Successful Fundraising Begins With a Stellar Pitch Deck

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Capital is often the most limiting factor for new entrepreneurs. You could have the greatest business idea of all time, but if you don't have the funding to turn your dream into a reality, nothing will ever come of it. This is why so many entrepreneurs turn to venture capitalists (VCs) for help. However, there's one issue: The average VC is a very tough sell — and for good reason. Nobody likes to waste their time or money, even those who have a great deal of both.

Pitching your business idea to potential investors can be terrifying. Of course, you want to make a good impression, but you never really know what questions will be thrown your way. In some cases, VCs could walk into the room, shake your hand, listen to your initial idea and leave. While there's not much you can do about people who are not interested in working with you; there is something you can do to increase the chances of securing the funds you need as an entrepreneur — create a mind-blowing pitch deck.

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You don't need to reinvent the

wheel. You need to keep it rolling.

You're probably wondering how to make a mind-blowing pitch deck without completely discarding all of the existing ideas and expectations surrounding pitches. The truth is, you don't have to devise some grand spectacle or reinvent the wheel; you just have to get your point across clearly and quickly. This requires you to dive into your vision and understand what you want to do, why you want to do it and what everybody (including VCs) stands to gain from it.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned in working with pitch-deck makers like Ari Kohan, the CEO of 50 Proof, was to trim out the fluff.

VCs are just like any other humans. They can get bored, distracted, disinterested and unmotivated. Your job during a pitch is to prevent all of those things from happening. You have to keep your audience listening and attentive from start to finish. Most entrepreneurs try to pack too much information into one pitch deck, and it's overwhelming. While you shouldn't leave out vital information, you have to figure out how to distill your vision, ideas and data into easily digestible sound bites.

The average VC doesn't have the time, patience, or desire to listen to a pitch deck that lasts longer than three minutes. However, talking quickly will get you nowhere. You can't just cram all of your ideas into a short timeframe. Instead, you need to find a pace that engages your audience and allows you to consolidate your ideas into manageable segments. This will keep your presentation moving at a comfortable pace that works for both you and your audience. You basically have 180 seconds to prove your assertions and make a great impression from your introductory email to the conclusion of your pitch.

They say that the human attention span is somewhere around eight seconds and, thanks to a global culture that craves

immediate gratification, it will probably only get shorter with time. This means you have to express something interesting with each statement or question you pose. Again, talking fast won't cut it. You have to say something bold, engaging, and – perhaps most importantly – worth listening to. Every time you do this, you've just bought yourself an additional eight seconds. Use it wisely.

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Why pitch decks are vital for fundraising success

Kohan built his entire business around the enhancement of pitch decks for VCs. So far, he has raised over $1 billion for entrepreneurs and startups. The success of his business alone is enough to show the importance of quality pitch decks. Hundreds of companies look to Kohan and his company for help crafting the perfect message to snag a VC or two.

What's his secret? First and foremost, he has taken part in hundreds of fundraising pitches, so his strategies and knowledge are both time and battle-tested. So, unless you're willing to hire an expert like Kohan to assist your business, perfecting your pitch decks will essentially be a process of trial and error.

That said, it's almost impossible to over-prepare for a fundraising pitch. You need to have a strong introduction, legitimate supporting data, engaging visual aids, and a vision or story that grabs hold of your listeners. You might think that throwing up a few Powerpoint slides and just winging it is enough to get the job done, but you're wrong. Even on the off-chance that it works, why take the risk? Pitch decks are too important to put on the backburner.

Think about it: A potential billion-dollar company could hinge on a 10 slide deck. When you consider pitch decks in these terms, it becomes apparent why you have to put your heart and soul into every aspect of your presentation – and prepare to be grilled by your audience.

VCs are not looking to throw their money at someone with a bad idea, a lack of information or poor presentation skills. So, brush up your pitch so that it is near perfection. This way, you leave less room for VCs and other potential investors to tear you to shreds. And who knows, you could end up fundraising the next billion-dollar idea with just a few simple slides.

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