

Basics of pitching ideas

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Agenda for our session

- What is pitching and why is it relevant to us?
- Elements of a good pitch
- Using pitching for finding internships and thesis commissions

- Pitching canvas - developing your own pitch



A desk setup featuring a glowing brass desk lamp on the left, an open notebook with lined pages in the center, and a glass of water on the right. In the foreground, three pens (black, silver, and gold) are laid out. The background is softly blurred, showing a window with light and a green plant.

**What is pitching and
why is it relevant to us?**

Why are we talking about pitching today?

- This morning you learned about identifying the skills, resources and unique perspectives you already have...
- ... and about the Asset Manager mindset of creating your own opportunities...
- ...now we focus on thinking **how to communicate those assets**
- **Pitching is a skill of explaining what you do and why it matters to someone else.**
- You are essentially making a pitch when...
 - Applying for thesis commissions or internships
 - Applying for research funding
 - Applying for jobs
 - Selling a service, product or idea
 - Looking for funding for your business or project
 - Looking for partners and collaborators



What's pitching, really?

- Concept heavily associated with the tech industry and start-up world, where the goal is to get investors to support your business...
- ...but you can take advantage of the same principles in many other situations
- Pitching is the skill of
 - **crystallising** your idea and thinking
 - **communicating** the core elements clearly
 - **influencing** your audience to take the next step

In other words

- Pitching helps you with
 - **clarifying your idea** so you really understand it yourself
 - communicating **the most important parts** simply
 - making your audience **see the value** and to **want to continue the conversation**
- Pitching is not magic that gets you the funding/job/position in one step
- Instead, the **goal of pitching is to get your audience interested**, and to get you an **opening for the next step**: a positive response, a meeting, a further discussion
- Pitch always answers the same question:
 - Why should the audience invest their time, energy or money in you and what you are proposing?



What's pitching, really?

[Sequoia Capital](#)

“A pitch should clearly explain your purpose, problem, and solution.”
→ The goal is to make the idea easy to understand and evaluate quickly

[Y Combinator](#)

“Explain what you're building and why it matters — clearly and concisely.”
→ The goal is to make the listener understand your idea in seconds

[Techstars](#)

“Pitching is about communicating your idea clearly and leading to the next step.”
→ The goal is to create interest and move the conversation forward

Research (e.g. about [narrative](#) and about [pitching process](#))

“Pitching is a process, and there are ways to improve your pitch”
“Pitch helps the listener imagine a future where the idea works”
→ The goal is to support decision-making under uncertainty by making the idea credible and imaginable

Check out the
underlined links!!

Pitches vary in length
from a 30s “elevator
pitch” to
2-5min pitches, or even
15-20min investor pitches!

Some further helpful resources

These can be useful if you want to build a pitch for a business idea you have.

You can find useful elements also for other purposes - be selective what is useful to you! :)

How to build a compelling pitch? TED talk, re: narrative!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0hVIH3EnlQ>

Techstars Pitch worksheet

- <https://toolkit.techstars.com/master-your-pitch-worksheet>

Sequoia Capital's pitch deck template

- <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/sequoia-capital-pitchdecktemplate/46231251#3>



