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10 STEPS TO BUILD AN INVESTOR-READY PITCH DECK



PERSISTENT



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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INTRODUCTION

For many early-stage companies, a pitch deck is the first introduction investors have to the business. Before the meetings, due diligence, or negotiations, there is usually a deck. At Persistent, we regularly review pitch decks from climate and impact-focused businesses across Africa. While industries and business models differ, strong pitch decks often share many of the same qualities: they are clear, realistic, compelling, and grounded in a strong understanding of the problem and the market.

One important lesson stands out repeatedly: investors are not only investing in a product. They are investing in a team's understanding of the problem, the market opportunity, and the path to scale.

Based on investment perspectives across the Persistent team, here are 10 practical steps to help founders build a stronger and more investor-ready pitch deck. While this list isn't exhaustive, it's a good place to start.



1. START WITH THE ROOT CAUSE PROBLEM

Many company leaders describe broad topics instead of clearly defining the real problem their company is solving.

For example, “energy access” is not the problem by itself. Investors want to understand the deeper issue behind it.

Ask yourself:

- What is causing the problem?
- Why does it persist?
- Who is affected most?
- What are the economic or operational consequences?

Strong decks move beyond surface-level descriptions. Instead of saying: “Energy is expensive.” A stronger framing would explain why: “Businesses rely on diesel because of unreliable grids, leading to high operational costs and increased emissions.”

This kind of root-cause thinking demonstrates market understanding and strategic depth.

2. PRESENT YOUR SOLUTION IN FOUR CLEAR PARTS

Once the problem is established, explain your solution simply and logically. One useful structure is:

a) The Product

What exactly are you offering? Keep this section focused and easy to understand.

b) Why It Works

Explain what makes your solution different.

This could include:

- Lower cost
- Better performance
- Financing innovation
- Distribution advantages
- Faster delivery
- Better user experience
- Data or technology advantages



c) The Business Model

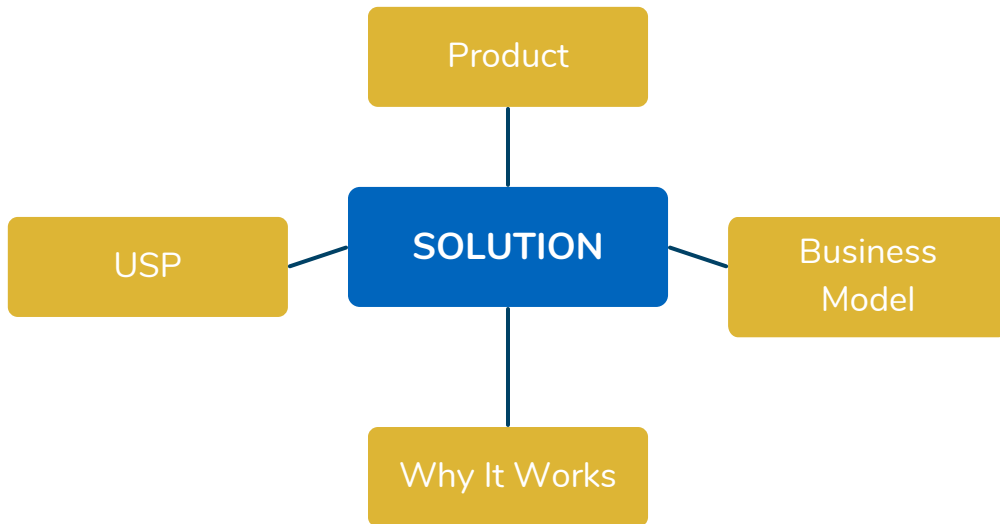
How does the company make money? Investors should quickly understand:

- Who pays you
- How often they pay
- Why customers will continue paying
- Whether the model can scale

The strongest solution sections are simple, connected, and realistic.

d) What is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

Why is this different from all the others the investor was asked to look at today?



3. BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE MARKET OPPORTUNITY

One of the biggest mistakes in pitch decks is using large market numbers without showing a realistic path to capturing them.

