

Building a Pitch Deck

A Pitch Deck Primer – Updated May 2025



Harlem Capital

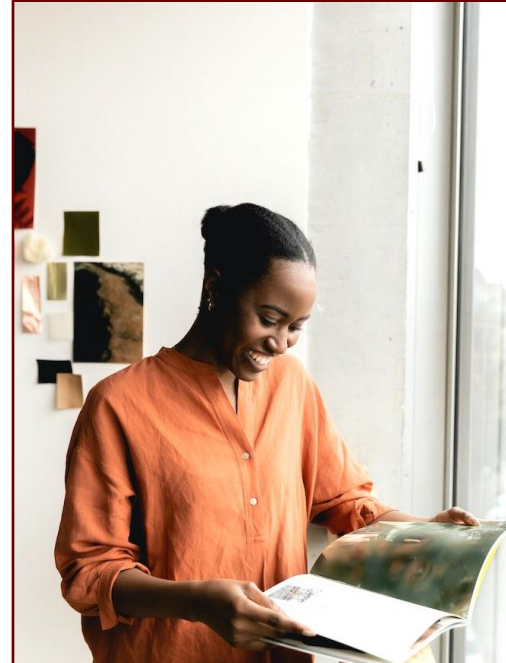


Introduction

At Harlem Capital, hundreds of pitch decks have come across our desks.

We want to help you put your best foot forward.

This primer describes each essential part of a great deck and provides insight on how you can best tell the story of your startup.



Company Introduction

Your first slide should give a memorable, meaningful introduction to your startup or small business.
Please include the following:



Logo

Company Logo and
Company Name



Tagline

Add a short description of
what your company does



A Bit About You

Founder Names and
Contact Information

What Problem Are You Solving?

Use this slide to highlight the core pain point you're solving and who exactly it impacts. Be specific. Investors should immediately understand *why this problem matters* and *why now*.

We recommend covering:

1. **The real-world pain your customer experiences and what it costs them** (time, money, energy, missed opportunity)
2. **Why current solutions fall short and how that creates a clear gap in the market**

Keep it punchy and grounded in insight. A strong problem slide should make us say, *"Yep, that's a real issue and no one's fixing it well."*

What You're Building and Why It Wins

This is where you show how your product directly tackles the problem you just laid out. Keep it clear, compelling, and grounded in how it actually improves your customer's life.

Cover these points:

1

Unique Value Proposition

What makes your approach different and better than those existing in the market?

2

Real Use Cases

Paint the picture: how, where, and when do people use your product?

3

Scalability of the Product

Why this isn't just a good idea, but a big opportunity. Can it grow fast? Can it expand into other segments?

What You're Building and How It Works

Your audience should walk away knowing exactly what your product is and how it works. If they can't *picture* it, they won't buy in. Demo it if you can, but if not, use this slide to break it down.

If your product is already functional, include:

1. **Core functionality** — What does it *do*?
2. **Key features** — What stands out?
3. **Product architecture** — What's under the hood (tech, process, etc.)?
4. **Intellectual Property (IP)** — Patents, proprietary tech, trade secrets?

If still in development, add a clear **product roadmap**:

What's been built > what's coming next > expected timing

Clarity is key here. Think: *"If I had to explain this to someone in 60 seconds, what would I say?"*



Business Model Breakdown

This slide should clearly explain how your business generates revenue. **Keep it simple, visually compelling, and focused on the numbers.**

Be sure to cover:

1. **Revenue model** — One-time sales? Subscriptions? Licensing? Marketplace fees?
2. **Pricing strategy** — What do customers pay and why?
3. **Customer flow** — Who's paying, how often, and through what channel?
4. **Unit economics (if applicable)** — What does it cost you to make money?

Use visuals (charts, diagrams, infographics) to make it easy to grasp at a glance. The goal: investors should instantly understand *how this becomes a real business*.

Traction

Investors want to see progress. This slide should highlight the key milestones that show your venture is moving, growing, and gaining real-world validation.

Tailor your traction metrics to your stage and industry. Examples include:

- Minimum viable product (MVP) built or launched
- Number of beta users or paying customers
- Revenue metrics (MRR, ARR, etc.)
- Retention or engagement data
- Customer testimonials or reviews
- Partnerships, waitlists, or LOIs

Make it easy to see that you're gaining traction and moving in the right direction.

