts the burden on the investor to figure out the point of the pitch.
 You must feed the investor what they need to know, on the silver platter of a dang good story. Take the time to build to a climax.
- Suspense The best stories expertly leverage suspense. They keep
 audiences on their toes, desperate for a satisfying conclusion. Use
 suspense as a tactic in your pitch deck to keep an investor interested.
 A delay, even a slight one, between expectation and gratification can
 win the hearts of your audience. How might this look?
 - Consider a startup solving loneliness in older adults. Highlighting
 how massive of a problem it is then jumping into your solution will
 work fine. But highlighting how massive of a problem it is, then
 stopping to say something like, "it's no surprise that there's a ton of
 startups looking to solve this, but they're missing the point. They
 aren't meeting the customer where they are on user experience...
 but we are!" is great. It makes your solution inevitable.
- The Coveted "Aha Moment" All great stories leverage the surprise factor to give audiences "woah!" and "no way!" moments. These are exciting reversals of expectation that resonate long after the story ends. We call these "gut punches," and they can be the cherry on top that gets you to the next round. When an investor's face goes "aha!" after hearing the gut punch, it means your value proposition clicked, you're now speaking the same language. Now, they will enjoy telling their partners about why their fund might want to invest.

With these tactics you can start building a powerful story. But how do you put these in action? The "story reframe" has local and global impact on pitch deck construction. This brings us to our second tool.

01

TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

Tasty Ingredients

So, your pitch deck needs a narrative arc. A rigid framework won't work, because it would limit your ability to be artful and personal when crafting your narrative. Instead, we like to work with **story ingredients** - general, moldable elements to help you form your pitch narrative.

- Mission = What meaningful goal do you hope to accomplish?
- Problem = What is wrong or missing from the world?
- Opportunity = Why has the problem not been solved yet?
- One-Liner = What is the most elegant sentence that describes your product?
- Deep Dive = How does it work? (Provide a few viewpoints, i.e. tech, customer journey, value exchanged).
- Gut Punch = Why is your product an opportunity one cannot resist?
- Snapshot = How are you making money / how will you make money?
- Team = Why believe in you, of all people, to make this happen?
- Ask = What are next steps, and why do they require funding?



You might be wondering, why are no-brainer items like "competitors" missing? Simple: good answers to "Opportunity" or "Gut Punch" will account for competitors, and do so in an organic and memorable way. The same is true for "financials" and the "Snapshot."

Persuasion Tactics

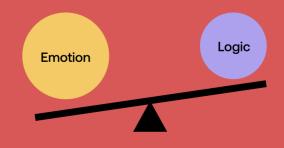


Any persuasive argument includes logic, emotion, and credibility.

Things get exciting when we map these tactics onto a pitch deck structure. We open with logic, to setup a sizable problem that's worth solving. We lean towards emotion when we speak about the solution, highlighting elegant tech and gamechanging value props to generate payoff. Finally, we use credibility to wrap the story, making it abundantly clear that everything said is trustworthy and accurate.

As a general rule, earlier stage companies can index more on emotion, whereas investors will expect logic and data in later stage decks.

Credibility should be dialed up – no matter what!



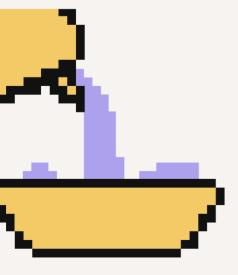
TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

Don't Forget Seasoning

Some tactical tips before the real adventure begins. Garnish galore.

Check out Section 04 for more where this came from.

You should always be optimizing for your worst audience: the investor that needs to skim through 40 pitch decks in an afternoon.



Our ingredients are meant to inspire. But, as every chef knows, a great dish is much more than a combination of ingredients. Cooking takes finesse, practice, and time. So do pitch decks. Here are some more actionable tips to guide you as you get cooking:

- Narrative Headers Locally, slides should have a narrative header: instead of "Why Now?" the title should say "A new financial regulation just changed, allowing us to be the first to market." Instead of "Team" the title should say "Our team brings 20+ years of energy drink marketing expertise." Each slide will contain a single subject, even if it's complex. When headers pull their weight, details suddenly gain greater importance, because their job becomes clearer: is the exciting idea (header) actually true?
 - Bonus: Optimize for Attention. You should always be optimizing for your worst audience: the investor that needs to skim through 40 pitch decks in an afternoon. Narrative headers convey your message effectively to skimmers, which can open a door that might otherwise be left closed.
 - Test: If you took all your headers, and put them together into a paragraph, would your story be cohesive? Would it be powerful? If so, you nailed it. If not, rework it.
- Don't Bury The Lede What's the single strongest piece of evidence you have to convince an investor? Is it the caliber of your team? Is it the hockey-stick user growth? Is it the innovative technology you've built? Whatever it is, lead with it. If it's strong enough, let it be the first slide in your deck, starting your story on a strong foot. Don't miss the opportunity to grab an investor's attention.
- Speed to Solution Don't let an investor wait too long to learn what
 your solution is. At the end of the day, that's what they are excited to
 see. So while build-up and suspense is important, never drag out the
 problem for too long. Two tricks to help you on this:
 - Consider combining your Problem and Opportunity into one slide, whenever your Problem is already carrying most of the weight.
 - Consider including your Mission right on your title slide, instead of having it on its own slide.

