



# Pitch Day/Start-Up Challenge Playbook

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## Overview

One of the best, and highest-profile, ways to promote entrepreneurship in a community is to hold a “Pitch Day,” sometimes also referred to as a “Start-up Challenge” (this Playbook uses Pitch Day primarily because “Start-Up Challenge” may be too limiting as some ventures may be beyond the start-up phase of company life-cycle). Such an event, done well and regularly (say, on an annual basis), can accomplish multiple goals for the organizing entity:

- Pitch Day can showcase for the general public the entrepreneurial talent and activity in your community, providing a platform for entrepreneurs to share their stories, successes, and their ongoing needs;
- Pitch Day can serve as a means to connect entrepreneurs and their ventures with interested third parties, including potential investors, board members, advisors, employees, customers, and others who may want to be involved in a specific venture’s ecosystem;
- Pitch Day can serve as an inspiration to others in the community who may be considering taking the entrepreneurial plunge but have not yet summoned the courage to make what can be a daunting leap of faith;
- Pitch Day can serve as a vehicle to bring experienced and successful community members into the entrepreneurial ecosystem in your community and to get them more involved in other programs offered by the hosting/organizing entity;
- Pitch Day can serve as a means to enhance the profile of the hosting/organizing entity and its mission/vision/goals/programs, resulting in increased community awareness and acceptance. For non-profit and other entities that rely on contributions and donations to fund their programs, Pitch Day can be a significant source of revenue.

Silicon Couloir’s annual Pitch Day is our most successful and high-profile event, one that has become a staple of interest in the community. Pitch Day has also provided a stage (both literally and figuratively!) for Silicon Couloir to inform the community and interested attendees about its other programs and its place in the community.

While Silicon Couloir is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, Pitch Days can also be utilized by economic development agencies, incubators, accelerators and universities to further their organizational goals.

This document provides a step-by-step roadmap for how to host a Pitch Day/Start-up Challenge.



### **DISCLAIMER**

This playbook is only intended as a general guide to organizing and putting on a “Pitch Day” or “Start-Up Challenge” event. Each organization desiring to host their own event should do careful research into the feasibility of putting on such an event in their community. Silicon Couloir makes no representation regarding the legality, effectiveness, or success of any event based on the information contained herein.

Due to general solicitation securities rules promulgated by the SEC, entrepreneur presenters should not include a specific investor ask in their pitch decks and presentations. While one of the goals of Pitch Day is to get growing companies in need of capital in front of potential investors, securities law is complex and we advise that you should tread very carefully around the issue of solicitation of funds by companies. Your organization should consult the appropriate legal experts to ensure that you are not violating federal and/or state statutes, rules or regulations and Silicon Couloir is not responsible for any violations of such federal and/or state statutes, rules, or regulations.





## Is Pitch Day for You?

The first step in making a decision regarding a Pitch Day is to determine whether, in fact, such an event would contribute to the mission and values of the organization.

For example, the stated mission of Silicon Couloir is:

*“We align entrepreneurship with community vision to promote a diverse and healthy economy for current and future generations.”*

In addition, Silicon Couloir honors our values in the Pitch Day process as follows:

- **Entrepreneur Empowerment.** Sharing both success stories and opportunities for entrepreneurs to pitch to a large audience helps bring the entrepreneurial community together and also encourages all entrepreneurs to pursue their idea (even those not presenting).
- **Community Caretaking.** Finding those companies/entrepreneurs with a tie to the Teton regional community and supporting our efforts to provide living wages, create companies with sustainable business practices that are a net positive to the ecological wonders of our region.
- **World-Class.** Use the application and coaching process to market and attract those companies with potential that also align with our community vision and bring the best and brightest entrepreneurs, investors and panelists to the table.
- **Take Action** - Do not let obstacles, naysayers, planning, visioning, or unforeseen hurdles impede our ability to put on a world-class event.
- **Fun** - This event is like no other in our community and is driving conversations around the state. This event should be equal parts inspiring, invigorating, and a celebration of all the entrepreneurs in our region have built and accomplished.

As previously mentioned, Silicon Couloir is a nonprofit organization. As such, Silicon Couloir must have a public purpose that benefits the community, and as evidenced by our mission statement, we aspire to do more than just offer a range of programs to aspiring entrepreneurs and start-up organizations. Located in Jackson, WY, we grapple with others in our community on how to ensure our promotion of entrepreneurship is in line with the things that make our specific community special, including our natural beauty, wildlife, clean air and water, and recreational opportunities. We also struggle with the rest of our community on how to reduce inequality, maintain affordable housing, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure the existence of a thriving middle class.



In our community, tourism and hospitality have dominated the economy for many years. Communities like ours are struggling with over-tourism and its detrimental effects. We also suffer from, as the Economic Policy Institute recently noted, the highest rate of inequality for any metropolitan area in the country.

Given our Mission and the community in which we live and work, Silicon Couloir created Pitch Day to highlight the diversity of new companies and risk-takers in industries other than tourism and hospitality. Our Pitch Day also seeks to highlight companies that contribute to maintaining the special qualities of our community.

Considerations will obviously differ for other Wyoming communities, based on their community character and vision, as well as the specific issues and challenges they face.

We believe that, in order to create and put on a successful Pitch Day, the organizing entity *must* take into account local and communal factors and incorporate them into the Pitch Day program and ethos.

How can this be done? Prior to taking on the task of organizing a Pitch Day:

- Schedule meetings with elected officials, community leaders, and other potential stakeholders to get their input.
- Hold internal organizational meetings with the Board and staff to brainstorm ideas.
- Talk to local entrepreneurs about their challenges and needs.
- Assess the feasibility through online surveys and other means of mass communications of the community's interest in, and acceptance of, a Start-up event.
- Determine your organization's capacity to plan, organize, and successfully put on the event.