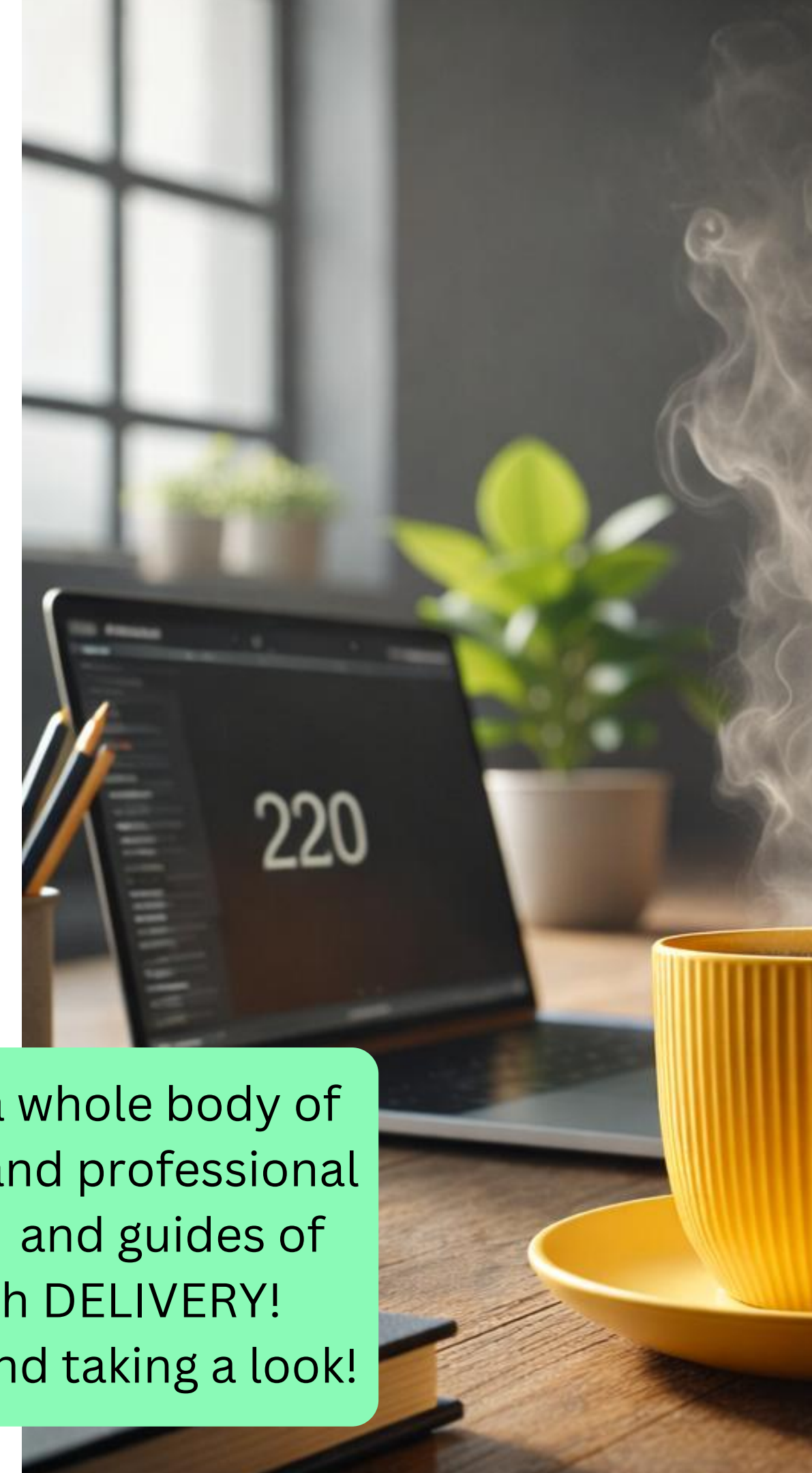
A warm, dimly lit desk scene. On the left, a brass desk lamp with a glowing light bulb. In the center, an open notebook with blank, lined pages. To the right, a clear glass of water. In the foreground, three pens (black, silver, and gold) are laid out. The background is softly blurred, showing a window with light and a green plant.

Elements of a good pitch

Elements of a good pitch

- Pitching is a process - it is well-prepared, well-targeted and well-delivered *
- In a pitching situation, the listener usually has only a little time for you, and operates under incomplete information and uncertainty
- A successful pitch helps the listener answer:
 - What is the point here?
 - Is this relevant to me?
 - Is this credible?
 - Is this worth spending more of my time on?
- The goal is not to sound fancy and impressive, but to **make the idea and value easy to understand quickly**
- A good pitch, according to research & professionals...
 - **is clear**
 - **is concise**
 - **is relevant**
 - **shows the value**
 - **is concrete**
 - **proposes the next step**

*There is a whole body of academic and professional literature and guides of the pitch DELIVERY!
I recommend taking a look!