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Slide Breakdown; Deep Dive

Ingredients of a Tasty Story

We're lucky to work with Hustle Fund's Redwood School, an amazing quarterly program focused on fundraising and growth for founders.

To give you something to chew on, we selected a handful of real pitch decks from one of the recent cohorts. Each of these companies solve different problems and present unique pitch stories. So now, onto the deliciousness. Hope you're hungry.



Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors

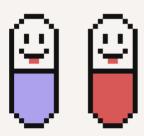
eBook

Story Ingredients

TASTY STORIES

Story Ingredients

As we discussed, your pitch deck must have an arc. We're not a fan of rigid frameworks. They limit your ability to be flexible and artful when crafting a killer story. Instead, we like to think of story ingredients, tools to use as you craft your narrative.



Our 6 superstars:



Heads-up: The slides you're about to see do not necessarily represent the current thinking of the company. These are from a moment in time, and many have been adjusted. They are merely here as examples:)

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients 10

02

TASTY STORIES

Story Ingredients

Overview of Ingredients

Your goal is to encourage an investor to take action: to give your deck thought, to invite you to a meeting, to write a check. So, we layered on persuasion methodology, and mapped the 9 story ingredients back to it.

The result: a flavorful set of 9 topics to hit when crafting a succulent story.

Logos / Logic







Pathos / Emotion







Ethos / Credibility







Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Mission



A good Mission slide is deep and relatable. The core idea should unify the company.

Being able to communicate your company's mission is life or death. Your mission statement helps an investor understand your "why," the fire that keeps you going. Not only that, but it's a rallying cry to get smart people aboard your ship. The key to crafting a powerful Mission is altitude.

Too high ("we're going to save the world!") and you'll lose your audience.

Too low ("here's what we do in plain language") and you waste an opportunity.

Just right = a meaningful, achievable vision at the core of your company.



Luca

THE HERO

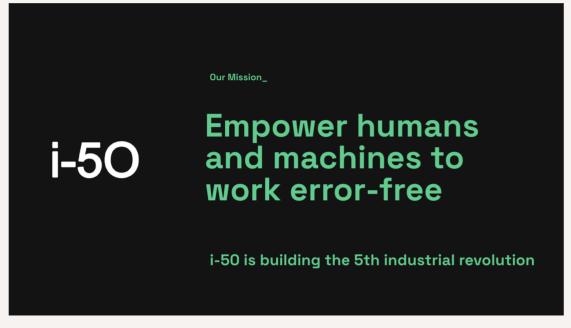
Visually, Luca frames its mission like it's the star of the show. The mission slide is always a good opportunity to show some color!



Amazing! But, maybe too high level for investors to understand what you're doing.



Mission



I-50

THE SPACE SAVER

More often than not, your company's Mission can fit on your title slide! This lets you save an extra slide to improve "speed to solution."

Infrastructure to access the global payment system

Machnet

THE ONE-LINER IN DISGUISE

This Mission sits higher than a One-Liner, and lower than an aspirational Mission. But it works! The audience knows exactly where this deck will go.



What is an uncommon truth that everyone on your team believes? How do you inspire people to join your team, beyond compensation? Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Problem



Strong Problems spark a "no, duh" reaction. If it's big and important, it should be obvious.

The Problem slide sets up the rest of your deck. The biggest watchout here is over-explanation. Instead of a Problem slide, we often encounter "problem sections", or worse, multiple problems! Luckily, there are tried-and-true layouts available for nailing the problem in a single slide. Overselling a problem, with tons of slides, diagrams, and words, never goes well.

Something we've learned: problems worth solving are usually easy to understand.

Less is more here. If your problem is worth solving, a couple of key words, stats, or a simple diagram are all you should need to explain it.

Traditional loans are slow and expensive

Old Format

Old Tech

- High cost
- High compliance
- Hard to qualify borrowers
- Disconnected point solutions
- Cost prohibitive
- Requires manual workarounds

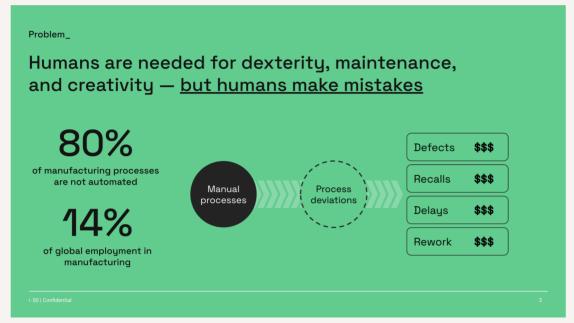
Ned

SIMPLICITY IS BLISS

Lending is complicated. But Ned's problem is not. That's what makes it so effective. Distill problems down to their core. They're often simpler than you think.