Once you've done the above, and assuming that you believe a Pitch Day makes sense for your organization and your community, make decisions internally on the focus, theme, and structure of the Pitch Day and set them down in an outline for review and approval by the appropriate people/authority.

With that out of the way, you're ready to delve into the details!

## **Put Together a Working Group**

Silicon Couloir has found the best way to organize an event is to put together a working group with defined goals, roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

In our nonprofit organization, we formed a Pitch Day Committee that consists of staff, board members, and certain outside third parties. Defining the roles of the members of the Committee is a must. In our case, even with members of the board of directors on the Committee, the executive director has the final say on decision making.

The working group or committee should be formed well in advance of the event and should meet regularly during the event planning process, with meetings becoming more frequent as the date of the event approaches. The frequency of committee meetings will likely be determined by the contents of the workplan the committee puts together (see the next section entitled “Playbook”).

In its initial meetings, along with the aforementioned definition of roles and responsibilities, the working group should arrive at clearly defined goals that would make for a successful event: financial, marketing, attendance, public relations, raising awareness of the organizational mission, etc.

The working group or committee should also seek to set expectations for each person involved as well as for the organization as the planning process moves forward. This will ensure that everyone is on the same page and working towards the same goals; and if done correctly, will minimize the risk of adverse consequences and unforeseen surprises.

Committee meetings should have an agenda, action items, and specific takeaways/task assignments to ensure progress is being made.





## Workplan

Silicon Couloir has found the best way to organize the details surrounding our Pitch Day is to put together a workplan in Gantt chart format. For those of you unfamiliar with a Gantt chart, it is essentially a visual representation of tasks that need to be accomplished with a timeline next to each specific task showing the timing and duration of each task. See **Appendix A** for an example of a Silicon Couloir Pitch Day Gantt Chart.

While there are specific programs/software that help with Gantt Charts and project scheduling, this can also be done in a relatively simple Excel spreadsheet.

The Gantt chart should include the following critical information on each line:

- The action Item
- The “owner” of the action Item (i.e., the person responsible for ensuring that it gets done)
- Whether or not that action Item has been completed
- Start date for the action item
- A bar graph showing the date/period for when the action item should be considered, started, and finished.

The Gantt chart should list every specific action item that must be performed in order to have a successful event. No item is too small to be included.



## Pick a Date/Time

Once you have determined that a Pitch Day or Pitch Day is feasible, the first step is to pick a date and time that makes sense. Considerations should include:

**Time of Year.** Different communities have different rhythms to their cultural, social, and business communities.

- Is winter a tough time to get people out to come to an event?
- Does the community have a seasonal economy, with slow period(s) and busier period(s)? If so, how might that impact attendance and ability to attract attention to the event?
- When is it likely that your target audience will be able and predisposed to attend an event?
- Are there other community events that might conflict with your event? Is there a time of year when your Pitch Day will stand out as a premier event that community members will want to attend?
- Is the preferred venue for the event available at certain times of the year?
- What time of day makes the most sense? Does afternoon preclude getting working people in attendance? Is late evening too late for families with children in school?

Historically, Silicon Couloir's Pitch Day took place in August, an incredibly busy time of year for our tourist economy and a time of year when events (nonprofit fundraisers, music shows, annual meetings) are so plentiful that any given night might have several competing. Realizing this, we changed the date for last year's event and found that the end of our busy summer tourist season – early-to-mid September – is a good time for our Pitch Day. Most tourists with school-age children have returned home for the school year. Local businesses are not quite as strapped for time and resources as they are doing the crazy core summer months. Yet, many of the volunteers in our ecosystem, including mentors, are still in town and available to participate/attend.

Silicon Couloir's Pitch Day has taken place from 4 – 7 pm for the past several years; this has resulted in lighter attendance at the beginning of the event as people working, and students/families participating in extracurricular activities, are not able to arrive at the venue for the early portions of the event. Therefore, we have determined that a later start – say 4:30 or 5 pm – will improve early attendance, provide companies that pitch first a stronger audience while not running too late into the evening.

Each community/organization will have its own considerations and variables to consider. Putting careful thought into these considerations with your team will ensure the best chance of success. And while it may make sense to move the date in future years based on experience with past events (as Silicon Couloir did in 2019), holding the event on a consistent time of year will more deeply ingrain the event in the community scheduling consciousness.





## Pick a Location

Another critically important factor in the success of a Pitch Day is to choose the proper venue. There are several factors to consider when making this decision, and it is important to keep in mind that as the annual (or bi-annual – whatever the frequency) event matures and takes root in the community, the weighting of certain factors in choosing an appropriate location may change.

**Suitability.** A key consideration is the suitability of any potential venue for the event. Does it have the technical capabilities required, such as a sound system, projector, large screen for showcasing pitch decks, a stage/podium area where presenters and speakers can stand and stand out? If you are serving or providing refreshments, does the venue have the ability to handle food/drink? Is it appropriately clean?

**Sophistication.** This is an incredibly subjective factor, but one that should be strongly considered in choosing your location. Potential investors, business people, and other attendees generally like a comfortable and clean atmosphere for these types of events. Does a community center fit the bill? A school auditorium? A movie theater? Generally, the idea is to present entrepreneurs in the best light possible, and picking a facility that reflects the quality of your organization and program is a critical factor in ensuring you give yourself – and your entrepreneurs – the best chance of success.

**Capacity.** The event venue should be able to handle the expected audience size, but not be too big that it would look empty or not well attended based on projected community engagement. It is better to be full and overflowing than look empty and not well-attended.

**Capability.** The venue, and the people who operate the venue (if applicable) should be capable of handling the tech requirements, timing and operations of the event. Seeking out the owners/operators of the venue during your location decision process and determining their capabilities, as well as securing commitments to be available for rehearsals, dry-runs, and walk-throughs on the “day of” should be a factor in considering if the venue is appropriate for your event.

