



# Presenting Your Venture

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January 2025  
Nuts and Bolts  
of New Ventures

**Fundamentals of effective  
presentations**

# Why are we talking about this?

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When is it important?  
If you get better at it, so what?  
Your thoughts?

# Times when you'll want this include:



- 1 Acquiring customers  
Acquiring partners
- 2 Hiring the best staff, even when they have other offers
- 3 Keeping your staff motivated and focused, even during tough times
- 4 Raising capital  
Eventually: Selling your company

# Tonight's agenda

- 1** What's a pitch? And what do you hope it will do for you?
- 2** Let's give some pitches → distill, develop guidelines to do it well
- 3** Give them again, using what we've learned
- 4** Questions, summary and conclusions

# My background

- Founder & CEO – 4 startups – MDs – Harvard Medical School
- Author: *The Start Up Starter Kit* (Amazon)
- CEO of Vitasoy USA (publicly traded, Hong Kong exchange – turnaround)
- Executive positions at Baxter, Abbott, other companies
- Princeton, MIT Sloan (MSM)
- Performing musician
- Volunteer – homeless shelters



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# What do people invest in?

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A good idea isn't the same as a good product

A good product isn't the same as a good business

People want to work with promising businesses

- Great team
- Skilled at execution
- Understand their business



**Can you describe it  
clearly  
and persuasively?**

# What is this pitch you speak of?

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- It's some sort of presentation that is intended:
  - To persuade others of your point of view
  - To bring about some desired behavior
- Therefore:
  - To whom might you present?
  - Why?
  - What do they want? How will you provide that?
  - What are your goals? What result do you want?

# Potential audiences for your pitch

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- Customers
- Potential employees
- Current employees
- Channel partners/retailers/etc.
- Family members



- Investors

Do they have the same priorities?

Same pitch?

# **In every case, they're wondering, "WIIFM?"**

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## **What's In It For Me?**

- They may be too sophisticated to ask this
- But they're thinking it...
- A successful pitch answers their question

## **What's in it for your target audience?**

- Customers
- New hires, current employees
- Investors

# So how do you do it?

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A crash course in the basics

# What we're about to cover

- A few sales fundamentals; qualifying, WIIFM, benefits vs. RTB, and more
- Presentation fundamentals: understanding your audience, engaging them, and more
- Using a microphone properly
- Raising capital – some typical questions
- A template you might use

# But first: let's hear a few sample pitches

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Volunteers, please:

A few minutes just telling us about  
your business – not a pitch

Then: three-minute presentation;  
our feedback

Audience: your responsibilities:

Listen carefully

Critique respectfully

Apply to your own situation

# Presenting

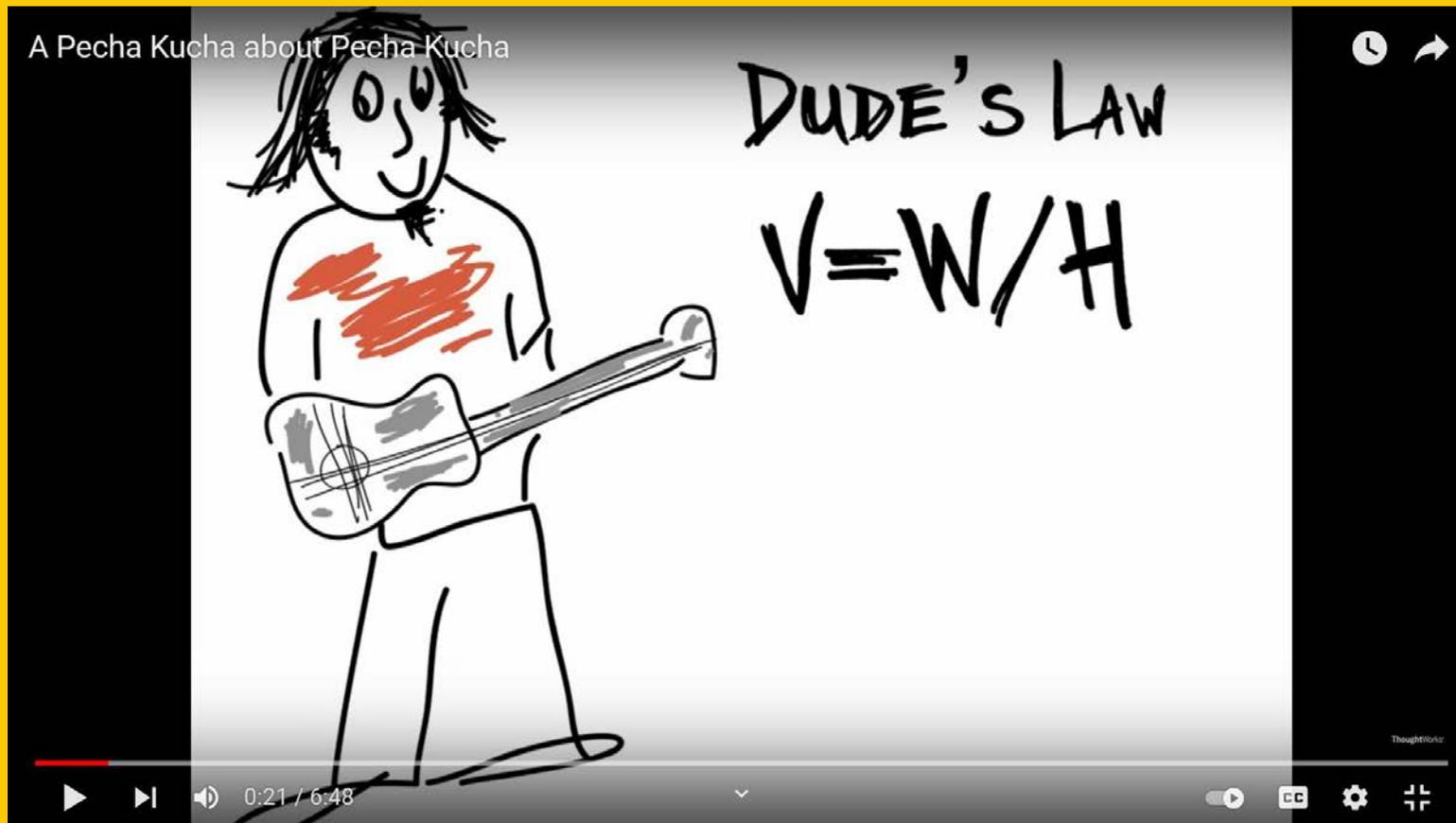
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**A few basics that can make a big difference**

# Watch this 6:48 video

From “A PechaKucha about PechaKucha”

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)



Courtesy of Sumeet Gayathri Moghe. License: CC BY

# Understanding your audience



## *This takes thought and research*

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- Which do they care more about?
  - You?
  - Themselves?
- Should your goal be to persuade them that:
  - You're really smart?
  - Your technology is really awesome?
  - Your vision is really compelling?
- Answer: Maybe, but only if it is a Reason to Believe
- **Benefits first, then Reason to Believe**
- Remember: their 1<sup>st</sup> priority is:  
“How will this help me?”

# A 500-year old pitch (circa 1501)



## *It's old, but it worked...*

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Having, most illustrious lord, seen and considered the experiments of all those who pose as masters in the art of inventing instruments of war, and finding that their inventions differ in no way from those in common use, I am emboldened, without prejudice to anyone, to solicit an appointment of acquainting your Excellency with certain of my secrets.

1. I can construct bridges which are very light and strong and very portable, with which to pursue and defeat the enemy; and others more solid, which resist fire or assault, yet are easily removed and placed in position; and I can also burn and destroy those of the enemy.
2. In case of a siege I can cut off water from the trenches and make pontoons and scaling ladders and other similar contrivances.
3. If by reason of the elevation or the strength of its position a place cannot be bombarded, I can demolish every fortress if its foundations have not been set on stone.

