

Making Movies in LA

PowerPoint guidelines for video pitches

Guy Kawasaki has his [guidelines](#) for the perfect PowerPoint slide deck, but too few entrepreneurs follow his suggestions. And think how important these slides are; you use them when you're in front of, usually a roomful of, potential investors. Take into account the crappy national economy and assume that some investors, maybe more than a few, might be thinking that, compared to your deal, real estate might be a better asset to hold if they can time it right. Without getting too morose, it's a difficult time for a startup to get funded. It's always taken massive doses of persistence; now it's taking more.

For the past 10 years I've sat through many PowerPoint presentations. What a pity so few really get it right.

You know your technology, you've studied the market and you've squeezed every nickel yet when you get that opportunity to pitch, to the people who could help you realize your dreams, you go at it half-assed. You fail to inspire us; maybe even worse, you bore us, all because you didn't do your homework. We enjoy seeing a good presentation. We want to get involved with exciting new concepts with starry-eyed entrepreneurs. Make us happy; work on those slides!

First off, you're gonna have different presentations for different audiences. One size does not fit all. Let's focus on one to go with your video pitch. "Why can't I use one of the slide decks I already have?" You can, but you won't get the impact you're hoping for and it's not going to take long to tailor your slides perfectly for video.

Prepping for the shoot

I'm experimenting with recording entrepreneurs and their presentations; the other day I spent all day playing with 4 different presentations for a video shoot set for next week. The entrepreneurs will walk away with a movie on DVD that combines a video of them giving their pitch in a small window right next to their PowerPoint slides – and it's all perfectly synched, so when the presenter says, "on this next slide, The Team", that slide advances in perfect synch.

Investors love these videos; even though they're travelling pitch videos allow them to stay involved, to participate in the next hot deal. The benefits to you, the entrepreneur, are many; you'll attract more interest and it can happen virally – without driving all over southern California in my case – you'll pick up interest from out of town investors, maybe even across the country.

Angel investing is changing. Tools like [Angelsoft](#) allow investors to syndicate more easily than ever before. The old mantra, "angels only invest within a two hour driving radius" is slowly breaking down. If you put together an effective video slide deck and present it with passion, you'll be taking a giant step in getting your startup funded.

Making it

Let's consider some of the unique challenges that video pitching puts on your slides:

1. **Visibility.** The slides will be shown in a video display, not projected on to a 100" screen, so you've got to:
 - a. Simplify the content, and
 - b. Maximize the contrast.

Try it right now. Instead of running SlideShow full screen, constrain the presentation to a window that only takes up 55% of the laptop display. Now shrink it again to the 720x420 video display and imagine 40% of this screen dedicated to the video of you pitching. Get the picture? Those slides with loads of text will be even harder to read. Unless you optimize your slides for this reduced display, the presentation will lose its punch. As Guy Kawasaki recommends, use a big font, 32pt is nice, and limit what you write on each slide.

Coincidence? Two of these four presentations at hand are using blue text to make their points. I'm sure it looks great blown up on a wall, but in this tiny world of a YouTube window it blows. You say you must have blue text? Make it navy blue/black and keep the background pale for the best high contrast look.

2. **Tables.** Yikes! I advance to an important slide, the financial projections and there's too much detail. Nooneisgonnabeabletomakeanysenseofthis. So thin those tables down. Don't show the grid outline, that's just more distraction. Show your five year projections with only a few rows of data.
3. **Attention span.** Last year I was posting 10 minute videos on my blog. Then I went to a podcast conference and learned that the average time someone will stay looking at a video is only 3.5 minutes! And that's for interesting clips of cats up a tree, not talking heads pitching get rich quick schemes. If you present at [Tech Coast Angels](#) we give you 15 minutes, but that's live; that much time gives us plenty of opportunities to jiggle our Blackberries; same on the web, it's easy to click away to something else. I offer two thoughts:
 - a. Shorten the presentation; yes you can tell your story in less time, and
 - b. Place your logo on each slide, like TV stations do with their programming. One of the 4 slide decks for next week's shoot is missing this logo-on-every-slide, so when I got distracted for a moment then returned to the presentation (I was pretending to be the entrepreneur making the video pitch) I couldn't remember the company name! If it happened to me it'll happen to others, so place that cute little icon on every slide.
4. **Beginning and Ending slides.** I hate Summary slides, but don't let me get ahead of myself. Your title slide, let's take a fresh look. This slide will sit in the video display for several seconds while you chatter your introduction and before that, during the time it takes for the viewer to press PLAY. Keep it very simple. And no summary slides to start with either; that's really pouring cold water on the fire you're trying to light. Title slide: logo big, your name smaller. Drop the URLs, the somber looking "Confidential" (this is

headed for a large audience) and the titles, addresses or phone numbers you've scribbled all over this slide.

5. **A big finish.** One of these slide decks I've been playing with ends suddenly, kaput! So the video ends with PowerPoint's bleak finale: "End of slide show, click to exit".

Come on, this is Tinsel town; now's when the credits roll!

Let's land on a "final" slide that is identical to the first slide, that title slide. That's a clue for you to stop talking, to wrap up. You might be on such a roll that you click right past the slide you usually end on, so wind it up as your logo glows on the screen.

But we're not done. Create one or two slides with just your URL (and a small logo) then a slide with just your contact phone number (logo, too). Can you picture this? These last few slides will be like the credits rolling at the end of a flick.

Now you're making an effective video presentation; something designed specifically for the medium.

Next, publish it everywhere: to [Angelsoft's OPENdeals](#), your Facebook page, YouTube and your own website, too.



The tools

- Credit goes to Ken Deemer, a Tech Coast Angel in LA; he found the \$99 [Screenflow](#) for the Mac; it makes all this video stuff click. (I run my MacBook Pro with Boot Camp so it can run Vista, too; the best of both worlds.)
- Add Office with PowerPoint for another \$150; you could be done with just these two, but
- I add a big pro LED light, a [Litepanels flood](#) for \$1,700, and
- an external microphone, like the \$200 [Audio Technica 3035 condenser mic](#) connected to
- a [MOTU UltraLite](#) firewire mixer, \$550
- Add a [pop filter](#) for that studio look.
- Camera? That built in iSight camera on the Mac works great.

This configuration is compact! You can wheel it into any conference room and not have to sweat the setup.