Startup Pitch Deck Branding Guide

When you consider branding your startup pitch deck to show potential investors, you might be thinking about just slapping your logo and your website URL on the bottom of every slide and calling it a day.

I mean...that's better than nothing.

But branding is so much more than your logo. And pitching to investors is just like marketing your brand, whether you realize it or not. That's why your startup pitch deck needs to be designed to impress, written to inspire, and ultimately created to sell your idea to potential funders.

A [startup pitch deck](#) is usually a 10-20 slide presentation designed to give a short summary of your company, your business plan and your startup vision.

It typically focuses on your product or service, sharing your business model, giving a look into your monetization strategy, and providing background on the who, what, when, where, how of the company.

But investors are busy, and you often don't have a lot of time to pitch, so you need to make the most out of those precious few slides.

To raise money from investors, you obviously need to have a winning startup idea, a solid team and a convincing plan. On top of that, a well-designed pitch deck and strong brand can help seal the deal for your startups' growth.

To be honest, we're not exactly experts on creating intoxicating, yet realistic, financial projections for your pitch. And seriously, if you figure out how to calculate your cost of customer acquisition before you have any customers, please let us know. We'd love that secret formula!

But we are experts on branding, and we know how to create compelling brands that people remember. So we're going to tell you how to brand your startup pitch deck to make a lasting impression on investors.

Keep in mind that although this may seem like a lot of work to put into a 5-minute pitch deck, all the effort you put in now will become reusable, valuable brand assets for all your future marketing efforts.

And if it gets you that seed funding you need to build your startup, then, of course, it is worth it!

Free Tools & Resources

Pitch Deck Starters

Free startup pitch deck template

Video Tutorial on Branding Your

Pitch Deck

Branding Tools

Brand Voice Tool

Core Values Tool

Brand Personality Quiz

Color Tools

Hex Code / Code Formula Tool

Color Palette Inspiration

Color Palette Inspiration with Color

Formulas

Font Repositories

Free Google Fonts

Affordable Fonts

Photos

https://www.pexels.com

https://unsplash.com

https://stock.adobe.com/free

Remove the background from an

image tool

Design and Graphics

Free design tool

Free icons

Google icon font

Writing

Rhyming Dictionary

Related Words Thesaurus

Step 1: Assemble Your Assets

Locate Your Existing Brand Assets

The first step in branding your startup pitch deck is to figure out what assets you already have for your brand. Assemble and organize the brand assets you already have including:

- brand story or other copy

- brand voice guidelines

- word bank

- mission statement

- vision statement

- core values

- photos

- logo file(s)

- colors

- fonts

- graphics / icons

Now, depending on how far along you are in your branding journey, you may have none or all of those things yet. Don't worry, just pull together what you can for now, and we'll talk more in detail about how to generate or discover some of these brand elements below.

Get a Startup Pitch Deck Template

It may be tempting to just open up a blank PowerPoint document and start building your pitch deck.

Don't do it!

Assuming you're not going to hire a professional writer and graphic designer to help you with your pitch deck (which you should!), then the next best way to go about it is to start with a professionally designed template and then customize it, adding your own branding and content to it.

There is no need to start from scratch, especially if you're not a designy, visually oriented person. Find a design template for startup pitches to save time.

Download our free startup pitch deck template here.

There are literally thousands of free startup pitch decks online you can download as a starting point. And the Internet is replete with articles online about how to create a persuasive pitch deck or top 10 mistakes to avoid when pitching an investor. Google any of those topics and you'll find fantastic articles, infographics, tricks and tips.

Whether you use PowerPoint, Google Slides, Keynote or some other presentation software, it matters not. Most of these tips on branding your deck apply to any mode of presenting.

Step 2: Write Your Pitch

Before jumping into writing the slides or script for the pitch deck, we recommend doing some standard branding work to establish some of the brand assets you may not have yet.

If you've already done any of these exercises, good for you! Just skip to the next section.

Especially when you have such a limited amount of time and so few words on the pitch itself, every word counts. So doing this preliminary brand work will make sure you choose your words wisely.

Develop a Brand Story

One of the problems with pitching to investors is standing out. They hear a lot of similar sounding pitches.

If you've ever watched the show Silicon Valley, you know that practically all startups claim that their idea is going to "Make the World a Better Place."

Your brand story offers an opportunity to stand out because Storytelling is a proven method to capture a listener's attention and help them remember you.

Your brand story is the narrative that tells how your company came into existence and why you started it. The goal of a good brand story is to inspire a positive emotional reaction and sear it into the brains of potential funders (and later customers).

A brand story might use facts (i.e. we started our company in 2017 in Seattle) and also personal anecdotes (i.e. our founders met at the airport security line when they accidentally grabbed each other's carry-on bag).