Problem

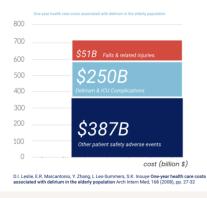


I-50

THE HOME RUN

This Problem slide gives us a little bit of everything: an intuitive tagline, some compelling numbers, and a simple visualization of cause & effect. Bravo, i-50!

Patient safety is a growing problem that isn't reimbursable









Robbie

THE MATHEMATICIAN

Big, strong numbers (from a reputable source) are hard to combat. They help explain your problem, and better yet, why it's worth solving.

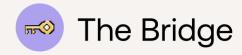


What was wrong with the world before your solution existed?

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Opportunity

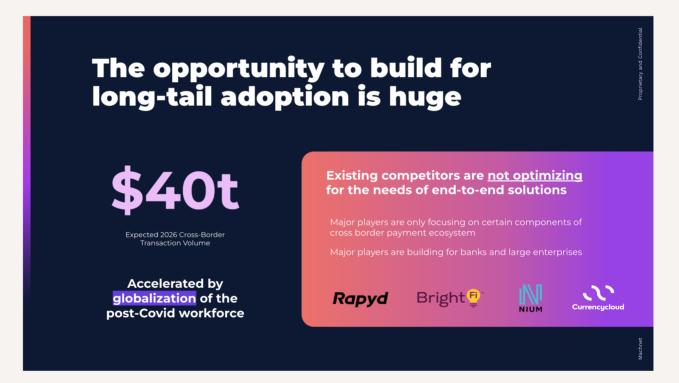


The Opportunity is a half-step, a helping hand to guide investors from the problem to the solution.

First-off, you don't necessarily *need* the Opportunity slide. But it can be an effective tool if used properly. A good opportunity slide shows how big the problem is OR why your competitors just. don't. get. it. The Opportunity can let your problem slide breathe, so you can keep it "dummy" simple. But watch out! If it doesn't add to your narrative, it risks "burying the lede" - by wasting time before your Solution.

Not every Problem needs an Opportunity. But, if investors are losing the thread early on, use this ingredient to better connect your deck.

You can mention competitors here. Often times, showing how current solutions are outdated, or entrants are missing something with their approach, is all that's needed to hammer home the validity of your problem.



Machnet

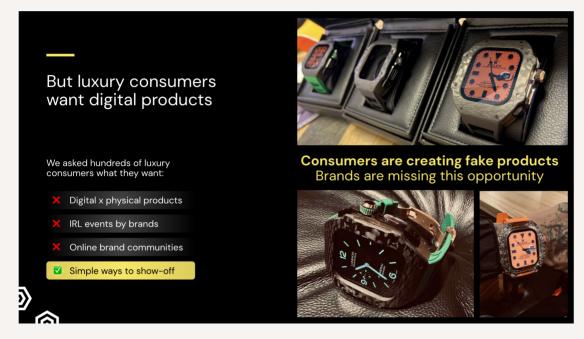
THE LONG-TAIL

Opportunities can highlight what your competitors are missing. New tech is often crowded at the top, leaving the long-tail ignored.

A strong Opportunity is a market underserved.



Opportunity



BitBrand

PEOPLE WANT WHAT THEY CAN'T HAVE

BitBrand shows that consumers are resorting to extreme measures to solve for digital luxury. If you can simplify the consumer journey, you have an opportunity.





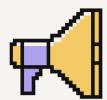
Ned

A BROKEN USER JOURNEY

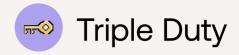
We love using the Problem or Opportunity to lay out an expensive, slow, manual, or generally burdensome user journey. This makes for an easy "build" in the Deep Dive, where we show how the product improves the user journey by many degrees.



How much value is being lost due to the problem? Why are incumbents and competitors missing the mark?



One-Liner



A One-Liner slide gives you bang for your buck. It's simple, yet powerful.

The One-Liner is a moment to pause and transition from "Set-Up" to "Pay-Off". To do so effectively, you can give your One-Liner some high-end real estate: breathing room. Use the One-Liner as an opportunity to pause, level-set, then dive into the meat of your pitch. Clear copywriting is important here. Done right, an investor will never be confused about your "what" ever again.

Great things come in small packages. Like a stunning sentence in a novel, the One-Liner accomplishes a lot with total elegance.

- 1. **Transition.** Make it clear you'll be talking about your solution from here on out
- 2. **Clarity**. An unmissable explanation of what it is you actually do
- Aesthetics. Grab attention visually, shaking up the style or flashing your beautiful product

Meet Machnet

An API that enables businesses to build and embed cross-border payment solutions

Machnet

THE REFRESH

Nothing too crazy here. Just a crystal clear, "what" over a visually defining gradient. This slide acts as a transition from the setup to solution sections.



Show, don't tell! A UI mockup or animated GIF would be a great bonus to visually demonstrate the product.