Elements of a good pitch - Clear & Concise

“You stand out by being concise and easy to understand”

Michael Seibel, Y Combinator ([see his talk here](#))

- If your audience doesn't understand what you do, or offer, they can't fund you or say yes to what you propose

You cannot tell your audience everything, you need to be selective -

- what are the core elements you need to tell?
- what are the key things the listener needs to understand?

Is your audience an expert in your topic?

→ **Think about the language you use!! (ability to talk “two languages”)**

- With an **expert audience**, you can use more technical, specialist language
- With a **“regular” audience** (e.g. not a tech-specialist, not a HR-specialist, not a medical specialist...) make sure you talk about your topic with **CLEAR, understandable language**



Elements of a good pitch - Relevance

- There is no one pitch that always works - The content of a good pitch depends on your audience and what you are trying to achieve.
- Identifying and understanding your target and what your desired next step, is a core part of the process
- A pitch is only “good” if it is relevant to the audience (funder, investor, business manager, company owner, mother, neighbour, prospective client...)
- **Pitching to an investor is different from pitching to a customer**
→ they want and need different things:
 - **Investor** - are you a good investment, will you make them more money?
 - **Customer** - what problem do you solve for them, how and for how much?
- When preparing your pitch, ask why would this matter to this audience, what is important or interesting to them?



Elements of a good pitch - Value & Concreteness

- A strong pitch helps the audience see, what is the value and benefit of what you are offering in practical terms
- Do not stay in the abstract level, do not leave the listener to connect dots or expect them to have time or ability to imagine what your idea would mean to them →
- Spell it out, be concrete, give an example of an action, outcome or a situation
 - What is the benefit of what you suggest? What is the value?
 - What would your proposal be in practice, what would happen, what would get done, what is produced, what is done better?

✗ *“I am interested in sustainability”*

✓ *“I could analyse your packaging options and suggest 2–3 more environmentally friendly and cost effective alternatives.”*

✗ *“I would like to do my thesis about sustainability”*

✓ *“I could analyse your current sustainability practices and develop a short improvement plan”*



