



DOCUMENT TEMPLATE

# Pitch Deck Outline & Narrative

## What this guide helps you create — and who it's for

A pitch deck *outline and narrative* — the ten-to-twelve-slide structure, the one sentence each slide has to make the reader believe, the through-line that turns the slides into a story instead of a list, and the “do not include” list. This guide produces the skeleton and the argument; the designed slides themselves are a separate job (there's a blueprint for that at the end).

**Use this if** you're raising — or about to — and your deck is currently a feature catalogue, or twenty-eight slides, or a set of slides that don't add up to a story. **Skip it** if you have a deck that's getting you second meetings; this guide builds the narrative, it doesn't second-guess one that works.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- 1 **Read sections 02–04** so you know why a deck is one argument, not a list of slides.
- 2 **Open your AI chatbot** — the one you set up in guide 01. Have your one-pager (guide 02) and positioning statement (guide 03) to hand — the deck is built from those.
- 3 **Make the decisions in section 03** — the ask, the one-line story, the proof you have at this stage, the audience. Do this *before* you touch the prompt.
- 4 **Copy the prompt in section 05** into the chatbot. Paste your Founder Context Block where it says to, and fill in the `{curly braces}`.
- 5 **Send it**, then sharpen what comes back using the four moves in section 06 — one at a time.
- 6 **Build the slides from the outline** — and only then worry about how they look.

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## Why this document matters

The most common bad deck is a feature catalogue with a cover: a slide for the product, a slide for the tech, a slide for every capability, a slide for the market — true facts, in some order, adding up to nothing. The reader flips through it in three minutes and can't tell you what the company is or why they should care. A deck isn't a brochure with slide numbers; it's one argument, told in order, with each slide moving the reader one step closer to "yes, let's talk more."

This guide forces the argument to the surface first — the one-line story — and then lays out the slides that tell it: the shift in the world, the problem or opening it creates, why you're the ones to take it, the proof, the ask. Get the story right and the slides almost write themselves. Get it wrong and no amount of slide polish saves it.

**A deck is one argument, told in order — not a catalogue of slides. If you can't say the story in a sentence, the deck doesn't have one yet.**

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It comes from four decisions. Section 03.

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## The thinking framework — what to settle before you prompt

The prompt builds the outline. These calls are yours.

### — What's the ask?

What round, how much, for what — and what the deck is supposed to get you (a second meeting, a term sheet, an angel cheque). The whole deck points at this. "Raising capital" is not an ask; "£600k pre-seed for 18 months' runway to reach 5,000 businesses" is.

## — What’s the one-line story?

The deck is a single argument; you have to be able to say it in a sentence before you can build it. The shape is roughly: “*This is changing → which means this problem (or opening) → and we’re the ones to take it → here’s the proof it’s working → so we’re raising X to do Y.*” If you can’t compress the company into that sentence, the deck won’t have a spine — fix the sentence first.

## — What proof do you have at this stage?

A pre-seed deck and a Series A deck make completely different cases. Pre-seed: team + insight + early signal (waitlist, pilots, a sharp wedge). Series A: traction + retention + unit economics. Be honest about which deck you’re building, and don’t fake the proof of a later stage — investors can tell, and it’s the fastest way to lose them.

## — Who’s the audience?

A generalist seed fund, a sector specialist, an angel who knows your space — each needs a different emphasis. The specialist needs less market education and more depth, faster. The generalist needs the “why now” spelled out. Decide who this version of the deck is for.

DECIDE	WEAK DEFAULT	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
The ask	“raising a round”	“£600k pre-seed — 18 months runway to 5,000 businesses”
The one-line story	“we’re an AI accounting platform”	“self-employment’s exploding + tax is going digital → millions doing their books badly → we turn a photo of a receipt into a filed return → 412 paying, growing → raising £600k”
The proof	“(claims a Series A’s traction)”	“412 paying businesses, X% MoM, here’s the retention curve — a pre-seed’s worth of signal, honestly stated”
The audience	“investors”	“a UK pre-seed generalist — spell out the ‘why now’”

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## Common failure modes — what generic output looks like

Ask an AI for “a pitch deck” cold, and you get the templated 11 slides with no argument running through them. Reject these:

× WHAT TO REJECT ON SIGHT

- **The feature catalogue.** A slide per capability, no story. True facts in a row, adding up to nothing.
- **Buried lede.** The most interesting thing — the wedge, the traction, the insight — is on slide 9. It should be near the front.
- **The fantasy TAM.** “Market size: £50bn” with no working. Nobody believes top-down billions; a credible bottom-up number does more.
- **The titles-not-people team slide.** A row of headshots with job titles. The question is *why this team* — the unfair experience, the reason you’ll win this — not who’s CEO.
- **The vague ask, and the bloat.** “We’re looking to raise capital to grow” (how much? for what?) — and twenty-eight slides, paragraphs of text per slide, a deck that takes thirty minutes to read instead of three.

If the outline looks like this, you haven’t written the one-line story. Section 03.

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## The prompt template

This is the bit that does the work. You don’t need to understand prompting — you just need to do these five things, in order:

RUNNING THIS PROMPT – STEP BY STEP

- 1 **Copy the entire grey box below** (all of it, top to bottom).
- 2 **Open your AI chatbot** and paste it into the message box. Don’t press send yet.
- 3 **Paste your Founder Context Block** where the prompt says `{paste your Founder Context Block here}` — delete that line and put your block in its place. (No Context Block yet? Build one in guide 01.)
- 4 **Replace every {curly-brace} bit** with your own answer — your four decisions from section 03, plus your one-pager and positioning statement, go straight in. If you’re unsure of one, leave it; the prompt will ask.
- 5 **Send it.** Then go to section 06 to sharpen what comes back.

PROMPT TEMPLATE

→ Copy the whole box. Paste your **Founder Context Block** where it says to, then swap everything in {curly braces} for your own answers before you send it.

You are helping me write a pitch deck **OUTLINE** and **NARRATIVE** – the slide structure, the one sentence each slide must make the reader believe, and the story that runs through them. Not the designed slides – the skeleton and the argument.

Here is everything you need to know about my company:

{paste your Founder Context Block here}

Inputs I've decided (use these – don't override them):

- The ask – round, amount, use, and what the deck should GET me: {e.g. "£600k pre-seed, 18 months runway to 5,000 businesses; goal: a second meeting / a term sheet"}
- The one-line story (the through-line): {e.g. "self-employment's exploding + tax going digital → millions doing their books badly → we turn a photo of a receipt into a filed return → 412 paying, growing → so we're raising £600k"} – if I left this vague, your first job is to help me sharpen it before anything else.
- The proof I actually have at this stage: {e.g. "412 paying businesses, X% MoM, retention curve – pre-seed signal, no Series-A claims"}
- The audience for this version: {e.g. "a UK pre-seed generalist – spell out the 'why now'"}}
- My one-pager and positioning statement, if I have them: {paste them – the deck should be built from these}

Produce:

1. The one-line story – restated cleanly (or sharpened, if mine was vague). One sentence, the spine of the deck.
2. The slide outline – 10 to 12 slides, in order. For each slide: a title; the ONE sentence that slide must make the reader believe; and a one-line note on what's on it (the kind of content – a demo, a chart, three bullets – not the design). Make sure the single most interesting thing (the wedge, the traction, the insight) lands by slide 4, not slide 9.
3. The "do not include" list – the slides and claims that weaken this deck for my stage and audience (e.g. a top-down TAM, a 12-feature roadmap, claiming traction I don't have). Be specific about mine.
4. Slide 1, in speaker notes – the 30-second version of how I open, out loud.

Rules:

- Twelve slides maximum. One idea per slide.
- No top-down "TAM = £Xbn" – if a market-size slide is warranted, make it bottom-up (units × price × realistic capture) and say so.

- The team slide answers "why this team," not "who's CEO."
- The ask is a specific amount, for a specific use, with the milestones it buys.
- Anything in {curly braces} is a slot for me to fill. If I left one blank, ask me for it – don't invent it.

When you're done, tell me which slide is weakest for this audience, and what would have to be true for it to land.

