

## RADICALS & VISIONARIES

# A 14-Step Guide to Being Consistently Pitch Perfect

Your pitch is not just what you tell investors. It's your message to everyone interested enough in your company to ask you about it.



**DAVID BROWN**

CONTRIBUTOR

Managing Partner, Techstars



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At [Techstars](#), I see lots of pitches. I get them during the application process, when I first meet the companies, when I listen to presentations meant for customers, when I listen to founders pitch to investors, when I read job descriptions and at demo day.

Your pitch is your message. You deliver it to all of your constituencies -- mentors, employees, investors, family and friends. It's a misconception to think pitching is what you do just for demo day.

Maybe the best advice for putting together your pitch is one of my favorite quotes, from Albert Einstein. “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.”

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Little is more important than getting the pitch right, so here are my tips for persuading your audience that you understand it well enough. This works preparing for demo day but the content is useful every time you need to explain your company and its purpose.

- 1. Know what you're after.** Your goal is to get a meeting. Nothing more.
- 2. They will compare.** Make your presentation stand out. One way to do that is subtle humor. Another is crushing proof that what you are doing is awesome. Another is just to be more interesting than everyone else.
- 3. Earn your audience's attention.** A startling fact. An interesting story. Contradict conventional wisdom. Make them laugh. Play on a known fear. Be appropriately different. Make them think. Be interesting!
- 4. You know the most.** The audience doesn’t know your business, your market or your product like you do. Make it easy to understand. You want them excited about your business, not trying to figure it out. Use simple words.
- 5. The first minute.** Your first minute is critical, either they pay attention or check their phone. Show you are credible, what problem you are solving, and

how, as well as why they should care.

**6. The solution and the problem.** After the first minute, illuminate the problem. Do a product demo and tell a user story. A good transitional phrase after one minute is “Let me show you how this works” or similar.

**7. No crescendos.** Get to the good stuff right away.

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**8. Show, don't tell.** A slide that takes more than 30 seconds to read is too long.

**9. Confluence.** Your slides must amplify, enhance and prove what you say, never compete with it. People will read before they listen. No bullet points!

**10. About the money.** Explain how your business model will make money.

**11. How it's going, so far.** Demonstrate your traction. The earlier you do that, the better.

**12. Keep to your idea.** Don't talk about your competition, do talk about how you are differentiated.

**13. Talk about your team.** Show their pictures, explain their roles and list their experience, include logos.

**14. Closing.** Stick the landing. Be strong. Make an ask.

Founders who hit each of these points really stand out. They have a clear

message that shows off their business to mentors, employees, investors and friends. Keep these tips in mind and you'll explain your business simply, but completely, so everyone can understand it well enough.

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