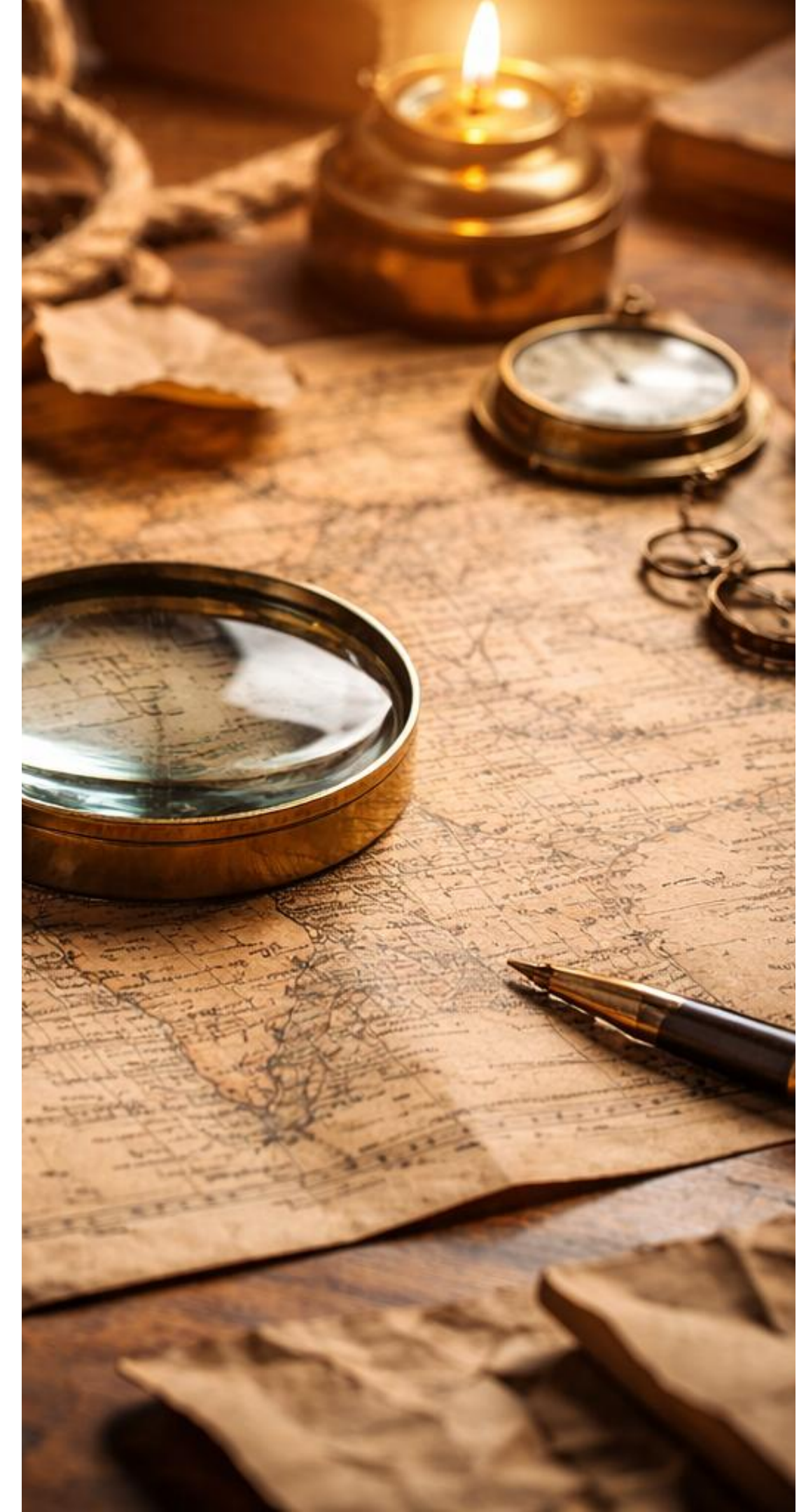
Elements of a good pitch - your goal and the next step

- Define for yourself what your ideal outcome of the pitching situation is
 - **Long-term:** funding, partnership, thesis commission, internship, job?
 - **Short-term:** a further discussion, a meeting, an opportunity to send a more detailed plan...
- Make sure **you propose a next step in your pitch!**
 - Proposing the next step, “a call to action”, is a key part of the pitch
 - Without a clear ask for the next step, you are just telling a nice story with no goal
- The next step suggestion can be as simple as:
 - *Could we schedule a meeting to discuss the idea further?*
 - *Would you be available for a call next week to talk about the proposal?*
 - *Could I prepare a short project proposal for you to comment via email?*



Elements of a good pitch - your goal and the next step

- Be clear about what your goal is, and build a pitch that supports it
- If you are looking for funding, don't waste your opportunity talking about partnerships or internships, and vice versa.
- You should indicate your overall goal in the pitch - why are you approaching this person. Can be expressed e.g. as follows:
- *“We are currently exploring funding opportunities to further develop this idea and would like discuss if this could be relevant to you”*
- *“At this stage, we are looking for potential investors to support the next phase of development.”*
- *“I am currently looking for an internship opportunity and would be particularly interested in working with your company's marketing function”*



Pitching “templates”

Sequoia Capital's model:

- Company Purpose
- Problem
- Solution
- Why now?
- Market Size
- Competition
- Product
- Business Model
- Team
- Financials

Link to full pitch deck template

Generic simple model

- **What is it?**
- → What do you do /offer
- **Why does it matter?**
- → Why is this important?
- **For whom?**
- → Who is this relevant to?
- **Why you?**
- → What makes you good at this specific purpose?
- **What next?**
- → What's the next step, what are you asking for?