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## How to iterate when the output is weak

First drafts come back as the template with your words dropped in. These four moves give it a spine – one at a time:

1. **State the story first.** *"Before any slides: give me the one-line story – 'this is changing → which means → we're the ones → here's the proof → raising X for Y.' If it doesn't compress to a sentence, tell me what's missing."*
2. **Move the lede up.** *"What's the single most interesting thing in this deck – the wedge, the traction, the insight? Make sure it lands by slide 4, not slide 9."*
3. **Cut to twelve, one idea each.** *"Twelve slides maximum. One idea per slide. Anything that doesn't move the argument forward – into the appendix or gone."*
4. **Fix the TAM, the team slide, and the ask.** *"Replace any top-down market number with a credible bottom-up one. Rewrite the team slide to answer 'why this team,' not list titles. And make the ask a specific amount, for a specific use, with the milestones it buys."*

If two passes don't fix it, you don't have the one-line story yet – back to section 03.

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## A worked example

Sam from guide 01, Ledgerwise – raising a £600k pre-seed. Here's the outline, built from his one-pager (guide 02) and positioning statement (guide 03).

**The one-line story:** “Self-employment is exploding and HMRC is going fully digital – so millions of UK sole traders are doing their own books badly and can’t afford a bookkeeper. Ledgerwise turns a photographed receipt into a filed return, with no data entry. 412 paying businesses, growing X% a month, with strong retention – we’re raising £600k to reach 5,000 and prove the channel.”

**The slides (12):** 1) Cover – the one-line. 2) The problem – “I’m always behind on my books, and I find out how far when the deadline shows up.” 3) Why now – Making Tax Digital + the gig economy. 4) The solution – photo → filed; a 20-second demo. 5) The wedge – no data entry, built for the too-small-for-an-accountant segment. 6) Traction – 412 paying, MoM growth, the retention curve (honest pre-seed signal). 7) Business model – £X/month, payback in N months. 8) Go-to-market – the trades-community channel that’s working, and why it scales. 9) Competition – the spreadsheet, the £200/mo bookkeeper, the enterprise tools that don’t fit; why this segment is open. 10) Team – what Sam built before, why he understands this market. 11) The ask – £600k pre-seed, 18 months’ runway, the milestones it buys. 12) Appendix pointer / contact.

**Do not include:** a 28-slide deck; a “TAM = £50bn” slide (use bottom-up: UK sole traders × realistic price × realistic capture); a roadmap slide promising twelve features; the lede on slide 9.

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## Edge cases — and when to go deeper

A few situations need more than the template:

- **You’re pitching a sector-specialist fund.** Assume they know the market — skip the basic education, go deeper and faster on the wedge, the insight, the unit economics. The “why now” can be shorter; the “why this is hard and we’ve cracked it” should be longer.
- **The read deck vs the present deck.** A deck you email needs more on each slide (no one’s there to narrate); a deck you talk over should be sparser. Decide which this is, and if you need both, build the sparse one and add speaker notes for the read version.
- **You’re at Series A or later.** Vision matters less; traction, retention and unit economics carry the deck. The story shifts from “this could be big” to “this is working, here’s the engine, here’s what scaling capital does to it.”
- **You have a tight one-pager already** (guide 02) — expand *that* into the deck rather than starting fresh, so the deck inherits the edit:

→ WHEN YOU NEED TO GO DEEPER

**One-Pager → Investor Deck** — Expand a tight one-pager into a 10-slide narrative deck without losing the edit.

[n-access.co.uk/playbook/one-pager-to-deck](https://n-access.co.uk/playbook/one-pager-to-deck)

- **The slides need to look as sharp as the argument** — layout, charts, the visual through-line:

→ WHEN YOU NEED TO GO DEEPER

**Claude Visual System** — A repeatable prompt chain for generating an on-brand visual identity — colour, type, layout rules — without a designer.

[n-access.co.uk/playbook/claude-visual-system](https://n-access.co.uk/playbook/claude-visual-system)

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## What to read next

- **02 · The Business One-Pager** — the deck is the one-pager expanded; if you don't have a tight one-pager, start there.
- **03 · Brand Positioning & Messaging** — the slides should use the positioning language; if the deck won't land, the positioning might be why.
- **14 · Investor Update Templates** — once they're in, this is how you keep them informed (and warm for the next round).

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## The Founder's Playbook

A library of short operator guides for founders building with AI — not prompt-pack content, an actual method. Each guide is free, each routes you to deeper blueprints when you need them, and each assumes one thing: that you've built your **Founder Context Block** (that's guide 01).

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