A brand story only needs to be a couple of sentences. If it's a really compelling story, it can be longer.

There may be some overlapping information as your company elevator pitch, but above all, your brand story should feature the people at the center of your origin story, not the products or services you offer.

Establish Your Brand Voice

Brand voice is the tone and style in which you speak or write as a company.

If you're a solo founder, your brand voice might come naturally to you as it's probably similar to how you talk. But if you have multiple founders, and especially if your personalities, vocabularies and tone are quite different, brand voice guidelines become more important.

Identify the top 3-5 characteristics of your [brand voice using our free tool](#) and then write a sentence or two about what each characteristic means to you.

Brand voice guidelines will create a unified way to speak and write, no matter the content of the message or who is doing the pitching.

Create a Brand Word Bank

While [brainstorming about your business name](#), your values, your products or services, you likely came up with many words that are related to the business. Think back to those brainstorming sessions, and actually write down any words you can think of. These could be descriptive words, verbs or nouns or phrases.

Pop each of those words into a thesaurus and write down any of those synonyms that strike you as compelling. Your goal is to find words that have a lot of personality, meaning or "flavor" that will enhance your branding efforts and help you stand out.

For example, look at Uber's tagline, "We ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion." Ooh that's good. This is fantastic brand copy for an opening or closing slide. Notice their tagline isn't "Our app helps people find rides." Not nearly as powerful!

You still need to have clarity in your pitch, for sure. If you never say "Our app helps people find rides" the investors may not understand what you do. It's a balance between poetry and clarity!

Capture all of the words you like and intend to use in a spreadsheet or document for easy access. It's also helpful to add a list of words that you don't want to use either because they don't adhere to the brand guidelines, or you simply don't like them.

Having this list, or word bank, will speed up the writing process in any of your future writing projects: a press release, website copy or even a grant application.

Plus, it can become a part of your overall brand guidelines or editorial guidelines that you give to vendors, freelancers or new hires to ensure consistency.

Write Down Your Mission, Vision & Values

If you don't yet have a mission or vision statement or company core values, now is the time to create them.

You may or may not actually include those brand elements on your slide deck, but this type of thing often comes up in follow-up questions from investors such as "What do you see the company in 5 or 10 years?" or "Why did you start this company?" or "What makes you different from X competitor?"

Having established your mission, vision and values (and memorized them) will ensure you don't stumble during this line of interrogation.

Mission Statement

The mission statement is a formal summary of the aims and values of a brand. It's more action-oriented than the vision statement. It may include the "what," "how" and "why" of your business strategy. It captures, in a few sentences, the essence of your business's goals and the philosophies behind them. It defines what the company does for its customers, employees and owners and possibly the community or the world.

Read these examples of inspiring mission statements.

Vision Statement

A vision statement is a formal summary of a brand's long-term, big-picture goals. To write a vision statement for your business, think about how you, your audience, your community or the world will be different if you achieve your goals and purpose.

The vision statement might be time-bound and measurable, for example, projecting 5 or 10 years in the future. Your vision statement should be no longer than a couple of sentences.

Read these examples of inspiring vision statements.

Core Values

Core values are a powerful way to connect with people. Instead of just telling people what you do (focusing on what you are selling), core values help demonstrate what makes you different. Core values are at the heart of a brand's "why."

We recommend choosing 5 core values using our free tool and writing a sentence or two about what they mean to the brand.

Read these examples of company core values.

With the mission, vision and values, every word is important, so remember to look in your word bank for inspiration!

Write the Pitch Deck Slide Text or Script

Depending on how you like to prepare for presentations, you may want to start with an outline and then write out a full script and then put text on the slides. Or maybe you like to just build your text slide by slide in your PowerPoint document and then add notes later.

Whatever your methodology, it's time to actually populate the pitch deck with your text content. And it should be pretty easy now that you've done all that pre-work!

Don't try to reinvent the wheel with the type of content in your pitch deck. There is a format most investors are used to, and that helps them more easily understand your company and compare it to other pitches.

Stick with the format that has somewhat become standard unless you have a good reason not to, which is something like this:

1. Problem

2. Solution

3. Company Info

4. Product

5. Demo

6. Market

7. Business Model

8. Unfair Advantage

9. Competition

10. Marketing & Brand Strategy

11. Team

12. Traction / Milestones

13. Contact Info

Note: If you haven't done a proper business plan yet, at least make sure to do the [Business Model Canvas exercise](#) before you create your slide deck.

Once you've gotten the script or slide text down, go back through it to make sure it meets the brand voice guidelines. Replace any boring words with any more "flavorful" words from your word bank. Include your brand story on the Company info slide or Team slide.

Nice work! You're halfway done!