Your Competitive Edge

This is where you show why your venture stands out. Investors need to believe that you can compete and win in your market.

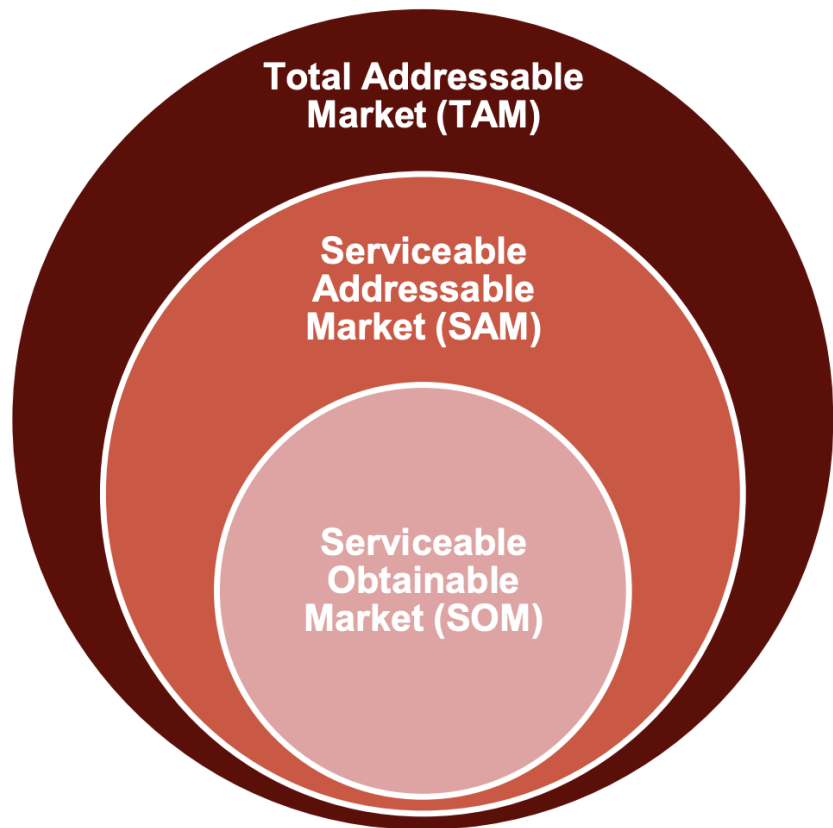
This slide should answer the following key questions:

1. What makes your business differentiated and better than others trying to solve the same customer problem?
2. Who are some of your direct competitors or substitutes?
3. What will keep a competitor from imitating your product and entering the market? (Think: proprietary tech, unique insights, brand, partnerships, community, IP)

Be honest and confident about the competitive landscape. Show that you understand it and know how to thrive within it. Highlight how your approach is smarter, faster, or more aligned with what customers truly need.

Market Opportunity

Investors want to know that you're solving a big enough problem in a market with room to grow. Use this slide to highlight both the size of the opportunity and the forces shaping it. Include insights like: TAM, SAM and SOM



TAM describes the total revenue opportunity for a product/service

SAM describes the sub-markets of the TAM addressed by a product

SOM describes how much of the SAM can be captured in the short/mid term

You can also speak to trends, behaviors, or technologies creating momentum in your space.

This slide should answer:

- Why now?
- Why this market?
- How big can this really get?

Show the data, but keep it digestible. A smart visual or chart can help drive the message home.

Introduce The Team

Investors don't just bet on ideas. They bet on people. Use this slide to show why you and your team are the right ones to bring this vision to life.

Highlight:

1. Key team members and their relevant experience
2. Educational or professional background that adds credibility
3. Unique insights, skills, or networks you bring to the table
4. Why you care deeply about solving this problem

Keep it concise. This is your chance to show the team's track record, grit, and founder-market fit.

Why Your Pitch Deck Matters

Your pitch deck is more than just a series of slides. It's your story, your momentum, and your shot.

A well-crafted deck can open doors, spark conversations, and create momentum.

Focus on clarity, purpose, and passion.

Winners don't just build great companies. They tell legendary stories that leave a lasting impact.



All winners welcome.



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