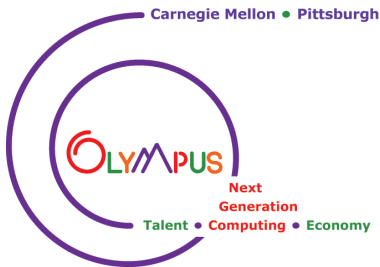


# Carnegie Mellon University

## Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship

### The Product Pitch

Kit Needham



# Types of Communication



- **Customer Brochure**
  - Targeted to customers; use at events, handouts, 'leave behind' after a meeting
- **Website**
  - Targeted to customers
- ***What Do You Do?* and Elevator pitch(es)**

30-90 second verbal communication targeted to customers, investors, general population
- **Product pitch (mailed and in-person versions)**
  - Targeted towards customers
- **Investor pitch (mailed and in-person versions)**
  - 20 minute
- **1-2 Page Snapshot**
  - Targeted to investors; Can be mailed/emailed
- **6 page Executive Summary**
  - We have a plan – its not all big idea and hyperbole
- **The Business Plan**
  - Questionable whether you will need it, but you will definitely need to have done the thinking

# Underlying Principle

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## Know your Audience!

*Customers aren't buying your technology.*

*They are buying  
a solution  
to their problem.*

# How Did You Get This Opportunity?

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- You initiated the request to present?
- You were given an introduction?
- You met someone at an event?
- Other?

# What Do You Want to Achieve?

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- Feedback?
- Test?
- Pilot?
- Letter of interest? Intent?
- Purchase, lease or subscription?

# Know Your Audience



Who will be in the room?

❖ Users

❖ Influencers

❖ Buyers/Decision-makers (executives)

Ask for names, titles/positions

Look them up on LinkedIn

Other news articles?

**Your presentation will vary depending on who you are talking to.**

# Know Your Audience



Research the company  
*Research their competition*

- ❖ Websites
- ❖ Recent news
- ❖ Public companies – quarterly shareholder reports
- ❖ Private companies – local newspapers

# The Product Pitch Components

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- The problem
- Your solution
- How it Works
  - Pictures
  - Diagrams (if appropriate)
  - Tech specs (if appropriate, limited)
- Competition
- Current status
- Benefits/Testimonial(s)
- Team

**Passion**

**Enthusiasm**

**What is  
'The Ask'?**



# Creation of the Pitch

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- Slides support the narrative, not the other way around
- Slides that are too busy lose the audience

# Company Name



**PRESENTER(S)**

**TITLE**

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

# Your Talking Points to Title Slide

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- What business are you in?
- What is your unique value proposition?
- What do you want to accomplish?
  - Place-setting opening to get everyone on the same page
  - Don't assume anyone has read anything you have sent in advance

# The Problem

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- What situation (“pain”) will you solve/exploit?
- If not a problem specifically, what is the opportunity?
  - Make the problem real
  - Tell a story, give an example - ideally something that you learned from your research, industry trends
  - Use data, numbers to quantify the problem or opportunity
  - Set the stage; get heads nodding

# Your Solution

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- What are you specifically offering?
- How does it solve their problem?
- Explain/show how it works
  - Flow chart
  - Diagram
  - Pictures
  - Short video clip (not live)
  - Sample
- Can be more than one slide

Using videos via the internet can be very risky; test first and have a backup plan

# Technology/IP

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## Describe the technology in your offering

- Will your audience understand the acronyms?
- Explain the technology in a way that makes sense to the audience
- Business differentiators and benefits
- Find a way to talk about your 'secret sauce' without revealing it

This is one slide for a reason  
– don't deep dive at this stage

# Current Status

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Proof-of-concept

Proto-type

Beta

Pilot(s)

Data about results?

When will it be ready to be tested, used

- Beta testers, on-line users, pilots, paid pilots, strategic partners?
- Interested parties – Letter of Interest? Letter of Intent?

# Competition

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- Who are they? How are you better?
- Provide examples of how you are better?
- What attributes do you have that the competition doesn't
  - There are ALWAYS competitors – even if the alternative is 'do nothing'
  - Demonstrate a clear advantage
  - Emphasize how you are better rather than criticizing your competition.



# Team

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- Who are the 2 - 4 key players in your company?
- Focus on significant relevant accomplishments
- Who is on the company's board of advisors/directors
  - Careful about listing 'casual' advisors
  - If you have a 'rock star', may want this to be your first slide.

# Summary Slide

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- Reinforce your company's mantra/slogan/motto
- Solidify core value proposition and technology
  - How are you solving THEIR problem
  - What are the benefits of using your solution

**Make the ASK!**

# Appendix

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- Any detailed slides to support the main ones
- Any of those slides you wanted to use but didn't have time/space for
- Any slide that can support an expected (or unexpected) question
- Can be as many as you like
- Memorize where they are or have a handy key so you can go immediately to the slide

# The Pitch - Tips

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- Number your slides
- Practice, practice, practice
- “Less is more” on your slides
- Get feedback before and after
- Be excited and passionate

# If they ask about pricing...

21

Generally not best practice to put prices in a presentation. Companies like to negotiate.

Early adopters generally get deep discounts

Can share pricing model e.g. monthly fees, etc.

# Tips/Techniques

22

- **Best** if you have done some Customer Discovery first. You can better target the pitch.
  - Can set up a call with the requester before the meeting if Customer Discovery has not already been done.
- Try to make it interactive – engage them by asking questions, encourage them asking questions. (Don't be upset if you don't get all the way through the pitch.)

# Common Mistakes

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- Botching the Q&A
  - Every question is not a ‘sales opportunity’
  - Not really answering the question (okay to rephrase)
  - Giving overly long answers. Anticipate what questions you’ll get and prepare a succinct answer. Answer the question - then ask for next question.
  - Dueling ‘responders’ – presenter is the QB who decides whether to hand the question to someone else.
  - Mishandling questions you don’t know the answer to (okay to rephrase, clarify or even say – ‘Great question. Let me get back to you with an answer.’)

# Common Mistakes

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- Too much time on the product/technology and not enough on the business value you are creating or problems you are solving.
  - **(They aren't buying your technology – they are buying a solution to their problem. )**
- Talking to the slides, not the audience
- Relying on a live demo (which doesn't work)
- Relying on your pitch deck. Practice giving your pitch without it!



# Handouts and ‘Leave Behinds’

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What would be valuable for this audience? One-page executive summary? Outline of what you are going to cover? Brochure? Technical spec sheet?

- If asked for copies
  - Great reason to follow up!
  - Send an electronic version that can easily be forwarded.
  - The forwarded version may be more ‘word dense’ since you won’t be there to talk about the slide.
- Put “Confidential” at the bottom of all slides

# Include at the end of your pitch

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- How many customer interviews did your team do?
- What did you learn about your customer segments from talking to your customers?
- What will you do next?