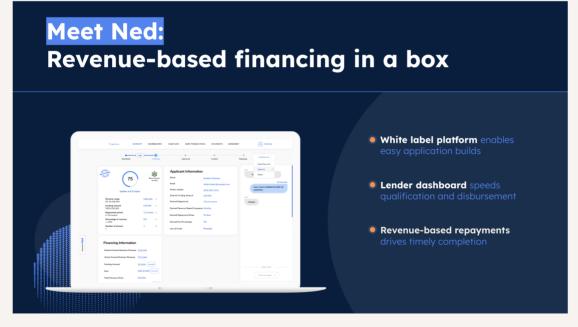
One-Liner



BitBrand

THE SHOWCASE

The One-Liner is an opportunity to showcase your product visually, to let the viewer make sense of your solution by actually seeing the thing.



Ned

A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA

Here, Ned delivers a simple, slightly more abstract One-Liner. The slide leans on product rendering and feature details to fill in the gaps.



Without trying to sell, what are you selling? What's the simplest way to get the depth of your offering across? Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Deep Dive

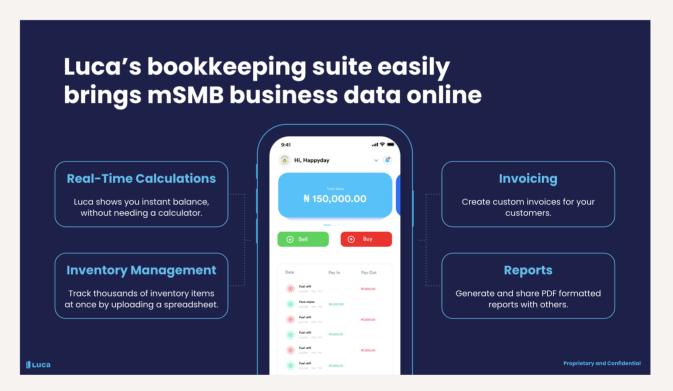


You've made it to the "what," so... now what? A Deep Dive lets you detail your solution.

The Deep Dive is a standard part of a pitch. It's the part where you describe your solution in more depth than the One-Liner. Often, these end up being the most crowded slides in a deck. Don't let that be the case for you. Prioritize making these slides visual, by showing images, renderings, or diagrams of your product at work.

The most flexible ingredient, you should explain your product across a few dimensions to round out understanding.

You can lay out your product features; hone in on the value exchange with customers; or our favorite, have a "build" slide that show how you're directly solving the problem you laid out earlier. The Deep Dive's your oyster!



Luca

ON ITS NOSE

Product visuals go a long way! Luca goes simple, with a UI mockup along with its four main features. This clear "what" slide orients the viewer quickly to the solution.



Deep Dive



Ned

THE PROBLEM BUILD

This is one of our favorites. Here, Ned visually copies its problem slide, but now highlights how the new world looks with its product.



We have an immediate impact on manufacturing outcomes

99.8%
Process tracking accuracy

26%
Increased production capacity

Saved per station

i-50

THE CLEAR IMPACT

Simple and effective. Consider showing clear value prop or ROI of your solution in cost, time, complexity savings for your customers.



How does your product look and work? How does your product solve a problem, with a clear ROI? Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Gut Punch

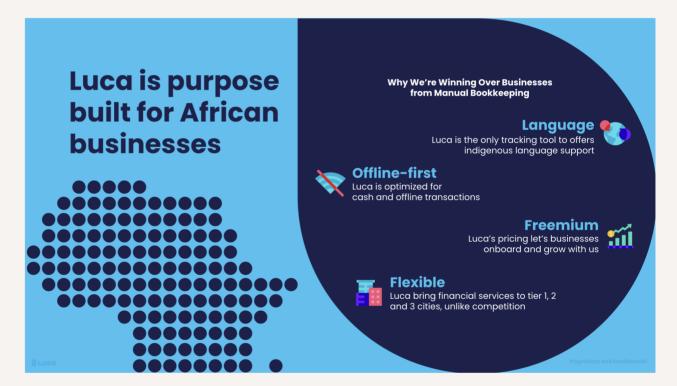


If the Problem slide is your "no, duh," then the Gut Punch is your "oh \$#%@."

Yeah, we said it. A Gut Punch is the moment you go from a sound business, to an irresistible investment opportunity. The Gut Punch is often the strongest bit of rationale you have for why an investor should jump out of their seat. It's the takeaway you want the Associate to relay to their Partner — why they should meet with you.

If you have a strong product or business, you likely have many unique and exciting things going for you.

To nail the Gut Punch, look at your pitch critically, and use this slide to preempt investor concerns. Getting feedback about competition? Make it clear that you're the only product that's purpose-built for your specific market (like the slide below!)



Luca

A PURPOSE-BUILT NARRATIVE

Purpose-built solutions that meet an underserved market or specific customer type often stand out from the pack. Especially when you can explain why your team is fit for this purpose, like Luca does. It proves to the viewer why you're poised for early adoption or a potential moat.



