

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

ACBSP School of Thought Competition 2024-2025 Instructions

For the first level of this competition, the Call for Submissions, please include a recorded presentation of your PITCH and closely follow the nine (9) points detailed below. Note that all team members must be included in the recording.

Teams should be made up of no more than three (3) team members and must include at least one (1) member from an ACBSP member school.

Each participating team is to provide (1) a recorded presentation no longer than 7 minutes, PITCHING your idea, and (2) a written executive summary (2-3 pages) that briefly covers the following components. Please be concise and clear in your presentation in both your recorded and written portions. The presentations will be scored, in part, on meeting these length requirements.

1. The Grab

You should lead with the most compelling statement of why you have a really big idea. You need to get your reader to think, “Wow!” This sentence (or two) sets the tone for the rest of the executive summary. Usually, this is a concise statement of the unique solution you have developed to a big problem. It should be direct and specific and not abstract and conceptual. If you can drop some impressive names in the first paragraph you should—world-class advisors, companies you are already working with, a brand name founding investor, etc. Do not expect an investor to discover that you have two Nobel laureates on your advisory board six paragraphs later. He or she may never get that far.

2. The Problem/Opportunity

You need to make it clear that there is a big important problem (current or emerging) that you are going to solve or an opportunity you are going to exploit. In this context, you are establishing your Value Proposition—there is enormous pain and opportunity out there, and, for example, you are going to increase revenues, reduce costs, increase speed, expand reach, eliminate inefficiency, increase effectiveness, etc. Do not confuse your statement of the problem with the size of the opportunity (see below).



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3. The Solution

What specifically are you offering to whom? For example, are you developing software, hardware, service, or a combination? Use common terms to state concretely what you are proposing that solves the problem you have identified. Avoid acronyms and do not try to use these precious few words to create and trademark a bunch of terms that would not mean anything to most people. You might need to clarify where you fit in the value chain or distribution channels — who do you work with in the ecosystem of your sector, and why will they be eager to work with you? If you have existing customers and revenues, make it clear. If not, tell the investor when you will.

4. The Market Size

Spend a few more sentences showing your potential market size, providing the basic market segmentation, size, growth, and dynamics—how many people or companies, how many dollars, how fast the growth, and what is driving the market segment? You will be better off targeting a meaningful percentage of a smaller, well-defined, growing market than claiming a microscopic percentage of a huge, heterogeneous, mature market. Do not claim you are addressing the \$24 billion widget market, when you are really addressing the \$85 million market for specialized arc-widgets used in the emerging widget sector.

5. Your Competitive Advantage

No matter what you might think, you have competition. At a minimum, you compete with the current way of doing business. Most likely, there is a near competitor, or a direct competitor that is about to emerge (are you sufficiently paranoid yet?). Identify your real, sustainable competitive advantage and state it clearly. Do not try to convince investors that your key competitive asset is your “first mover advantage.” Here is where you can articulate your unique benefits and advantages. Believe it or not, in most cases, you should be able to make this point in one or two sentences.



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6. The Business Model

Specifically, how are you going to generate revenues, and from whom? Why is your model leverageable and scalable? Why will it be capital efficient? What are the critical metrics on which you will be evaluated—customers, licenses, units, revenues, margin? Whatever it is, what impressive levels will you reach within three to five years.

7. The Team

Why is your team uniquely qualified to win? Do not tell us you have 48 combined years of expertise in widget development; tell us your CTO was the lead widget developer for Intel, and she was on the original IEEE standards committee for arc - widgets. Do not just regurgitate a shortened form of each founder's resume; explain why the background of each team member fits. If you can, state the names of brand name companies for whom your team has worked. Do not drop a name if it is an unknown name, and do not drop a name if you are not happy to give the contact as a reference (at a later date).

8. The Promise/Financial Projections

When you are pitching to investors, your fundamental promise is that you are going to make them a boatload of money. The only way you can do that is if you can achieve a level of success that far exceeds the capital required to generate the revenue. Your Summary Financial Projections should clearly show your abilities to generate sales. However, if they are not believable, then all of your work is unconvincing. You should show five years of revenues, expenses, losses/profits, cash & headcount. You should also show a key driver or two, such as the number of customers/units projected to be shipped each year.

9. The Ask

This is the amount of funding you are asking for now. This should generally be the minimum amount of equity you need to reach the next major milestone. You can always take more if investors are willing to make more available, but it is hard to take less. If you expect to be raising another round of financing later, make that clear, and state the expected amount.



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