**Cost.** Of course, the cost of renting or using a facility should be factored into the planning and budgeting process. Government organizations and nonprofits may be able to obtain discounted rates from venues that charge a fee; it never hurts to ask!



## **Save The Date**

Once you have a firm date and time and a confirmed location, it is critically important to get a “Save the Date” reminder out to your constituency. Many potential and interested attendees will have busy schedules, so the earlier a “Save the Date” can be sent out, the higher the likelihood that speakers, judges, presenters, and interested attendees will be able to attend. Also, and this is important, sending an early Save the Date will let other organizations in the community know that they should not schedule an event of their own on the same date and/or time, reducing the likelihood of conflicts.

Please note that it is not necessary to have a set agenda before you send out a “Save the Date” notice, nor is it required to know who the participants, judges, or speaker will be.

Silicon Couloir holds a post-event recap and assessment meeting the week after its annual Pitch Day event. In that meeting, we decide on the date of the next year’s event and make sure to communicate that to our ecosystem and mailing list as expeditiously as possible.

In general, remember the more advanced notice you can give of scheduling, the more likely you are to reduce conflicts and to increase participation and attendance.



## Set an Agenda

Once you have agreed on organizing and hosting a Pitch Day, one of the next steps is to put together an agenda for the event itself. Below is the Agenda for Silicon Couloir's Pitch Day in 2019:

3:30 PM	Doors to Venue Open
4:00 PM	Opening Remarks (organization representative)
4:10 PM	Company Presentations and Panel/Audience Q&A (17 minutes per company: 8-minute presentation + 9-minute Q&A)
5:52 PM	Audience Voting
5:56 PM	Other Local Company Updates (previous presenters; 3 companies, two minutes per company)
6:02 PM	Awards and Closing Remarks
6:10 PM	Post-Event Reception
7:00 PM	End of Event

The key elements of this Agenda are as follows:

- A period before the event began when attendees should show up and get settled.
- A very tight timeline. In order to keep the event to a time period that does not lose the audience and run too long, it is critical to script the event down to the minute. This will require someone (or a team of people) overseeing the event as it happens – timing speakers, getting presenters ready to step up when it is their time, timing the Q&A, prioritizing and asking audience questions, etc.
- The inclusion of a post-event reception where attendees can mingle with presenters. After all, a big part of the event is to give entrepreneurs and their ventures exposure to the public and interested third parties.

While the Agenda may seem simple, much thought should go into the timing for each section and how to ensure that the event sticks tightly to the Agenda timeframe.







## **Keynote Speaker**

The addition of a keynote speaker to the Pitch Day event is optional.

A keynote speaker can add to the event in several different ways:

- A speaker can provide a known “name” in the community that serves as a draw to community members and attendees.
- A speaker with deep experience and success in entrepreneurship can inspire others and add background to the experience of participating entrepreneurs and the challenges of starting and building a business.

There are also potential drawbacks to having a keynote speaker, primarily that keynote speakers tend to have difficulty sticking to a tight timeframe (which is critical for an event like this) and they also have a tendency to take focus away from the presenters and their pitches.

There are additional alternatives to a keynote speaker. In the case of Silicon Couloir, which has a history of several Pitch Day events, the organization has chosen to showcase past winners by providing them a platform to give a brief update on their company since they last participated in Pitch Day.

Whichever option you may choose, it is important to set strict parameters on the length of time allowed for a keynote speech or for company updates. In the case of Silicon Couloir, this allotted time is 6 minutes.

## Prizes/Awards

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Notwithstanding the incredibly important disclaimer above, Pitch Day would not be complete without some prizes and/or awards presented to participants. Your event may just have one “Grand Jury” or “Grand Panelist” Award, or it may have several awards for different reasons or categories.

Remember, all Pitch Day presenters will receive the benefit of expert coaching regardless of whether or not they win an actual award at Pitch day itself.

Silicon Couloir currently offers 3 awards:

- The **Panelist Choice Award** given to the company that the judging panel determines has 1) the most compelling business idea, 2) the best chance for business success, 3) the highest likelihood of getting funded, and 4) the strongest presentation. The prize is unrestricted cash money.
- The **Audience Choice Award** is given to the company who “wows” the audience with their presentation. The prize is a combination of money (less than the Panelist Award) and the free use of at Silicon Couloir’s Cowork Space for a year.
- The **Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award** is presented to that entrepreneur or venture whose person/team and company best embodies the core values and mission of Silicon Couloir, which is to align entrepreneurship with community vision to promote a diverse economy and healthy environment for current and future generations. The prize is a combination of money (less than the Audience Choice Award) and free entry into the Silicon Couloir TEAMS Mentor program.

### **Types of Prizes/Awards**

There are several types of prizes/awards that can be utilized:

- Money
- Trophy of some type
- Plaque for permanent recognition in an appropriate venue (the hosting organization's offices, for example)
- Other non-monetary awards with value (i.e., use of cowork space, participation in other of the hosting organization's programs, gift certificate, etc.)

**Monetary Prize/Award.** A monetary award is obviously the most direct and, to the participating entrepreneur, probably the most beneficial type of prize. And obviously, the larger the award the better!

**Trophy.** For certain awards, a high-quality glass trophy with the award name and the name of the Award-winning company engraved on it can serve as a boost to the winning company and a reminder of their success at your event. This may be especially applicable if the award is an audience award or an award named after a sponsor or benefactor.



**Plaque.** A small but effective prize is to have names of award winners each year for a specific award in a frame hanging on the wall of an appropriate office or other space.

**Non-Monetary Awards with Value.** These types of awards may actually have nearly as much value to winning participants as monetary awards. Free use of office space, automatic acceptance into other programs offered to entrepreneurs in the community, or free business advice/consultation by experts are all examples of non-monetary awards that may have meaningful and lasting value to award recipients.