Gut Punch

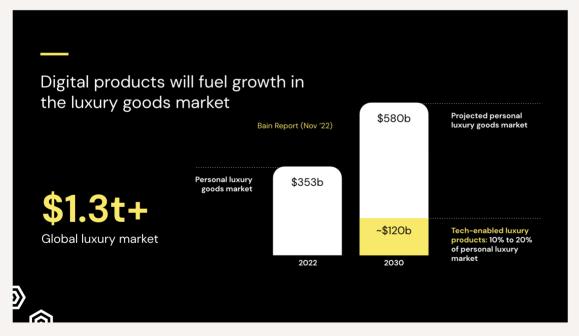


i-50

RESULTS, RESULTS, RESULTS

A solution in action, that solves big problems for customers, immediately enhances credibility.





BitBrand

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

The Gut Punch can add fuel to the fire. BitBrand takes their logical story one step further by highlighting that the market is <u>much</u> bigger than the viewer may have thought.



What's the strongest reason to invest in your company?



Snapshot



The past informs the future. The Snapshot offers a chance to look back and look forward.

We like to talk about traction and go-to-market as a Snapshot in time. This helps you tie the two together, and weigh each properly. Sometimes, it's too early for traction, so a strong GTM plan is needed. Other times, traction is so hot, it speaks for itself, and GTM becomes less of a focus. Either way, it's important to show where you've been, where you're at, and where you're going.

Early companies won't have robust revenue numbers or growth roadmaps.

But, you can still use this ingredient to instill confidence, and show investors that you will figure out growth over time. For traction, consider qualitative feedback or pilot engagement stats as a replacement for revenue. For GTM, hypotheses around monetization, user acquisition, or target markets can be useful alternatives.



Ned

FALLING UPWARDS

We love this slide! It shows how you plan to bite off your beachhead market, then swim upstream to larger markets with new product offerings and / or more scalable business models.



Snapshot



BitBrand

THE LOGO FLASH

Here's a great look back & look forward that leans on logos that people know. Showing logos ingrains your traction & GTM in reality.

Financial Model \$1,140,000 We're getting \$290k rapid traction Large paid pilot Select Medical 2023 Projection Expansion EEH health \$850k \$300 / Month /Camera Monthly License / Patient Annual Fee for Fall Prevention \$100K September 2020 Additional Monitoring Add-ons Launched 1st study 2020

Robbie

NUMBER HEAVY

It's always a good idea to showcase cold, hard numbers when talking about traction and where you're headed. Be careful though! You must justify those projections, before investors start poking holes.





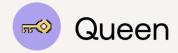
How has your product performed in the market? How will you capture new markets with better offerings? Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Story Ingredients



Team

In the early stages, your Team is your #1 asset. Treat this as more than just an obligatory slide.

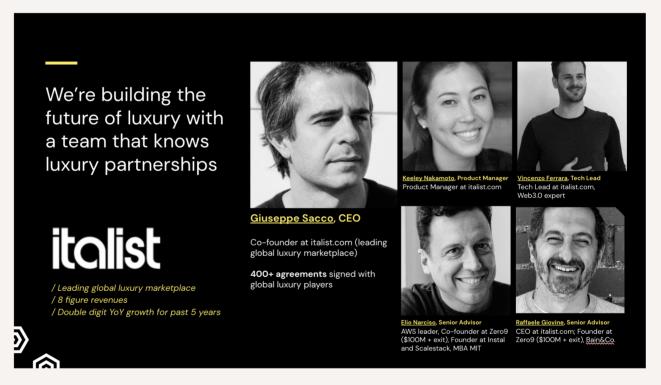
Many times, founders throw some headshots and logos onto a slide, and stick it in the back of their deck with a slide title that says, "Team." Don't let this be you. The Team slide is an opportunity to story-tell, so use it! In your slide title, tell us why you have the perfect team, or why your team is missing one last piece. And in the slide content, make sure to include your roles: that can be "CTO" or something more memorable and fun, like "The Software Alchemist."



Your Team slide can move gracefully up and down your narrative as you see fit, just like a queen on a chessboard.

Ending with Team never hurts. But if your team is your strong suit, or essential to understanding your approach to the problem, lead with it.

Sometimes, we even use the Team as the Gut Punch. DM us for more deets.



BitBrand

THE NARRATIVE TEAM SLIDE

More than just faces on a page, BitBrand's team slide adds to the story. This slide leans on the founders' shared experience growing an adjacent company in the same market.



Team



Ned

THE SHOW, NOT TELL

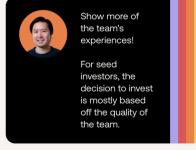
Ned lets the experience of its cofounders speak for itself here. Always show logos when you can!



Luca

THE POWERHOUSE

Luca leans on the strength of its founder, but also showcases the breadth of its team and strength of it's investors. All in one slide.





What does your team add to the story? Why should someone believe you are the right team to solve this?



