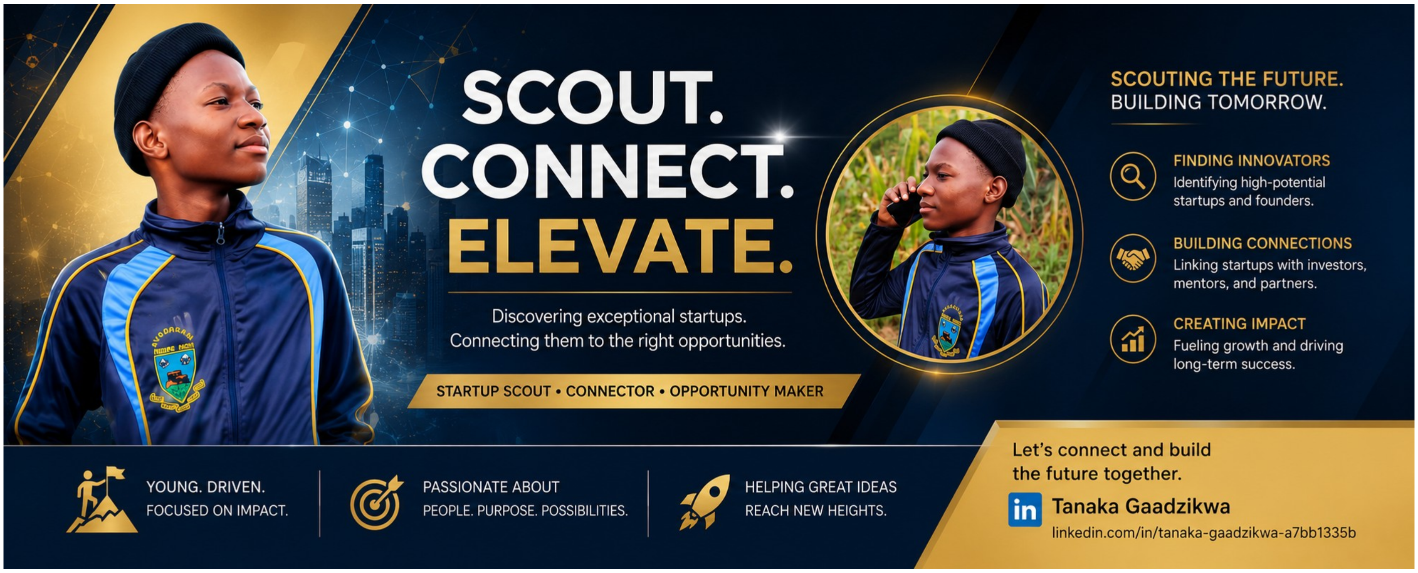
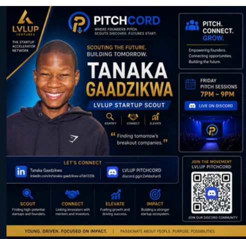


PITCHCORD FOUNDER SCHOOL

PITCH DECK BEST PRACTICES

Build a deck that supports the conversation.

A practical slide-by-slide guide for PitchCord founders preparing for scout review and Friday live sessions.



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Founder discovery • community connection • startup scouting

1. WHAT THE DECK IS FOR

The deck is not the pitch.

Your deck should make the company easier to understand, not harder. The founder is the storyteller. The slides are evidence, structure and visual support.

For a live PitchCord session, aim for a concise deck that can be understood quickly and does not require reading paragraphs from the screen.

2. CORE DECK RULES

Keep the signal high.

One idea per slide: If a slide is trying to explain three things, split it.

Use plain language: Avoid jargon unless the audience truly needs it.

Lead with evidence: Numbers, screenshots, customer proof and milestones beat vague claims.

Make text readable: If you have to zoom in, the slide is too dense.

Use visuals with purpose: Product images, charts and diagrams should explain, not decorate.