## **Sponsors**

No Pitch Day event would be considered whole without the recruitment of sponsors, both corporate and individual. Sponsorships serve several purposes:

- **Fundraising.** Sponsorships, especially corporate sponsorships, can serve as a vehicle to fund the costs of Pitch Day and, if well-executed by the organization, to fund other operating expenses/projects of the organization beyond Pitch Day.
- **Visibility.** Sponsorships can raise the visibility of the Pitch Day organizing entity. This may occur through promotion by the sponsoring entity, or by promotion by the organizing entity of the fact that it was able to attract corporate or individual sponsors who are highly regarded in the community.
- **Marketing/Public Relations.** Sponsorships can raise the respectability of the Pitch Day event itself - and increase attendance at the event - through advertising/signage of the sponsoring entity as well as free publicity from banners and signs with sponsor information placed around the community by both the sponsor and organizer of the event.

Sponsorships can take many forms:

- **Event Sponsorship (Naming Rights).** Generally, this is a large monetary sponsorship that gives the sole sponsor the right to have its name attached to the event as well as a higher profile of promotion by the organizing entity. Think “Silicon Couloir Pitch Day sponsored by XYZ Bank”, or “XYZ Bank Silicon Couloir Pitch Day”
- **Award Sponsorships.** Sponsors can underwrite the monetary and non-monetary awards at a given Pitch Day and receive recognition whenever the awards are mentioned in writing or orally. A representative of the sponsor may also be chosen to announce the award and hand out any prize at the event itself.
- **Supplies Sponsorships.** Sponsors may be willing to donate food, refreshments and alcoholic (or non-alcoholic) beverages for pre- and post-event social periods. These sponsors should get recognition at the location of their donated goods with some appropriately sized signage. Something on the order of “Thank you to ABC Beverages for donating beer for tonight’s event”.

Sponsorship recruitment should occur as early as possible before the event - in the case of an annual event, as soon as the previous year’s event has ended. Obvious sponsorship candidates are local businesses - banks, real estate, insurance, restaurants - any entity that desires an enhanced profile in the local community.

*It is essential that the organizing entity of Pitch Day have a clear understanding with all sponsors of expectations for/from both sides, and for larger sponsorships, this should be put in writing in a simple sponsorship agreement.*





## **Applications and the Application Period**

The application period for entrepreneurs to apply for Pitch Day should take place approximately 3 - 4 months prior to the date of the event. The application period should remain open for 3 - 4 weeks, although this can be extended as needed. However, it is critically important to leave enough time after the end of the application period for 2 subsequent events to occur:

1. Having all applicants appear before a selection committee to interview/present and then have the selection committee make its decision as to who will be the Pitch Day presenters, and
2. Ensuring that there will be time for 3-5 coaching sessions for each entrepreneur chosen to present at Pitch Day.

Potential applicants can be notified, the application period publicized, and applications can be requested via a press release and paid advertising in local newspapers and on local radio. Flyers may also be used by placing them strategically in locations where they are likely to be viewed by the target audience.

All communications should, at a minimum, include the following specifics:

- A description of your Pitch Day
- Open date and end date for the application period
- How applications should be submitted (i.e., via email with email address provided)
- The form of the application (i.e., an 8-page slide deck in .pdf or .ppt format)
- Eligibility rules (i.e., geographic limitations, residence limitations)
- Interview period and final selection committee decision date
- Organization contact information for anyone who has questions (i.e., an email address or phone number)

Silicon Couloir has certain criteria on who may qualify to apply and present at Pitch Day. Your organization criteria may differ. The following are some criteria that may be used to qualify applicants:

- Viability of idea
- Strength of company
- Geographic location
- Entrepreneur residence
- Company size
- Participation in a previous Pitch Day
- Pre-revenue vs. Post-revenue
- Engagement in other programs your organization conducts

## Selection Committee + Finalist Selection

The selection committee filters through applications and determines who will present at Pitch Day. There will often be significant overlap among the selection committee and the working group: members of the organizations' staff, board, and also interested third parties. It is very helpful to include individuals with prior experience in Pitch Days or similar events on the selection committee.

Once the application period has ended, staff should ensure that all applications are complete, and perform any follow-up to ensure that no documents are missing and all decks are viewable. The first step is to read through each of the presenter's decks, and determine if any can be immediately eliminated from consideration due to lack of meeting established criteria. Then, the selection committee will schedule time to get together, interview applicants and vote on all applications. In the interview process, applicants come before the selection committee and run through their presentation and deck under time constraint just as if live on stage; this is followed by a 15-minute or so Q&A period and feedback from the committee, ensuring that all applicants take away something positive from the interview experience. The interview process should be done as quickly as possible, and preferably all on the same day (although if you have a significant number of applicants, a two-day interview period may be needed. Next, choose any that are unanimous or nearly unanimous for acceptance, and pencil those in as finalists.

Next comes the hard part: evaluating the middle of the pack. Keep in mind how many spots you have remaining to fill. Application should be evaluated primarily on the advertised criteria for the panel award: 1) the most compelling business idea, 2) the best chance for business success, 3) the highest likelihood of getting funded, and 4) the strongest presentation. Beyond this, the selection committee should also consider the diversity of presenters in gender, age, geography, background, race, ethnicity, and industry. A more diverse makeup of presenters makes for a better competition and a more compelling and interesting event. Competitions with presenters of similar backgrounds or similar company industries can bore the audience, so diversity is crucial. Finally, "coachability" should also be factored in to the committee's decision-making process.

Try to choose the presenters without resorting to a multi-option vote. It is hard to keep in mind diversity when conducting a vote with several different options. If you are going to select six finalists, try to choose at least five as a group, and then you can vote to fill the remaining last slot.

Once you have selected your ideal finalist list, the organization should call each individual to congratulate them on their acceptance, **but be sure to confirm the individual's availability on the date of the competition.** Companies should not have anyone presenting for them aside from the Founder/CEO.