Instead of only presenting a massive TAM (Total Addressable Market), investors want to understand:

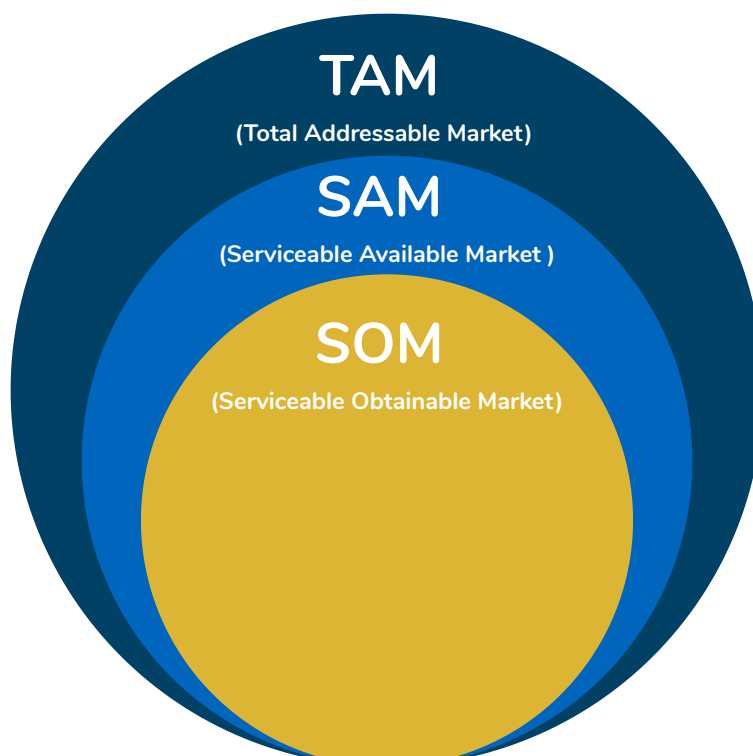
- Which customer segment you are targeting first
- Why this segment will buy now
- How large that reachable market is
- What makes the opportunity scalable

Good market slides move from **Total Addressable Market (TAM)** to **Serviceable Available Market (SAM)** to **Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM)**. But they also explain the assumptions behind those numbers.

A strong market section also identifies:

- Customer profiles
- Geographic focus
- Distribution strategy
- Go-to-market approach
- Payment behavior and willingness to pay

▶ **Remember: Specificity builds credibility.**



4. SHOW WHY THE TIMING MATTERS

Investors often ask a simple question: **“Why now?”**

A good pitch deck explains why the market is ready for the solution today.

This could include:

- Policy changes
- Rising energy prices
- Climate pressures
- Regulatory shifts
- Technology improvements
- Consumer demand
- Infrastructure gaps

Urgency matters - If the audience understands why the problem is becoming more important, the opportunity becomes more compelling.

5. EXPLAIN WHY YOUR TEAM IS THE RIGHT TEAM

Early-stage investing is heavily team-driven.

Investors want to know:

- Why are you uniquely positioned to solve this problem?
- What expertise does the team bring?
- What operational or industry experience do you have?
- How will you execute successfully?

A good team slide is concise but meaningful.

Focus on relevant experience, founder-market fit, and execution capability rather than long biographies.

Strong teams often combine:

- Technical expertise
- Market understanding
- Operational capability
- Commercial execution
- Show complementarity among team members



This section should help build confidence that the team can navigate challenges and scale effectively.



6.ADDRESS COMPETITION HONESTLY

Every company has competition.

If founders claim they have “no competitors,” it usually raises concerns.

Instead, strong decks clearly explain:

- Who else is solving the same problem
- Which alternatives do customers currently use
- How your approach is different
- Whether you compete directly, collaborate, or co-exist

Your advantage may come from:

- Cost structure
- Technology
- Distribution
- Financing
- Partnerships
- Policy knowledge
- Local market understanding



Competition slides are strongest when they are balanced, realistic, and thoughtful.