Ask

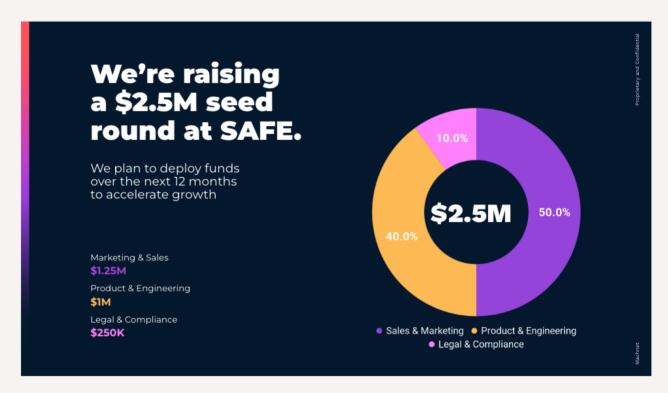
Don't Be Shy

Don't leave investors asking, "what now?" Assert what you want, and why you want it.

There are many types of investors, with many types of investment theses. Without a clear "ask" you risk 1) leaving investor in decision limbo or 2) wasting a meeting with a pre-seed fund for your Series A round. So crafting a good ask requires more than a clear number. And if it feel right, you can also show how you intend to use the capital, or lay out some upcoming milestones you're tracking toward.

Often the last slide of the deck, the Ask has the power to shift the perception of everything that has come before it.

So — spit it out. What do you need, and why? Sure, you can include pie chart breakdowns and growth plans, but at the end of the day, an investor likely just wants to see the number. If you're not sure what you're looking for, leave this ingredient out.



Machnet

THE USE OF FUNDS SLIDE

Here's a good example of showing what you need and why. Machnet clearly lays out how it will use its capital to fuel growth.



I'm not the biggest fan of these slides. Anchoring yourself around a number you're trying to raise is dangerous. If you come up short, your investors might ask whether there is an issue. This isn't a widely held belief though, even within our investment team. Elizabeth, for example, likes these Ask slides much more than I do.



Ask



i-50

NICE & EASY

We love simple slides like this! Often, Asks are just needed to provide a call-to-action for the audience, so there's no need to go deep.



BitBrand

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

Like all slides, Ask slides are flexible. Here, BitBrand highlights its Ask, with buckets of focus to show a little something extra for the viewer.

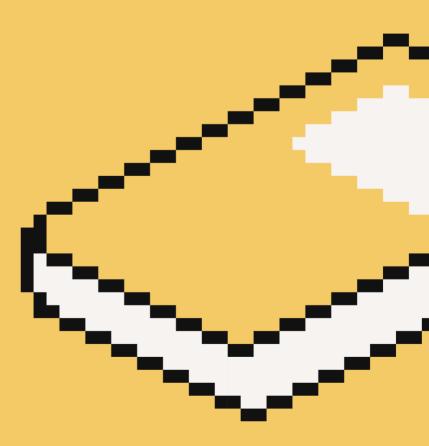


What's the call to action? What are you are raising, and why?



Doctor's Handbook

There's a few pieces of advice we mention all the time — so we gave them fun names and brought 'em together to create this extremely actionable chapter.



03 Story Tips



Narrative Headlines

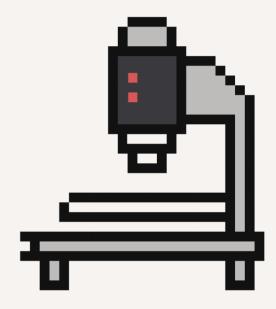
The most common advice we give: throw away your "Why Now" headers and try to actually explain, like, "[Why Now]".

Sharp, descriptive headlines are the backbone of an engaging story. When each slide focuses on a single clear point, your deck becomes infinitely more digestible (see: The Skim)

The Skim

A fact of pitch deck life — most investors are going to breeze through your deck. Instead of fighting the fact, use it to your advantage by sizing information thoughtfully. Make key takeaways unmissable. Minimize the visual space taken up by clarifying details.

The skimmer gets their streamlined narrative, and the deep reader gets rewarded with a more colorful story. Everyone wins.



Speed to Solution

Like clockwork, Elizabeth Yin tells us and our clients to hurry our sh** up and get to the exciting solution already.

We try our best to show the solution by slide 3 or 4, instead of 6 or 7. Condense your set-up by placing your Mission on your title slide. Or, cut out the Opportunity if the Problem already carries weight.

03 Story Tips



Super powers

Investors are evaluating you and your business for potential. They're looking for your unique "superpowers."

Your company is young, and potentially making no or relatively little cash. But every hero had to start somewhere. So, think through what makes you special, and make it a clear takeaway for anyone who sees your deck.

Kryptonite

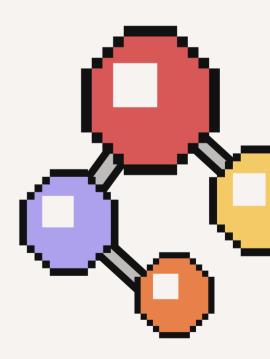
A big misconception is that vulnerability is a sign of weaknesses. In pitch decks, it can be a signal of self-awareness and credibility.

