INVESTOR CONNECT · PITCH WORKSHOP

Five minutes, eight slides, and one thing to be remembered for.

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Preparing for an online demo day, ten weeks out

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WHERE WE START

He stopped explaining and showed it

March 2008

Drew Houston could not get anyone to understand file sync by describing it. People nodded and did not sign up.

So he stopped describing. He recorded three minutes of his own screen, showing the thing working, and posted it to Digg.

The Dropbox beta waiting list

5,000

to

75,000

overnight

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He did not find better words. He stopped needing them.

Most of what we will do today is work out what you can show, so that less rests on what you say.

Source: Timeline of Dropbox

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BLOCK 1 · 6 MINUTES

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What is actually being decided

- The arithmetic of a demo day
- The test that is really being run
- Where sharp founders lose this format

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You are not competing with the other founders

You are competing with the investor's memory at the end of a long afternoon.

20

pitches in one sitting

Yours is one of twenty, and you do not choose your slot.

3

they still recall by evening

Being memorable matters more than being complete.

1

sentence, told to a partner

If they cannot say what you do, nothing else you said counted.

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Nobody in that room is deciding whether to invest in you.

They are deciding whether you are worth more of their time. That is a much lower bar, and a completely different pitch.

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The trap that catches capable founders

This format punishes some of the habits that made you good at the work itself.

You cannot feel the gap

You have lived inside this problem for two years. Your listener meets it in forty seconds. You are not simplifying for them, you are correcting for a distance you can no longer sense.

Breadth reads as drift

Describing three things the technology can do sounds like you have not decided which one matters. Range, here, is heard as indecision.

Your degree buys nothing

Everyone in this cohort has it. It got you into the room. It will not get you out of it. Spend those seconds on something only you can say.

Rigour sounds like doubt

You qualify, you caveat, you note the exception. You mean precision. An investor hears a founder who is unsure.

None of this is solved by dumbing it down. It is solved by choosing what to leave unsaid.

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BLOCK 2 · 15 MINUTES

Building the five minutes

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- Eight slides and what each one owes you
- Two rules that do the work
- The first fifteen seconds

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BLOCK 2 · STRUCTURE

Eight slides. No more.

Five minutes is roughly four and a half minutes of speaking once nerves are counted.

1 Title — 10 sec

Name, and one line on what you do

2 Problem — 40 sec

Whose pain, and what it costs them

3 Solution — 60 sec

Shown. A screen, a clip, a thing working.

4 Evidence — 60 sec

Why you believe anyone wants this

5 Money — 30 sec

Who pays, how much, how often (TAM, SAM, SOM)

6 Team — 30 sec

Why these people. One line each.

7 The ask — 30 sec

Amount, runway, what it buys

8 Contact — 0 sec

Left on screen through the questions

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That adds to 4 min 20, leaving 40 seconds of slack. Slide 8 costs you nothing and almost everyone skips it. Do not end on a blank screen while they decide.

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Two numbers, and the deck builds itself

25

words on a slide

Countable while you build it. A headline and three short lines is already close to the ceiling.

2:30

minutes in, you are on slide 4

Halfway through the five. Half your time gone, half your slides left. Still on the problem here and you know it while you can still recover.

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Why the first number matters more than it looks

The usual failure is a founder who writes seventy words on a slide and then reads them out. The moment text appears, people read it. They read faster than you speak, they finish before you do, and for the rest of that slide they are thinking about something else. A crowded slide does not add information. It removes your audience.

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BLOCK 2 · STRUCTURE

The opening fifteen seconds

Do not open with your name and your institute. They have both on the list in front of them.

WHAT

What you do, in plain words

"We help small diagnostic labs cut test turnaround from a day to four hours."

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FOR WHOM

Who specifically has this problem

"Standalone labs in tier two cities, running fifty to two hundred tests a day."

WHY NOW

What changed to make this possible

"Lab data became portable in 2024. Nobody has built for this end of the market."

Say it to someone outside your field. If they cannot repeat it back to you, it is not ready.

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BLOCK 3 · 11 MINUTES

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Evidence, when there is no revenue

- What counts as proof before anyone has paid
- Where most of you are already sitting on it
- How to say you have none

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BLOCK 3 · EVIDENCE

The ladder, strongest rung first

Find the highest rung you can honestly stand on, say that, and do not reach past it.

