

1. Pitch workshop



2 Lessons



60 minutes each
+ 5 hours preparation work



Pitch a business idea

This course description is aimed for teachers and coaches who will perform a pitch workshop with pupils and participants.

Background: What is a pitch?

A pitch is a short presentation of an idea that is given in a creative and rhetorical way and engages and convinces the audience that the idea is interesting and attractive.

Pitching is a phenomenon used in many of branches. For example, in the film industry, film makers often pitch ideas to financiers, such as TV-companies and distributors, at film festivals and other events. However, pitching is most common within the entrepreneurial sector, where entrepreneurs seek funding.

Usually a pitch is around 5–10 minutes; it is basically a “selling and convincing” presentation in a short format. An “elevator pitch” (the term “pitch” originates from this expression) should be presented in as much time as an elevator ride takes, so can only last for around 30 seconds.

A pitch can be done in many different creative ways. A pitch can, for example, be a film presentation, where there’s no talking. There is no right or wrong. However, this manual for a pitch workshop focusses on a classic oral pitch with support from a Pitch Deck. In this manual, extracts from the well-known platform, Airbnb, are attached. Airbnb is a good example to refer to; from the beginning, it was quite a simple idea, and it became an enormous worldwide success. Moreover, Airbnb’s Pitch Deck is very basic, and it can be good not to show too advanced Pitch Decks at this stage as many of the pupils might be beginners in pitching.

Short info about the company: Airbnb is a web-based platform for renting and listing private apartments and houses all around the world. The idea is inspired by the principals of the sharing economy, where individuals are both the suppliers and customers.

Airbnb started its business in 2008 when two designers (one of them was Brian Chesky, the founder and owner) had some room in their apartment and became hosts for three travelling persons that were looking for a place to stay during their trip to San Francisco. Shortly after, the idea of the platform started to form. Since then, millions of travellers and hosts have started free accounts on the Airbnb’s platform for the renting out and booking of unique accommodations all

around the world. The platform is now more than just a platform for rentals; it has become a global network through which events are also arranged at different places. Most importantly, it has added a whole new dimension to travelling.

Goal

To give pupils/participants the basic tools needed to pitch ideas in the future, to make them feel comfortable with presenting an idea, and to learn a classic method/form that is used for pitching.

Content

Lesson 1

Inform and teach what a pitch is. Inspire and give the pupils creative and rhetorical guidance.

As a workshop leader, in this lesson you will explain what a pitch is and give the pupils their challenge: to plan and implement the pitch of an idea! Set the time frame for your pitch workshop so that each pupil/group is given the same conditions. A pitch is often supported with visual material (photos, film clips, graphic design and text) that can be created in presentation programs such as Keynote, PowerPoint, or Prezi. Encourage the pupils to work with that part! This visual support is called the "Pitch Deck". Before you explain the structure of pitching, it can be a good idea to look closer at the company, Airbnb—perhaps not everyone is familiar with it—if you choose to have Airbnb as a practical example (Homepage: <https://www.airbnb.com>).

Teach the structure of a pitch

The classical structure of a pitch: Start with a short presentation of yourself, your background, preferably with just one sentence. Then, summarise *what* you will pitch, also preferably with just one sentence. When you pitch a film idea, for example, summarise the idea with one sentence. In the case of *Titanic*, you could say, for example: "*Titanic* is a Romeo and Juliet story—set on a sinking boat." Chesky, who pitched Airbnb, could have said at this stage: "Airbnb is a web platform for renting and hosting private accommodations that brings people from all over the world closer together."

AirBed&Breakfast

Book rooms with locals, rather than hotels.

This is a PowerPoint reproduction of an early AirBnB pitch deck via Business Insider @ <http://www.businessinsider.com/airbnb-a-13-billion-dollar-startups-first-ever-pitch-deck-2011-9>

After the short introduction, it is time to go into the idea on a deeper level. It is very important to catch the interest and attention of the audience quickly. A good way of doing that is to start with a rhetorical question and/or with a personal story that can lead to showing a "need". For example, Chesky could have said: "When I was out travelling I always felt disconnected in the hotel districts from the authentic culture, and moreover, it was expensive. Over 90% of those who travel want the experience of a local. What if there were another way of travelling in which visitors could also connect with other people and cultures?"

You can also address a "need" or "problem" that exists without a personal story: "Many people who travel want to a more authentic cultural experience and want to live outside of the hotel districts in affordable accommodation. What if you could get all that through one accessible platform?"

Pitch Deck Airbnb p. 2:

Problem

2

Price is an important concern for customers booking travel online.

Hotels leave you disconnected from the city and its culture.

No easy way exists to book a room with a local or become a host.

Then, convince the listeners why your idea is the solution to the need/problem. For example: "Airbnb is a platform where you can save money and more authentically experience and take part in the culture of your travel destination. You can also contribute by renting out your private accommodation to travellers, and at the same time, make money."