Have a great co-founder, but missing your CTO? That's your headline! Not sure how to monetize, but are testing a few promising hypotheses? Say that! Call out your holes so that investors don't have to.

The Shovel

Related to Kryptonite — one of the worst things you can do in a pitch deck is BS.

This often happens with market or financials. $0 \rightarrow 100$ revenue projections will send investors packing. Remember, it's okay to mention weaknesses (Kryptonite). And if something is too good to be true, don't lie — leave it out.



03 Design Tips



Dodge the Bullet

A great general design practice is... drumroll... stop using so many bullet points!

12pt bullets wave a "hey, you don't need to read this part, it's not important" flag. They're lazy. When you use them across a deck, the work becomes strenuous fact-finding instead of a pleasurable viewing exercise. A single sub-header, three columns, words in boxes, small paragraphs... just about anything is better than bullet points.

Static → Dynamic

Engineers and architects rejoice! Systems diagramming is here to stay. The 2D flexibility of a slide is a gift. Lines, arrows, brackets, and relative positioning are where it's at. Use them to connect concepts and show relationships.

Just remember, keep diagrams simple – visual complexity (neutral) can signal that a business or idea is complicated (negative).

BIG #s are the BEST #s

Numbers are a key part of any deck. They support your fairytale with cold hard facts. Unlike pills, the bigger they are, the easier to swallow. Pair 40-60pt numbers with a 10-20pt description text for a design-shop feel.

But, and this is a big but – make your numbers count. Investors can't stand dumb numbers (The Shovel) or numbers without context.



03 Design Tips



Eyebrows

"Eyebrow text" are directional wayfinding labels that sit above your headlines. They say something like, "Problem" "Solution" "Traction" "Team". They're touchstones for your narrative.

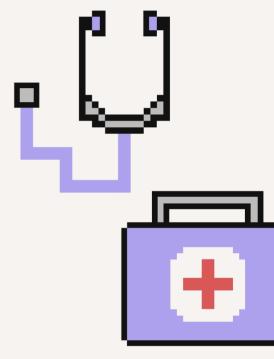
Small but mighty, we use them ~75% of the time in our decks. They allow your Narrative Headlines to stay focused, and support other efforts to accommodate The Skim.



Half and half is a type of milk AND a slide structure. Who knew! You can use a full-bleed block of color to split a slide in two for double the trouble.

One half can contain text, the other a key product image. Or, problematic user journey on one side, elegant future state on the other.

Besides being an ideal package for certain information, half and half also breaks up the visual flow and re-centers attention.



Breathing Room

Like any living, breathing creature, slides have a natural habitat. They're happiest in wide fields and open skies... they hate being crowded!

People can only take in so much information at once. We just gave 11 tips on how to build slides, but overbuild, and the structure crumbles. The valuable information you're sharing gets lost.

Each slide should be "long as a thought."* Nothing more, nothing less.

^{*}Phrase lovingly reappropriated from Leonard Michaels'

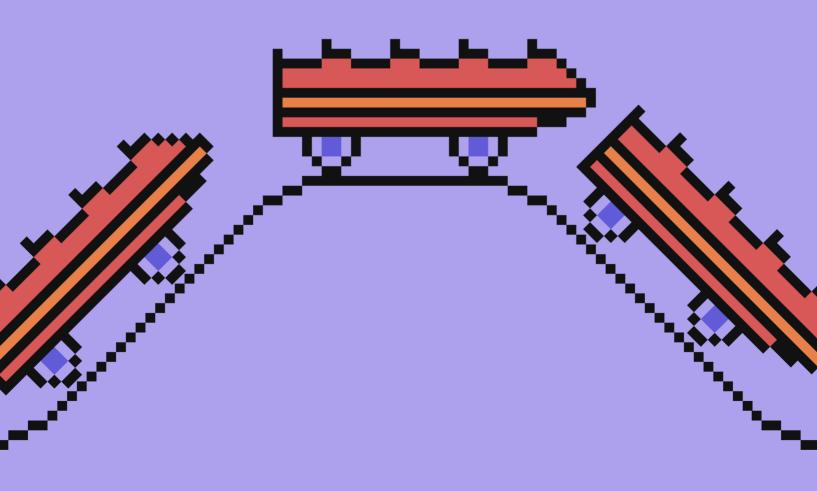
[&]quot;The Lost Interview", Paris Review No. 184, Spring 2008

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Company Spotlight 3



Company Spotlight

We selected six projects from Hustle Fund's most recent Redwood School Accelerator to highlight a range of industries, storytelling approaches, and layouts.



35



Ned

Fintech

Seed

















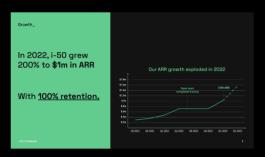


Commercial lending is an inefficient, manual process. Term loans have been the same for awhile (maybe forever?). Ned brings a new and improved method — revenue-based financing, running on a tech platform — to the masses.