## Leo, page 2

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4. I can also make a kind of cannon which is light and easy of transport, with which to hurl small stones like hail, and of which the smoke causes great terror to the enemy, so that they suffer heavy loss and confusion.
5. I can noiselessly construct to any prescribed point subterranean passages either straight or winding, passing if necessary underneath trenches or a river.
6. I can make armoured wagons carrying artillery, which shall break through the most serried ranks of the enemy, and so open a safe passage for your infantry.
7. If occasion should arise, I can construct cannon and mortars and light ordnance in shape both ornamental and useful and different from those in common use.
8. When it is impossible to use cannon I can supply in their stead catapults, mangonels, trabocchi, and other instruments of admirable efficiency not in general use—I short, as the occasion requires I can supply infinite means of attack and defense.



# Leo, page 3

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# A few guidelines

## *Presenting to your audience*

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- Invest the time to understand what they want: research, ask, listen carefully
- I know it's corny, but it helps if you actually care about their needs
- A sequence that is often effective is:
  - Introduction
  - Ask them what they're looking for in a (job, service...), or confirm that you know what they're looking for [Nordstrom]
  - Tell them why this will be great for them:  
**BENEFITS**
  - Support: Reasons To Believe
  - Ask for feedback. “How do you feel about this?”



# More guidelines: presenting

## What helps you be believable?

Conviction/enthusiasm/passion  
(but not lunacy)

Supporting evidence

Brevity

Be clear

Be brief

Stop talking

# How much information is right?

## *Should you tell them everything?*

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- What do you want them to remember?
  - Turn your computer off
  - Ask yourself what you want them to say when they describe your pitch to someone else
- Three points is all that most people retain
  - Probably the three that have the most relevance to them personally
  - Be ruthless in your editing...

# What's required to get this right?



## *Customer intimacy, tight prose*

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- Understanding what's broke that you fix
  - What's the unmet need?
  - What are the consequences?
  - For whom? Who's too small? Who's too big?
  - Why will they think your solution is better?
- Good structure and ruthless editing
  - Organize it tightly
  - Excluding some prospects makes it better

# A few words about style

## Slow down:

Speak more slowly than usual; enunciate clearly. This gives your audience time to process your golden words.

Don't think that fast talking will overcome bad editing

**Deploy “Passion” wisely**

**Tell a story! Avoid a “fact dump!”**

# Using a microphone

## *An often-overlooked detail*



- Some mics are “omnidirectional.” They amplify sounds from all sides.
- The mics you’ll use are usually unidirectional. They amplify what you point at them and ignore background sounds
- Therefore: speak down the barrel of the mic, not over the top, and within 2-4 inches of the microphone
- Speak more slowly than usual; enunciate clearly. Give your audience time to process your words of wisdom.