Classic pitching mistakes

- Trying to explain EVERYTHING
- Trying to sound smart
- Not having a clear point
- Not getting to the point - too much fluff
- Not being targeted for your audience
- Too abstract, not concrete enough
- Including too many ideas and directions at once - lacks focus
- Why this is important or useful for listener is not clear
- Benefit and value for listener is not clear
- No call for action, no next step suggested

- ✗ “I need funding / an internship”
- ✗ “Do you have any open positions?”
- ✗ “I am looking for any opportunity”
- ✗ “We are looking for investors, please invest”

- **passive**
- **unfocused**
- **not tailored**
- **too pushy**
- **too vague**
- **not credible**



Pitching is a skill - practise it

Pitching is **not** a personality trait

“Im not good at pitching”

→ “I haven’t practiced pitching enough yet”


Pitching is a skill you can improve

- Everyone starts out pretty bad 😊
- You can develop into a better pitcher fast by practising

Pitching is a skill you build through practice

- Keep practising
- Keep trying what works for different purposes and audiences
- Keep iterating
- Keep improving



A desk with a lamp, notebook, pens, and a glass of water. The scene is lit with warm, golden light from the lamp, creating a focused and studious atmosphere. The desk is made of dark wood, and the notebook is open, showing blank lined pages. Three pens in black, silver, and brown are neatly arranged to the right of the notebook. A tall, clear glass of water stands to the right of the lamp. In the background, a small potted plant is visible, adding a touch of greenery to the workspace.

**Using pitching for finding
internships /thesis commission**

Using pitching for getting an internship/thesis commissions

- Instead of asking if the company has any open positions
→ Propose a useful project for the company!!
- Develop a pitch: do not just presenting what your topic or interest is - make your topic /project relevant and useful for the company.

Simple steps to take:

- **Develop a concrete idea** of what your internship or thesis project could be
 - What is interesting to you, what kind of a project would you like to work with?
 - What are you able to do, are good at, or can learn?
 - What would support your desired career direction, and what kind of a specialist you want to become?
- **Do some research to find potential companies** that are interesting to you and that could benefit from your project (are they from a specific industry, work with a specific product/service, what size, uses a specific tech...)
- **Develop your pitch** - what you offer, what is the benefit, suggest a next step
- **Contact the companies** (find e.g. a team or dept. manager, HR, in small companies the CEO...)





Now, let's practise! 😊

In the worksheet ("Pitching Canvas") there are questions to help you clarify and define your idea.

The questions link to some key elements of developing a pitch.

In the final box you should try to crystallise your whole idea into a one-sentence mission statement.

PITCHING CANVAS

Think about your business idea, or a thesis / internship project you could do, and fill in the pitching canvas

What is your idea/project/focus?

Write your idea clearly in 1-2 sentences

What problem/need does this relate to?

What problem does it solve? What is it improving, developing or exploring?

Who does it help?

Who is this for? Who is your potential "client"?

What would you actually do?

Describe clear, concrete actions or outcomes (e.g. analyse, design, build, research, make a product, provide a service...).

What is the value?

Why this is useful? What is the benefit? What difference does it make?

Why you?

What skills, studies, or experience support you doing this?

1 sentence mission statement

Explain your business / project / idea in 1 declarative sentence. Focus on what you do, and why it matters.

This pitching canvas was created by Kareva - enhancing international recruitment readiness project (2025-2027).

It is free to use for personal and educational purposes.



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A warm, dimly lit desk scene. In the foreground, an open notebook with lined pages lies flat. To its right, three pens in black, silver, and brown are arranged diagonally. A tall, clear glass of water stands in the background. A brass desk lamp with a glowing light hangs over the desk. The background is softly blurred, showing a plant and a window.

**Communicating your ideas -
pitching in an email format**

Pitching for an internship/ thesis commission

If you are looking for a thesis commission, internship or a job, the company you approach is your “customer” - what problem can you solve for them, how do they benefit from what you propose?