The problem being solved by Ned was obvious and clear, which allowed us to create an extremely, almost hilariously, simple Problem slide. The Opportunity (\$10k+ for traditional lenders to approve a business loan) dovetailed with a Solution build (70% cost savings with Ned). Finally, Ned had very limited branding, so the visual design expressed through the deck upped credibility in a major way.

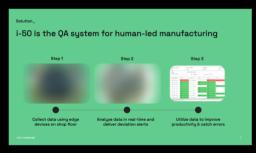






















While we like to believe that manufacturing is done by robots, it's still mostly done by humans, and humans make many mistakes. i-50 is a computer vision platform that monitors human workers and saves millions for companies.

We kicked off with a i-50's biggest strength - \$1m ARR with 100% customer retention. i-50 solves a solid problem with a differentiated solution, but we quickly navigated back to an extended Snapshot. We discuss outcomes, key clients, and a simple land-and-expand model for growth. To open and close (not seen above) we ground the vision in the 5th industrial revolution, a term that speaks to i-50s name and describes an exciting future where humans and machines work in harmony.

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Machnet

Payments

Seed



















A lot of money moves between countries, which means a lot of money is spent moving money between countries. Machnet provides a flexible solution to help smaller companies manage cross-border payments with ease.

Machnet's story naturally centered around a "long-tail" strategy. Not only do existing solutions target major companies (and not the smaller guys), but Machnet's technology is exceedingly flexible and modular, meaning they can flex to serve any type of company. Machnet also has a bunch of revenue streams, allowing us to present a compelling, balanced story around how they'll monetize and grow.

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Company Spotlight



Luca Bookkeeping Seed



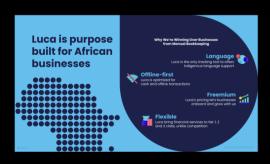
















An alarming number of Nigerian businesses are tracking everything on paper. Luca built a bookkeeping and commerce platform to serve these businesses specifically.

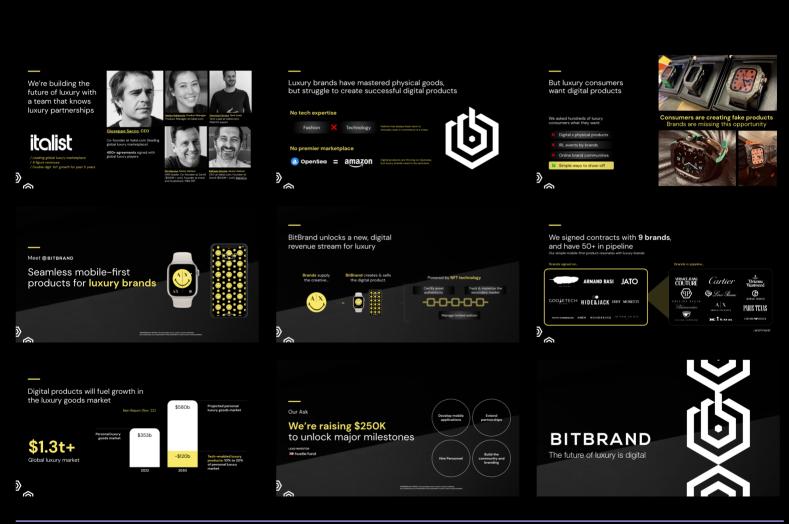
In foreign markets, Western investors often come to pitch decks with less context. So with Luca, we looked to double-down on building credibility upfront, by leaning on two really strong points: an amazing founder with previous start-up success and the early traction of an up-and-to-the-right graph. Then, we kept it simple, going for a geo-specific Gut Punch that clicks the "Why here? Why now?" for bookkeeping in Africa.



BitBrand

Luxury Retail

Pre-seed



Luxury fashion brands are still struggling to diversify away from physical goods, even though consumers are craving luxury digital products. BitBrand simplifies this process and empowers brands to embrace a digital future.

What's cool about BitBrand is that it looks all the web3 complexity in the face and says, "why can't this be simple?" BitBrand understands that most luxury consumers just want to show-off their taste (and dare we say, wealth). So, rather than build complicated crypto-economic structures around value-add NFTs, let's just let brands sell stuff that people can show off! Here, we leaned on a strong Team, coming at this from the fashion world, rather than crypto. Keeping the deck simple let us communicate a clear message.

Hustle Fund x Deck Doctors eBook Company Spotlight



Robbie.ai

Health Tech

Series A



















Patients falling in hospitals is a major safety hazard. It happens more than you'd think, and has large health and financial consequences. Robbie Al uses computer vision and Al to drastically reduce the risk.

Healthcare-related companies often struggle to present their brands effectively. Robbie has a high-tech and impactful solution that needed a slight visual lift to communicate the novelty of its offering. More than just aesthetics, there's a very clear ROI point for patients and hospitals, beyond the heartfelt realities of better care. With Robbie, we were able to illustrate the stickiness of their hardware x software solution with the numbers to back it up.

Thanks!

We'd love to meet you.

Hustle Fund

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