Step 3: Design Your Pitch Deck

[Our video](#) shows details about how to change the colors, fonts, photos and layouts of any startup pitch deck template.

Hint: Use the Master Slides!

Let's get into each step a little deeper and show you helpful tools to shortcut your work.

Change the Colors

If you had a logo professionally designed, you should have received a list of the color formulas that make up the colors in your logo or more extensive brand palette. If you didn't

get those codes or you can't find that email, don't worry. You can find the colors using [this tool](#).

If you don't have colors for your logo yet, this would be a good time to establish some using a tool like [Design Seeds](#) or [Coolors](#).

You'll need the hex codes or RGB color formula to input into your slide deck.

Change the Fonts

Change the fonts across the entire slide deck using the Master Slide view to your brand fonts.

If you don't have your brand fonts installed on your computer, find a similar one that will work. If you don't know your brand font or if you don't have a logo yet, you can download [free Google fonts](#) or purchase affordable fonts at [Creative Market](#).

Warning: if you use an uncommon font, you could end up with font compatibility issues if you have to present your pitch using someone else's computer. If they don't have the fancy font installed, there could be alignment issues or text cut off. You've been warned!

Add Your Logo

It's OK if you want to add your logo to every page, but resist the temptation to make it too large. It could take up valuable real estate and distract from the important content on each slide.

At the very least, add your logo to the first and last slide of your pitch deck.

If you don't have a logo yet, just use a basic font and a specific color to type your business name, and use that consistently across the pitch deck.

At some point, you'll want to invest in a logo because this is one part of the branding process that shouldn't be done by a layperson. You need special software to make sure the logo will work on all sizes and various formats, and there are many other technical specifications that will be important in the future.

If you can't afford to hire a local graphic designer or branding agency, consider getting a logo from a site like 99 Designs.

When adding your logo, remember to make sure it is legible. Your designer should have given you a few different versions of it. For example, you may have a reversed version that works well on dark backgrounds. Or perhaps you have a version where the symbol is on the side of the words instead of on top, which would make it more suitable for a footer area.

If you don't have a version with a transparent background, then it's best if the logo is always shown on a white background.

Add Your Photos

Replace all the placeholder images on the pitch deck with your brand images.

If you don't have any photos, use a website like Pexels.com or Unsplash or the free collection on Adobe to get free stock photos.

If you don't have a visual product, let's say you're doing pharmaceutical research for drug development, use whatever charts or graphics you can find. Then look for abstract photos to fill in your presentation and make it more visually appealing. When you search stock photo sites, literally use the word "abstract background" in their search bar. Artist renderings, blueprints or sketches are great too.

Cool trick: Use https://www.remove.bg to cut an image out of its background if needed. This might be helpful for product photos, or if all the founders have very different backgrounds for their headshots.

Edit the Charts or Infographics

Especially if your business doesn't have a lot of other visuals, using charts and infographics can help spice up an otherwise boring presentation.

Our slide deck has some built-in graphs. Just right click to edit the data.

You can also just use Excel to create charts and embed them in the presentation. Or use a tool like Canva, which allows you to easily make all kinds of graphics, including infographics and charts.

This tutorial will show you how to make a chart or graph in your PowerPoint.

Add Icons

Icons are symbols to aid in understanding and break up the monotony of text. Typically they are tiny little pictographs that go with a specific piece of text.

It's OK if your icons aren't totally literal, but do make sure all the icons you use are in the same style.

If you need different icons than the ones in your template, you can use websites such as Flat Icon or Swift Icons to download free or paid editable icon libraries.

Also, if you have Office 365, there is a built-in icon library within PowerPoint. Look under *Insert > Icons*.

Or, you can download the free Google icon font!

Customize the Animations

Many startup pitch deck templates will come with cool animations built in that make different elements move or appear. That's great! But as you start changing things around, you'll notice that some of the animation will get out of order or messed up.

This goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway. Before you go presenting your PowerPoint to investors, make sure you have actually presented it in Slideshow View so you know how the animations occur and how they are timed.

Check out the Animation Pane in PowerPoint to reorder things or change the animation trigger.

For additional info, watch this tutorial on how to use the animation pane in PowerPoint.

Tips & Tricks for Good Design

- Use the **format painter tool** to copy the format or style of text and apply it to other text that looks different.
- Make use of the **Paste option to Keep Text Only** to remove any stray formatting from wherever you are copying and pasting from.
- Leverage the alignment tools to make sure things stay centered and aligned with other elements on the slide.
- Don't try to cram too much information on any one slide! The best way to ensure that no one reads a slide (or any document) is to have too much information in a small amount of space.
- Leave space around elements, and use size and boldness to demonstrate hierarchy of importance.