7. DEMONSTRATE TRACTION AND MOMENTUM

Traction is one of the clearest indicators that a business is moving in the right direction. Even early-stage companies can demonstrate progress.

Examples include:

- Pilot programs
- Partnerships
- Customer feedback
- Products sold
- Letters of intent
- Revenue growth
- User adoption
- Early impact metrics
- Investors' interest

Investors want evidence that the market is responding positively. Whenever possible, use data instead of broad statements.

Strong traction slides often show:

- Milestones achieved
- Growth trends
- Customer validation
- Operational progress

 **Progress builds confidence.**

8. MAKE THE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS REASONABLE AND CONNECTED

A common weakness in pitch decks is unrealistic financial forecasting. Strong projections connect directly to the rest of the story.

Your numbers should reflect:

- Market realities
- Customer growth assumptions
- Operational capacity
- Pricing logic
- Scalability



Investors are not expecting perfect projections. They are looking for evidence that founders understand:

- Unit economics
- Cost structures
- Revenue drivers
- Pathways to profitability
- Capital requirements

Good financial slides answer practical questions such as:

- How much capital are you raising?
- What will the money be used for?
- How long will it last?
- What milestones will it unlock?

▶ **Well thought out projections can help an investor understand where you intend to take your business and how to get there.**



9. BUILD A STORY ACROSS THE ENTIRE DECK

One of the most important insights from experienced investors is that a pitch deck should feel like one coherent story.

Every slide should lead naturally into the next.

A useful storytelling structure is:



1. THE PROBLEM

2. THE ROOT CAUSE



3. THE SOLUTION

4. MARKET OPPORTUNITY



5. BUSINESS MODEL

6. TRACTION



7. COMPETITION

8. FINANCIALS



9. FUNDING ASK

10. VISION FOR SCALE

Strong storytelling creates clarity and is the most compelling way to convey what you want to tell your audience.

Keep the deck:

- Simple
- Clear
- Focused
- Not overly wordy
- Visually clean

Again, the key is to tell a compelling story that will lead an investor to the conclusion that this is where she should invest capital.



10. UNDERSTAND THE INVESTOR BEFORE YOU PITCH

Not every investor is the right fit for every business. One of the most overlooked parts of fundraising is investor mapping.

Before pitching, founders should understand:

- What sectors the investor focuses on
- What stage they invest in
- Their ticket size
- Geographic focus
- Whether they prioritize impact, returns, or both
- What types of businesses they have backed previously

The strongest founders adjust their messaging based on the audience while keeping the core story consistent. Good fundraising is not only about building a deck. It is also about building the right conversations.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A great pitch deck is not about creating the most beautiful presentation.

It is about presenting a compelling and credible story that demonstrates:

- A real problem
- A practical solution
- A scalable opportunity
- A capable team
- Clear traction
- Realistic growth



At Persistent, one recurring lesson from reviewing early-stage businesses is that simplicity often wins. The strongest decks are usually the clearest, most direct ones. They avoid unnecessary complexity, focus on evidence over hype, and communicate a realistic path toward growth and impact. Making a pitch deck compelling is not hyping it - it's telling a story that an investor can follow and understand.

ABOUT PERSISTENT

Persistent is Africa's Climate Venture Builder. For over a decade, Persistent has been a leader in developing and investing in climate-focused businesses that are part of the Energy Transition. Our investing and company building in solar energy, e-mobility and energy efficiency have positively impacted over 6 million people, avoided over 1.5 million tons of CO₂e, created 20,000 jobs, and provided clean energy services to over 15,000 SMEs.

Our approach combines equity investment with human capital support to early-stage, impact-driven companies, accelerating their pathways to scale and profitability. While we continue to focus on supporting the Energy Transition, we are beginning to invest in climate-focused businesses that are part of the Resource Transition and the Agricultural Transition. Persistent is dedicated to promoting a sustainable future while delivering exceptional returns to our investors. We are currently raising the Persistent Africa Climate Venture Builder Fund to increase our level of investing and company building.



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