# The 8-letter word everyone hates

- PRACTICE

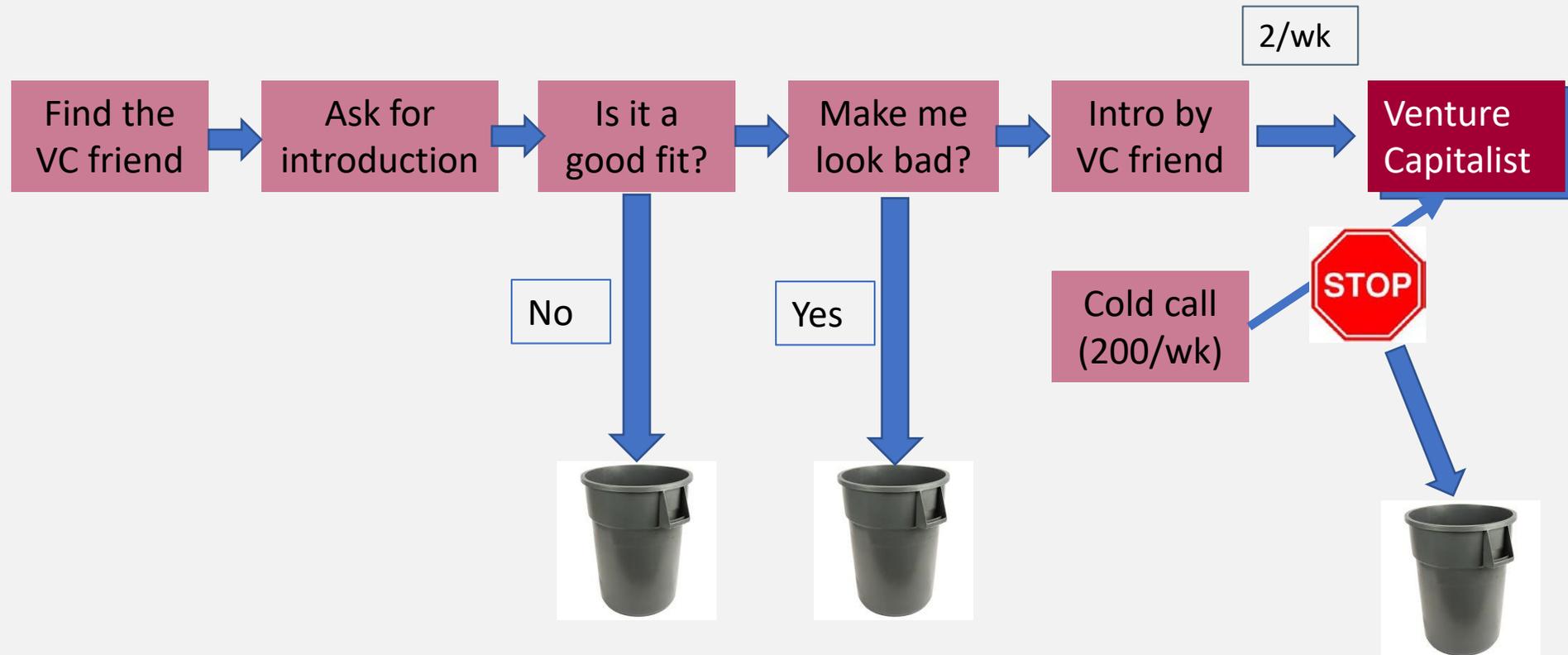
- Sometimes you have to work very hard to make it look easy
- You're retraining yourself: these are new habits
- Give your talk to an empty room
  - Use a timer
  - For the brave: record it (Oh God...)
- See the first bullet on this page...

# Raising venture capital

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Just a few words:  
Not for the faint of heart  
Be careful what you ask for  
Abandon hope, all ye who enter here

# Getting to see a venture capitalist



# What do investors care about?

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- Your technology?
- Your academic credentials?
- Getting back more than they invested?
  - What's the unmet need? Who has it?
  - Why will they think your solution is better?
  - Why this? Why now? Why this team?
  - What could go wrong?

# Those are just proxies for the two big questions



## How will you make money?

- Unmet need → better solution → customers?
- Team? Marketing?  
Sales? Distribution?
- Manufacturing?  
IP protection?
- Etc.

## How will I make money?

- Deal terms
- Probability: exit
- Etc.

# Preparing for an investor pitch

## *Some of the questions they'll have*

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- What kind of capital are you looking for?
- How much?
- How far will that take you?
- How long before you've built a good business?
- How will our firm make money from our investment in your business? [WIIFM?]

# A few words about pitch decks



- 1** Many entrepreneurs overload their decks: too long, too technical, too much jargon
- 2** The best decks describe the problem and the opportunity in the first slide or two
- 3** Focus: the unmet need/how meeting it  
Show proof or support for their value
- 4** <https://piktochart.com/blog/startup-pitch-decks-what-you-can-learn/>

# A template you might use

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- Anecdote: a problem, its consequence
- We've identified customers like her who will happily pay to solve this problem
- They think our solution is better...
- Stage of the business: we have a prototype, or we have early revenue or...
- We're raising capital to [purpose, timeline]
- Your questions?

Your innovation solves a problem  
→ tell us about the problem.  
Then tell us how your superior solution solves that problem.

# Your turn

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A star is born...

# Your turn: sample pitches

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Volunteers, please:

A few minutes just telling us about  
your business – not a pitch

Then: three-minute presentation;  
our feedback

Audience: your responsibilities:

Listen carefully

Critique respectfully

Apply to your own situation

**Your questions?**

# Summary

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- Know your audience, and the three things you want them to remember when you finish your presentation. [Challenge: three sentences, 10 seconds]
- Show them that you understand their problem, and tell a story about your better solution (WIIFM?)
- **PRACTICE!**

Good Luck!

THANK YOU

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