Basic pitch structure for an email

- Who you are (student of what?)
- Why are you messaging (internship / thesis?)
- What can you offer them?
 - Describe your thesis topic or internship project briefly and clearly
 - Make a link to the business, how could it be useful?
 - Be concrete, give concrete examples of the project output or what it entails
- Suggest a next step (call, meeting)



Good vs. bad intership pitch

✘ Bad example

“Hello, I am a business student looking for an internship. I am interested in sustainability and would like to gain experience in this field. I am motivated, hardworking, and a fast learner. Please let me know if you have any opportunities.



Good vs. bad intership pitch

✗ Bad example

“Hello, I am a business student looking for an internship. I am interested in sustainability and would like to gain experience in this field. I am motivated, hardworking, and a fast learner. Please let me know if you have any opportunities.

What’s wrong here:

- too generic
- no clear point or offer
- no clear value for the company
- no concrete, practical proposal
- passive, no next step



Good vs. bad intership pitch

✓ A better example

“Hello, I’m a business student focusing on corporate sustainability. I’m particularly interested in how companies can improve their environmental practices. I am looking for an internship and would be interested in a placement with your company. I could, for example, analyse your current sustainability initiatives and identify concrete improvement opportunities.
Could we discuss possible collaboration in a short meeting?”



Good vs. bad intership pitch

✓ A better example

“Hello, I’m a business student focusing on corporate sustainability. I’m particularly interested in how companies can improve their environmental practices. I am looking for an internship and would be interested in a placement with your company. I could, for example, analyse your current sustainability initiatives and identify concrete improvement opportunities. Could we discuss possible collaboration in a short meeting?”

What works?

- clear focus (sustainability)
- concrete action (analyse, identify)
- value for the company
- targeted
- clear next step



Sample contact email about thesis collaboration

If you are making a "cold contact", some things to keep in mind when drafting your message:

- Keep it short - a few paragraphs max!
- Be clear and to-the-point,
 - Who you are
 - Why are you messaging
 - What can you offer them - concrete examples
 - Suggest a next step (call, meeting)

ALWAYS TAILOR THE MESSAGE!

No mass spamming tens of companies with the same message!

Subject: Thesis Collaboration Inquiry

Dear Ms. Virtanen,

My name is Ellie Example, I am a Master's student in Business Studies at the Xamk University of Applied Sciences in Kotka. I am currently seeking a partner organisation for my thesis, which focuses on using AI to support business decision-making.

I am particularly interested in developing a project related to advanced competitor analyses using open-source data and AI. I'm thinking this could be a potentially useful topic for your organization.

Would you be available for a short teams meeting to discuss a possible thesis project collaboration?

Thank you in advance for your time.

I enclose my CV and a short thesis idea description for background.

Kind regards, Ellie Example



If you only have 20seconds... ...have a super short pitch ready!

Some examples could be...

- “I’m currently planning my thesis on using AI for competitor analysis, and I am looking for a company to partner up with. I think my topic could provide useful insights for your organisation. Would you be open to a short discussion to explore a possible collaboration?”
- “I’m developing a thesis idea on using AI and open-source data to analyse competitors and support business decision-making. Could this could be a useful thesis project for your organisation? Could we schedule a short meeting to discuss the idea?”



A few thoughts about Finnish communication style...

- Communication is information-centric– we want to know why you are messaging or talking to us. Not too much small talk, just a little 😊
- Excessive pleasantries, emotions, fancy or indirect language are not used or understood
- Messaging is direct and factual - not rhetorical or metaphorical. Words contain meaning and information clearly, there are rarely hidden meanings or hints between the lines.
- Messages are usually short and focusing on the key information that needs to be said. This can feel short, blunt or cold, but is not meant that way.
- Time is concrete, not flexible – punctuality and being on time in meetings and calls is crucial. Deadlines matter.
- Transparency and honesty builds trust. Don't promise anything you cannot keep. Always ask if you need clarifications or you are not sure.



Thank you!

**Remember -
Pitching is a skill -
practise it! :)**



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