## **Coaching & Presenter Pitch Decks**

### **Recruiting Coaches**

Coaching Pitch Day finalists is one of the core elements of a successful Pitch Day. While it takes place “behind the scenes”, it is important to remember that one of the ultimate goals of Pitch Day is to improve the presenting entrepreneurs’ business focus and ability to sell their business to interested third parties (not just investors, but also potential board members, staff and clients/customers).

The first step in recruiting quality coaches is to make a list of desired coach attributes: length of time in community, applicable business or other experience, ability to coach in person, and any other factors you deem relevant. The next step is to send coaching solicitation emails to potential coaching candidates within 1 week after the Pitch Day Selection Committee selects finalists. Then have staff and/or working group members briefly interview potential coaches, which can be done in person or by phone. Make sure to have a tentative schedule of coaching dates available so you can determine availability of potential coaches. Finally, have the working group settle on coach candidates and inform them that they have been chosen.

There are two strategies in scheduling coaching sessions: continuity of coaches or “fresh eyes”. The former consists of having the same coaches coach the same presenters throughout the 3-5 coaching sessions. The latter mixes up the coaches after a couple of sessions to get a fresh perspective on the presentations and decks of the finalists. Of course, you can combine the two, and this is the approach Silicon Couloir has taken. There should be 4 -5 coaches at each coaching session, and Silicon Couloir has kept some of the coaches consistent throughout the coaching process while rotating in other coaches to provide fresh eyes. A staff member or member of the working group should always be present at coaching sessions, and it is incumbent on that person to ensure smooth flow, that no one coach dominates the sessions, or that a coach with “fresh eyes” doesn't completely blow up the progress made in previous sessions.

**Finally, it is important to remember that all coaches are volunteers, so they should exhibit enthusiasm at being offered the opportunity to impart their learned wisdom to the finalist entrepreneurs.**

### **Creating a Pitch Deck**

The creation of a quality pitch deck is essential for the success of the participating entrepreneurs in any Pitch Day event. Silicon Couloir provides its Pitch Day coaches with the following information (including some overlap with the coaching section previously covered) that covers what we believe are best practices in creating a quality pitch deck that will provide

the entrepreneur with the springboard to present his/her venture in the best light, and that will resonate with members of the audience.

### **Coaching Guidelines**

Presenting companies will be put through 3-5 coaching sessions leading up to Pitch Day. Coaching is an integral part of the idea behind Pitch Day - it is just as important as the event itself. **Therefore, these sessions are mandatory.** During each session, companies will have 30 minutes to present their pitch (8 minutes/8 slides) and receive coaches' feedback.

Again, coaches play a tremendously valuable role in the development of these companies. This is not just about helping build great pitches. This is about building great entrepreneurs and great companies.

During the coaching sessions, Silicon Couloir strives to offer constructive, respectful feedback, and advice. Of course, honesty is important, but the coaching is not intended to have a hard edge to it (we're not "Shark Tank"). Finding holes in the business model is valuable, and so is advice on how to plug the holes. This should be done respectfully and in the interest of improvement and building, not as a means of tearing down individuals.

Coaching efforts fall into two categories:

- **Hone the business idea:**

- ☐ Does the product solve a problem, or fulfill a deep desire?
- ☐ Are the core customer and the size of the market well understood?
- ☐ Is there a realistic plan to enter the market?
- ☐ Is the competitive landscape well understood?
- ☐ Is the revenue model sound?
- ☐ Are the financial projections reasonable?
- ☐ Is the team well-positioned to execute?

- **Polish the pitch:**

- ☐ Are the slides organized in a way that allows the audience to grasp the key points (as mentioned above)?
- ☐ Are the slides clean and to the point (ie. free of small font words, bullet points, and clutter)?



- ☐ Is the presenter connecting with the audience in a genuine way (i.e. not just reading bullet points on a slide)?
- ☐ Is their vocal tonality and volume appealing?
- ☐ Is the presenter smiling and making good eye contact?
- ☐ Does the presenter have good control of the technology (ie. advancing slides at the right time)?

## **Pitch Day Presenters – Pitch Deck Guidelines**

The standard Pitch Deck consists of 8 slides. The following thoughts and guiding principles should help presenters to create the best possible deck for the venture *(also, please see Appendix B for a table providing a more detailed explanation of what each slide should convey)*:

- **Slide 1:** The Problem and why someone should care
- **Slide 2:** The Solution (your product or service)
- **Slide 3:** The Customer (what kind, marquee names, if any) and Market (how big)
- **Slide 4:** The Delivery Mechanism that connects your product/service to the customer
- **Slide 5:** The Value Proposition, i.e., how does this business monetize
- **Slide 6:** How you get paid
- **Slide 7:** Who are the people on the team and why should I invest in them?
- **Slide 8:** What are financial projections in summary format - revenue, COGS, SG&A, Net Profit - up to 5 years out
- Sometimes it might make sense to expand the deck to 1 or 2 more slides. The most common reasons for doing this (only add if applicable) are:
  - ☐ **Possible Additional Slide:** Key Intellectual Property
  - ☐ **Possible Additional Slide:** Detailed current and one or two year financials (only if company is post-revenue and already operating)



### **Points of Emphasis**

**Investors Buy Management.** The #1 thing most experienced investors invest in is people. Great ideas in great markets statistically do not happen organically without talent. And, one maxim when it comes to people is that "past performance does predict future results." So, in the presentation, it's important to communicate what you've done and the depth and quality of your team so investors can imagine what you are going to do with this opportunity.

**Focus, Focus, Focus.** This may be called the "ONE THING" concept. Few entrepreneurs have the discipline to make the tough calls and narrow their message, product, market, customer, investment pitch, etc... They think that if they widen their net, especially in a huge market, they

will find some sort of traction someplace and make a business work. Their lack of focus will, in fact, be the root of their failure. Being everything to everyone is in fact nothing for no one.

