How a VC Wants to Be Pitched



Accel partner Andrew Braccia breaks down the basics of selling your idea to venture capitalists.

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Pitching a product or business idea to venture-capital investors requires a lot of courage and conviction. It also takes a significant amount of work, time and networking to get a meeting in the first place. Once you have that opportunity in hand, you don’t want to waste it by delivering a subpar pitch presentation, one that lacks a compelling story. Without that story, you risk failing to convince your investor audience to believe in your idea — and you.

I sat down with Andrew Braccia, partner at Accel and early investor in companies like Slack, PagerDuty, Lynda.com, Squarespace and Prezi (where I am CMO), to get his insights on

how entrepreneurs can use tools like storytelling and imagery to engage VC investors during their pitch. He offered a rare glimpse into the components that he looks for when evaluating entrepreneurs and what makes a pitch presentation compelling. He also explained why less is often more when it comes to presenting information to VCs. Here is a breakdown of key takeaways from our conversation, with insights from Braccia himself.

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Make the pitch an experience.

"It depends on the entrepreneur and situation, but you want to make it interactive and give a clear command of the opportunity in an articulate way," Braccia advises. "You want to make it as engaging as possible so you create opportunities for shared dialogue and questions. It's a great indicator of the interest level of the receiving party. It sort of makes people buy more into what they're spending time on. You don't want to force it or make awkward moments either, or even look for confirmation."

Use imagery to create an emotional connection.

"If you're talking about your team, show pictures, [like] the schools they went to, icons of other companies they've worked at, their interests," says Braccia. "Market trends – being able to graph it, chart it, or personify it allows for an emotional connection with the person or market."

Be open to questions.

As Braccia puts it, "If you don't have a lot of confidence and are constantly looking for reinforcement, that could be

challenging. So you want confidence being able to be open to questions. Coming out with a strong sentence."

Keep things concise.

"I don't think length and detail of a presentation is synonymous with the success of that presentation," says Braccia. "It kind of goes into clarity and their ability to extract complexity. Hold yourself accountable to keep things concise in a presentation or 45-minute discussion."

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At the very least, you gain exposure.

Braccia suggestings bearing in mind that, at minimum, "It's an opportunity to meet investors and influencers who may help you in the future, if not today. And that's another reason why great storytelling is so important in the VC pitch: It makes you memorable."

Have your backstory on deck.

"Many entrepreneurs are caught off-guard when asked to dive into their backstory," cautions Braccia. "They haven't practiced how to tell that story, or left enough time in their presentation to share that information. And that is a tremendous opportunity lost to make a connection with investors."

As Braccia's observations make clear, your VC pitch can be a pivotal moment in your business. Going through the process can help crystallize the story you want to tell, and it's never too early to start developing that story.

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