1	**Someone is paying you**	Even one customer, even a small amount
2	**A paid pilot is running**	Money changed hands for a trial
3	**A signed LOI from a named company**	Name them if you are allowed to
4	**A design partner using it weekly**	Unpaid, but they keep coming back
5	**A competitive grant or incubation**	Someone with no reason to flatter you backed this
6	**A waitlist or usage number**	Give the growth rate, not just the total
7	**An expert who will say it on record**	Named, credentialed, and willing to be quoted

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Rung five is where many of you already are, and most bury it under funding. An incubator that selected you is third-party validation. Say it that way.

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BLOCK 3 · EVIDENCE

Saying you have nothing yet, well

SAY IT LIKE THIS

Three parts: what you tested, what you learned, what you will know next.

"We have no revenue yet. We ran it with four labs over six weeks. Three carried on using it after we stopped helping them. By January we will know whether they will pay for it."

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NOT LIKE THIS · THE THREE WAYS IT GOES WRONG

✕ Apologising

Hedging, trailing off, calling it early days. You have told them to discount everything that follows.

✕ Inflating

Users who are your own team. A pilot that was a demo. They have heard it before and they check.

✕ Staying silent on it

Skipping the slide does not hide the gap. It just means they raise it in Q&A, on their terms.

At this stage nobody is buying your numbers. They are buying your judgement, and nothing shows judgement faster than how you describe what you do not yet know.

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BLOCK 4 · 10 MINUTES

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The ask, and three minutes of questions

- Making an ask that sounds ready
- What the questions are telling you
- The four you least want

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BLOCK 4 · THE ASK

Three things, or it does not count

An ask without a number is heard as not ready, not as flexible.

How much

A figure, not a range you have not thought about

How long it lasts

Runway in months, so they can check the maths

What it buys

Two or three milestones you will have reached by the end of it

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“We are raising one crore for 18 months, to reach 20 paying labs and launch the second product line.”

If what you actually want is not money

Some of you are looking for a first design partner, a regulatory adviser, or a route into one buyer. Ask for that instead. A clear non-financial ask lands far better than a vague financial one.

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BLOCK 4 · Q & A

What to expect ? 3 minutes is ~4 questions

HOW TO ANSWER

- Answer what was asked, in two sentences, then stop
- Never answer a question nobody asked
- An interruption is interest. Let them cut in.
- Don’t deflect - “Don’t know” is a good answer !

THE FOUR YOU LEAST WANT

- What have you raised so far?
- Why has nobody paid you yet?
- What stops a bigger company doing this?
- Why is this team the one to do it?

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The question itself is the signal

A question about your customer, your pricing or your next six months means someone is imagining it working. A question about market size usually means they are filling the time politely. Listen for which one you are getting, because it tells you what to expect next

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ONLINE DELIVERY

The boring list that saves the pitch

Do this 30 minutes before the pitch, not 5 !

Power

On the charger. Not the moment to meet your battery.

Updates

Installed the day before. No restart prompt mid-pitch.

Backup link

WiFi tested, and you can switch in twenty seconds.

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Three copies

Cloud, desktop, PDF. One of them on your phone.

Silence

Notifications off. Close mail and chat entirely, keep phone in mute

Ten minutes early

Test mic, camera, screen share, and audio on any clip.

Online, nobody will nod.

You will get no encouragement, and if you wait for it you will slow down and lose your rhythm. Camera on, lit from the front, and keep going at the pace you rehearsed.

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FROM HERE TO DEMO DAY

What to walk in with, each time

Your programme owns the calendar. These are the three things it is for.

REVIEW 1

Outline only

- One sentence on what you do
- Eight slides, headings only
- No design, no colour yet

REVIEW 2

Full pitch, timed

- Evidence slide settled
- Demo clip recorded
- Run it against the clock

REVIEW 3

Delivery only

- No new slides
- Rehearse out loud, standing
- Fix the pace, not the content

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The deck is three weeks of work. You have ten.

That is enough time to climb the ladder. Decide this week which rung you want to be standing on in December, then spend the first six weeks earning it rather than designing slides.

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ONE THING TO TAKE AWAY

If they can repeat what you do, you are in the conversation.

If they cannot, none of the rest of it was ever heard.

Now let us hear yours.

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