### **Deck Format**

- Please remember to build your deck in wide format (16:9 ratio).
- You may use animated slides if you like but please let us know in advance so we have the tech dialed in beforehand.
- Avoid lots of words, industry jargon, and please do not use a small font. Rule of thumb: The smallest font size should be 1/2 the age of the oldest person in the room. Connect with the audience verbally - don't ask them to read and listen to you at the same time. You are not building a deck to be emailed. You are building a live, in-person pitch.
- Consider stripping out all the visual elements of your pitch and writing the one-sentence "big idea" for each slide that you want the audience to remember, and then build visuals around that big idea.
- Show us your product in the deck. Even if you are an app/website company, the audience wants to see your product. Take us for a tour by incorporating your app/website into the visuals of the deck - you don't even have to verbalize it; just show it and we'll understand.
- There are countless blogs on how to build a good pitch deck out there. Spend some time googling for pitch deck examples of similar companies to your own.

### **Financials**

Every coach will want to see financials presented in a slightly different way and there is no silver bullet here. However, there are some commonalities, so please consider these key elements to consider when putting together a slide with financial information:

- Gross Revenue
- COGS
- Gross Profit and Gross Margin
- SG&A (**S**elling, **G**eneral & **A**dministrative Expenses) and/or Op-Ex (**O**perating **E**xpenses)
- Net Operating Profit and Net Profit Margin (this could also be displayed as EBITDA – **E**arning **B**efore **I**nterest, **T**axes, **D**epreciation, and **A**mortization))

Your revenue model is a key part of your pitch. Therefore, please tell us:

- What percentage of revenue comes from what sources?
- What are your key revenue milestones?
- Does your revenue model change over time?

### **Summary**

Remember.... big font, big concepts, don't get into the weeds. Infographics here can be a BIG help!

Finally – here are a couple of good articles/sites to reference:

- [How A Speaker Can Break Through and Connect With Their Audience](#)
- [Kaufmann Foundation Powerful Presentations Tutorials](#)



## **Panel Selection**

Panel selection is critical to the success of your Pitch Day event. The idea is to have a panel with experience and expertise in business and start-up/emerging/growth companies. Panel members cannot be shy about asking questions, and they must be quick on their feet in their ability to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of each specific presentation and to ask questions and make comments that are relevant and helpful.

The panel is not supposed to attack the presenter or totally tear down their venture. Their function is to ask constructively critical questions of the entrepreneur relating to his/her company, to comment on the strengths of the company and presentation, and to help the presenter see any weaknesses the panelist feels are important to understand.

Panelist selection should begin well in advance of the date of your event, as many potential panelists will have busy schedules filled out well in advance. The panelist pool may come from local business people, professors, academics in the field of business or organizations, angel investors in early-stage companies, staff members of the Wyoming Business Council and/or other relevant state/regional organizations, economic development professionals, and even other entrepreneurs.

A slate of 4-6 panelists should be the appropriate number of judges so that each panelist has the ability to ask questions.

Your organization should set aside time to speak with each panelist prior to the event to set expectations and go over ground rules. Panelists should be asked to arrive at Pitch Day at least an hour prior to the beginning of the event, and a designated staff member should bring them to their seats in the venue and speak to them as a group, again reiterating ground rules, expectations, voting criteria, and answering any questions panelists may have.







## PR Materials

You will need to create/collect a number of PR materials in order to have an effective marketing campaign. Shared software such as Google Drive or Dropbox can make it easier to give access to your whole team.

The following is a list of materials you will need:

- Collect high-resolution logos for your organization/event sponsors.
- Collect high-resolution logos for your presenting companies.
- Create brief descriptions of the companies' products or services.
- Collect headshots of company founders.
- Collect headshots of panelists.
- Collect short biographies from panelists.
- Create an event logo that can be used throughout your campaign for consistent branding. You may want to work with a graphic designer who can also assist with the banner and brochure design. The banner, flyer, brochure, and print ads should all share the same branding.
- Create an event flyer that can be distributed around town.
- Create and order banners if you chose to use them (more below).
- Create a **master slide deck** for the day of. The master deck is your guide to the event. (See Master Slide Deck section for more details).
- Create an **event brochure** that includes the following:
  - ☐ Your organization's mission/vision/core values/programs
  - ☐ Welcome from ED
  - ☐ Organization staff and board
  - ☐ List of and thank you to coaches
  - ☐ Presenting companies Executive Summaries (See Appendix E)
  - ☐ Panelist headshots and bios
  - ☐ Organization/event sponsors
  - ☐ Blank pages for notes
  - ☐ Audience survey (optional: see Post Event Assessment)

Note: The brochure can be a big expense if you are printing them in color. Consider a digital version to save money and resources.

## **Marketing/PR/Social Media**

Now that you have your companies ready to pitch at an impressive venue, you need to get the word out to attract a large audience. Your marketing plan should be in place several months prior to the event with tasks assigned in your workplan. It's also recommended that you create a marketing budget and strategize the best way to use your funds to reach the maximum number of people.

### **Recommended Marketing Tools**

Build a **web page** for Pitch Day. The page should include an explanation about what Pitch Day is. Each year update your page with date, time, and place; application information and links; presenting companies' logos and descriptions; panelist headshots and bios. You can put a button on your organization's website homepage to highlight Pitch Day.

An effective and affordable way to market the event is to send **personal invites** via email or Paperless Post. Paperless Post Flyers are recommended because they are free to create, can be embedded in an email, and can be forwarded. The organization's staff and board should compile a list of donors, ecosystem members, local entrepreneurs, business owners, investors, and elected officials for the invitation or email. Encourage your core audience to invite friends or family.

Be sure to send an email to all participating companies several weeks prior to the event with your invitation embedded. Encourage the ventures to invite as many friends as possible to support and vote for them for the Audience Choice Award.