Pitch Deck Airbnb p. 3:

Solution

3

A **web platform** where users can rent out their space to host travelers to:



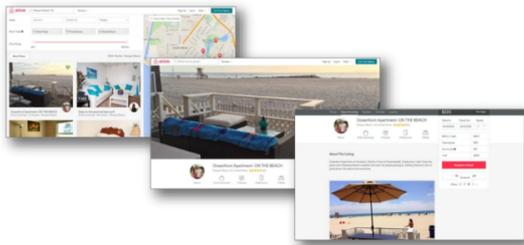
Then, describe the product and the structure of your idea. What does the structure of your idea look like? Describe it!

Ex: Pitch Deck Airbnb p. 6:

Product

6

SEARCH BY CITY → REVIEW LISTINGS → BOOK IT!



After you have described the structure of your idea, it is time to analyse its potential threats and weaknesses, and then evaluate the idea's strengths and opportunities. This process is called a SWOT analysis. "SWOT" stands for *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities* and *threats*. There will always be competition in the market as well as potential weaknesses in your idea. However, by countering these obstacles with constructive solutions, the pitch becomes more credible to the audience and shows that the idea is well thought-out. Begin by talking about the *weaknesses* of and *threats* to your idea, both externally (the market and business environment) and internally (within the organisation).



SWOT: pic source: <http://www.ccustomer.se/tools/analys/swot-analys-for-salj-och-marknad/>

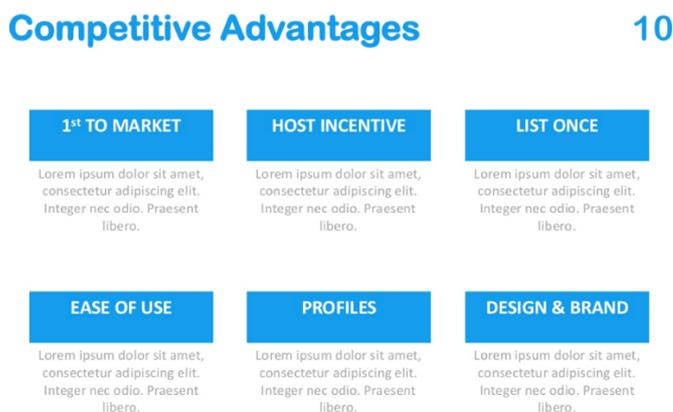
Weaknesses of Airbnb in its early stages could have been, for example, “We are quite a small team at this point, but we have the ambition to expand.” Threats to Airbnb could have been, “There is already a market for private accommodation renting on the internet. However, these sites don’t provide the same guarantees or offer the same ranking system and security. Hotel sites are too expensive, and hostels.com may be a good platform, but hostels can be rather impersonal.”

Pitch Deck Airbnb p 9:



The next step is to talk about the strengths (internal positives) and opportunities (external positives) regarding your idea. A statement about the strengths could be, for example: “We have the right team with the right competence to build and expand this platform.” Opportunities could include: “The platform is easy to handle, with various search filters allowing the client to find their optimal accommodation with specific requests, worldwide. In the future, this way of travelling will become a lifestyle for many people, and the market for it will never be saturated. It is the future.”

Ex: Pitch Deck p. 10:



Close your pitch to sum up (shortly) the content of your pitch! Aristotle, also called “the father of rhetoric”, said: *“Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them.”*

More to think about while preparing a pitch:

- The visual part (Pitch Deck) functions as support for what you are saying, so, don't overdo it and have too much text in your Pitch Deck. Too much visual text can make the audience focus on it rather than listening to you.
- Practise! Preferably, practise in front of a friend or a colleague.
- Watch the clock—make sure your pitch is within the time frame!
- Be aware of your body position—practise in front of a mirror, or even video record your pitch.

Lesson 2

The pupils, individually or as a team, will pitch their ideas to the class. Give positive, yet challenging/constructive, feedback. A smartboard or projector is needed for this lesson; pitches are supported with visual presentation material, a “Pitch Deck”.

It is very important, as a workshop leader, to keep track of the time frame for each pitch, so that everybody gets the same amount of time. Decide on a sign to give when there is one minute left of the pitch, so that the pitching team or individual has a chance to wrap it up if time has gotten away with them.

A pitch can always be refined and improved upon, so giving feedback is important. Start with positive feedback, and then move on to constructive feedback, or “challenges”. Was something unclear during the pitch? As part of the audience, did you lose focus at any time during the pitch? Try to empower the pupils/participants, and put more emphasis on the positive feedback as many are beginners.

Appendix

- Pitch deck: Airbnb: <https://www.ethos3.com/2017/09/top-5-best-pitch-deck-presentations/>
- Airbnb's webpage: <https://www.airbnb.com>
- Airbnb's billion dollar idea: Article i SAS Magazine Scandinavian Traveller: <https://scandinaviantraveler.com/en/lifestyle/airbnbs-billion-dollar-idea>
- SWOT analysis example: Starbucks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR9elCQJLXA&t=9s>
- Inspiration: The Good Talents Botkyrka pitchar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG1iZOnqJYM>