Stay consistent: Use the same typography, spacing, logo treatment and visual hierarchy.

3. RECOMMENDED SLIDE ORDER

A clean 9-slide structure.

Slide	Purpose	What good looks like
01	Company / one-line value proposition	Say what you do, for whom, and the outcome. Keep it memorable.
02	Problem	Show the pain. Who has it, how often, and what does it cost?
03	Solution / product	Show how your product solves the problem. Screenshots or product visuals help.
04	Market	Define your buyer and the realistic market. Avoid giant numbers with no path to capture value.
05	Traction	Revenue, users, pilots, LOIs, waitlist, growth, partnerships, retention or product milestones.
06	Business model	Who pays, how much, and how revenue scales.
07	Competition / advantage	Show alternatives and why your approach can win. Never claim there is no competition.
08	Team	Relevant capability, founder-market fit and execution strength.
09	The ask	Funding or specific next step, plus what it will accomplish.

4. SLIDE-BY-SLIDE GUIDANCE

What belongs on each slide.

Company / one-line value proposition

Include company name, logo, short descriptor, and one sentence that explains the customer + problem + outcome. Avoid taglines that sound clever but say nothing.

Problem

Use one or two painful facts, a short customer quote, cost of the problem, or a simple visual. Make the problem feel specific and real.

Solution / product

Show the product. Use a screenshot, workflow, diagram or before/after. Explain the outcome, not every feature.

Market

Show the target customer first. TAM/SAM/SOM can help, but only if assumptions are understandable. Explain where the first customers come from.

Traction

Put the strongest metric first. Use a simple chart if growth matters. Label dates and units clearly. Early companies can show pilots, LOIs, interviews or product velocity.

Business model

Explain who pays, price, contract type or expected monetization. If pricing is not final, show the working model and why.

Competition / advantage

Name real alternatives, including spreadsheets, manual processes, consultants or doing nothing. Show why customers switch and what is hard to copy.

Team

Include only relevant facts: technical depth, industry knowledge, prior execution, distribution, customer access or unique insight.

The ask

State exactly what you want. If raising, give amount/stage and 2-4 uses of funds. If not raising, ask for pilots, intros, mentors, partners or another specific next step.

5. DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

Professional does not mean complicated.

✓ Use high contrast between text and background.
✓ Keep body text large enough to read on a shared screen.
✓ Use one primary typeface and one accent typeface at most.
✓ Keep margins and alignment consistent.
✓ Use charts only when they communicate faster than words.
✓ Avoid walls of text, tiny screenshots and decorative clutter.
✓ Use brand colors consistently, but do not sacrifice readability.
✓ Export to PDF before pitch day so layout does not shift.

6. COMMON DECK MISTAKES

What weakens the room.

Too much text: If the audience is reading paragraphs, they are not listening to you.

No customer clarity: A deck can look polished and still fail if nobody knows who buys.

Feature dumping: Features matter only when connected to customer value.

Huge market, tiny logic: A giant TAM does not explain how you reach customers.

Traction buried late: If you have proof, show it early enough to shape the room's view.

No competition: Every problem has an existing alternative, even if it is manual work or doing nothing.

Generic team slide: Show why this team matters to this company.

Weak ask: End with a concrete next step, not “thank you.”

7. FINAL DECK CHECKLIST

Before Friday.

☐ Deck opens correctly.
☐ File name includes company name.
☐ Logo and company name appear clearly.
☐ One-line value proposition is understandable.
☐ Customer is specific.
☐ Problem is measurable or concrete.
☐ Product is visible.
☐ Traction numbers are current.
☐ Business model is understandable.
☐ Competition is realistic.
☐ Ask is explicit.
☐ No tiny text.
☐ No broken links or missing images.
☐ PDF backup exported.
☐ Founder can present without reading the slides.

BUILD THE STORY. THEN BUILD THE DECK.

Founder School → 90-Second Workbook → Deck Review → Friday PitchCord