**Banners** placed around town can be a good way to advertise the big day. Banners can be expensive but are highly visible. It's recommended that the banner has a date that is attached with velcro so it can be reused with a new date in subsequent years. If banner spaces are managed by local companies/ entities, be sure to reserve the banner space well in advance.

**Community calendars** (newspapers, local chamber, community foundation, public radio) are also a good way to let people know about the event and are usually free.

**Interviews** with your local radio station are a great way to provide more in-depth insight into the value of a pitch day.

Consider placing ad spots with **local radio**.

If your event is ticketed, **Eventbrite** can be used for registration with minimal fees. If you don't require attendees to register or purchase tickets, be sure to have a sign-in sheet at the door to capture contacts for your database.



**Electronic newsletters** are inexpensive and can be distributed widely to your email list. Many website platforms offer newsletter capabilities. Mailchimp and Constant Contact are also options. Images of your presenting companies, background information about the companies, entrepreneur interviews, and panel bios all make for good newsletter content.

If you have a regular gathering for your organization it can be fun to have a “**Pitch Day Preview.**” Invite your presenting companies to give a short talk about their company to get the audience excited for the full pitch.

**Local newspaper ads**, while often costly, still seem to be an important part of our marketing strategy. It’s recommended to start placing ads 2 weeks prior to the event. One way to reduce cost may be to consider ad sharing with a title sponsor.

If your venue has a website and social media presence, ask them to help you advertise the event. Be sure to provide the content for consistent messaging and branding.

## **Social Media**

A strong social media presence can make a world of difference for an event and is very cost-effective. Use your social media channels often to show off your competing companies, prizes, and panelists. Create a social media plan with at least **3 posts per week** on all channels in the month prior to your event. Platforms such as **Hootsuite** allow users to post to multiple channels at once and make social media marketing far more efficient.

Create a **Facebook event page** for your Pitch Day. You can then invite friends to the event and encourage other team members, board members, and presenting companies to do so as well. Make any event sponsors co-sponsors of your event page.

**Canva** is a useful platform to create a social media “tile” with your logo, event details and other assets you want to include such as venture logos, presenter headshots, and company descriptions.

Facebook and Instagram **boosts** will help your posts reach a wider audience.

As with the paperless post flyer invite, encourage participating companies and board members to share posts.

## **Press Releases**

You will want coverage from your local paper in advance of the event, at the event, and as a follow-up. Therefore, a series of press releases will be needed. Be sure to include newspapers from surrounding communities and the paper’s photographer in the press release.

- 1) Send out a press release announcing the opening of the application period for ventures. This will help you reach a wide audience of entrepreneurs and will alert the public to the event.

- 2) A second press release should be sent several weeks prior to the event announcing the participating companies and prizes available.
- 3) A final press release can be sent announcing the winners.

All of these press releases can be repurposed in your regular newsletters, website, news/blog and can be sent to local listservs if available.

### **Photography**

Hire or assign a photographer for the day of the event. You will be able to use the event photos for the follow-up press release, on your website, and for future Pitch Day marketing.

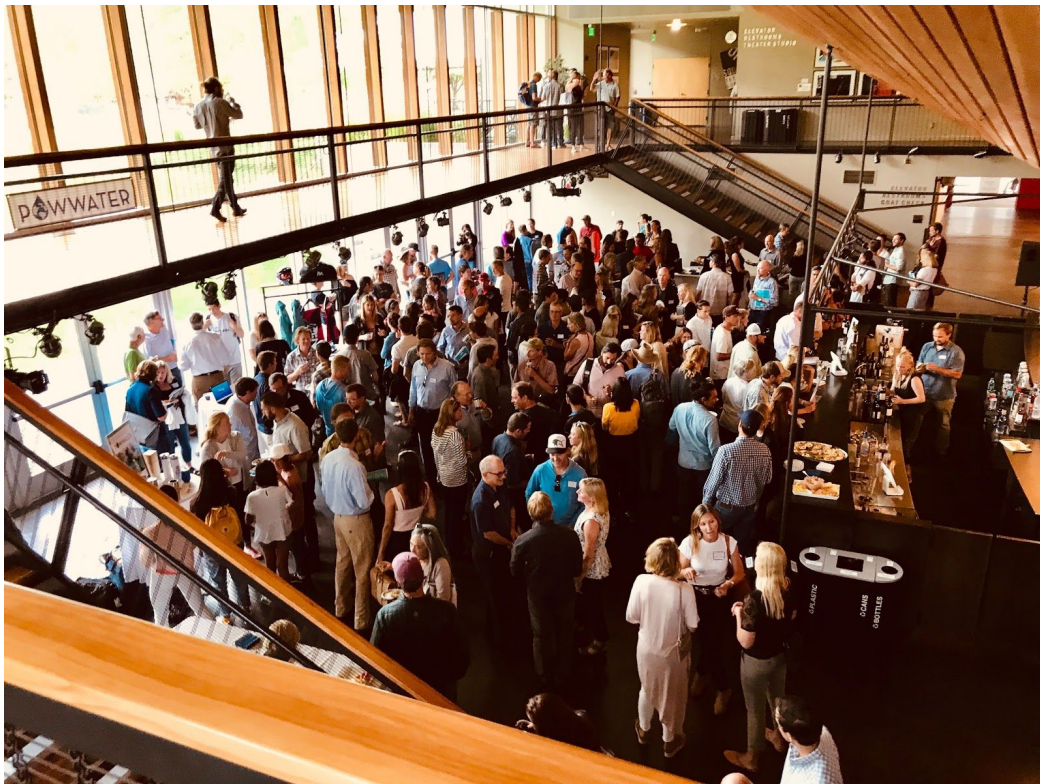
If your budget allows, a videographer will enable you to share the event with prospective donors, sponsors, or community members who couldn't attend. One note on video: it is possible that a presenter's business model, or a key aspect of their business, may change over time. Video of this presenter may become outdated; this is a risk to consider when posting video to a website or social media where it might remain for some time.



## **Food/Beverage**

Your post-pitch reception should include refreshments for your attendees to encourage them to spend time with and ask questions of the presenting companies. A cash bar and light appetizers are all that's required. If you can work with a local caterer/restaurant to procure donated food, all the better. If you can get a beverage donation it can also be fun to give each attendee a free drink ticket for beer or wine. If you are on a tight budget, local grocery stores can often provide affordable platters.

If time allows, you may want to consider holding a VIP dinner on-site (or nearby) for Pitch Day participants, panelists, and major donors or supporters of your organization. We have found, however, that a post-reception event can cut the reception short and take time away from the ability of Pitch Day participants and interested parties to spend quality time together.





## The Day of...

While actual Pitch Day can be nerve-racking, if your organization has followed this guide and properly prepared for the event, execution should be calm, orderly and effective.

However, remember that for a big event like Pitch Day, it is likely that everyone involved—organizers, presenters, speakers, even panelists, and sponsors—may be slightly on edge. ***It is imperative that you and your organization follow your script and workplan and maintain calm and composure at all times*** (yes, easier said than done!). Critical documents for the “day of” include:

- Written instructions for presenters as to where they should be and what they should do at all times
- Written accompaniment to the Master Slide Deck so the MC/organizers are always aware of what's coming next
- A written Pitch Day Schedule (see example below) choreographing speakers and events down to the minute
- A written schedule for volunteers (greeters, ushers, etc.)
- A written list of supplies required for the event and where they are physically needed
- A clearly written memo for staff detailing specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each active staff member working the event.
- Any other written information you decide is important to properly execute your workplan.

One “to do” not to overlook is to perform a tech run-through on the day of the event to ensure that all systems are functional and working properly. This should include allowing the presenters to get familiar with the stage and venue, to do an abbreviated dry run with their decks, and to walk through the mechanics of the event. This should be done in coordination with operators of the venue where the event is taking place..

**Roadblocks, miscommunications, and other unforeseen circumstances will likely occur. At such times, it is critically important to remember that your audience is not aware that a hiccup is occurring or just occurred, so the best course of action is to continue moving forward with your workplan.**

Below is a sample Pitch Day detailed schedule for the “day of” (slide references are to the Master Slide Deck):

## **Pitch Day Schedule 2019**

### Opening (Slide 1)

- 4:00-4:04 Welcome Remarks – Master of Ceremonies (Slides 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
- 4:04-4:06 Lead Sponsor Remarks – Sponsor Name, Company (Slide 7)
- 4:06-4:10 Introduction of the panel and first presenter - Org Board Member (Slides 8, 9, 10, 11)

### Presenters

- 4:10-4:18 Presenter 1, Company 1 (8 min)
- 4:18-4:27 Q&A (9 min)

- 4:27-4:35 Presenter 2, Company 2 (8 min)
- 4:35-4:44 Q&A (9 min)

- 4:44-4:52 Presenter 3, Company 3 (8 min)
- 4:52-5:01 Q&A (9 min)

- 5:01-5:09 Presenter 4, Company 4 (8 min)
- 5:09-5:18 Q&A (9 min)

- 5:18-5:26 Presenter 5, Company 5 (8 min)
- 5:26-5:35 Q&A (9 min)

- 5:35-5:43 Presenter 6, Company 6 (8 min)
- 5:43-5:52 Q&A (9 min)

- 5:52-5:56 Audience voting protocol, Fundraising Plug, past Presenters introductions -Master of Ceremonies (Slides, 11, 12, 13)

### Past Presenter Updates

- 5:56 – 5:58 Past Presenter 1, Past Company 1 - 2018 Audience Choice (Slide 13)
- 5:58 – 6:00 Past Presenter 2, Past Company 2 – 2018 Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award (Slide 13)
- 6:00 – 6:02 Past Presenter 3, Past Company 3, 2018 Pitch Day Participant (Slide 13)

- 6:02 – 6:07 Awards: Panelist Choice presented by Sponsor 1 (Slide 14), then Audience Choice presented by Sponsor 2 (Slide 15), then Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award presented by Sponsor or Board Member 3 (Slide 16)

- 6:07 – 6:10 Close – Thank General Sponsors, Event Sponsors - Master of Ceremonies (Slide 17)

- 6:10-7:00 Cocktails





## **Prize/Award Voting**

As mentioned earlier, Silicon Couloir most recently has been awarding three prizes: the Panel Award, Audience Choice Award, and The Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award.

### **Panel Award**

Once the presenters have concluded their pitches, the panel should leave the room accompanied by a staff member in order to deliberate somewhere in private. Often, one or two presentations stand out and a consensus can be reached without voting. If this is impossible, have individual panelists vote and the organization's executive director tally the votes. If there is no immediate winner, eliminate the presenters with the least votes until there are just two choices remaining and have the panel vote again. If there is a tie, the executive director will cast the tiebreaking vote.

### **Audience Award**

A great way to engage your audience is by allowing them to have a say in awarding prizes. There are a couple of recommended ways to conduct the audience vote. If you have a smaller audience, you can distribute voting sheets attached to the event program. Then, once the presentations are complete, have staff compile the sheets and tally the votes.

If you have a larger audience you can pay a small sum (~\$100) for a text message voting service. Silicon Couloir has previously used Wire2Air. You can also use this service to allow the audience to text in questions during the Q&A for each presenter. This allows staff to screen the questions and make sure the best questions get asked during the allotted time. (Keep in mind that most of the Q&A time is devoted to questions from the panelists).

Allow each audience member to vote for just one presenter, regardless of how you tally votes. There is no shame in audiences simply voting for their favorite: it encourages entrepreneurs to invite their friends and family, thereby increasing your attendance.

### **Hosting Organization Award: Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award**

It is often nice to give a third award based on values or alignment between the hosting organization and a particular entrepreneur/company. Silicon Couloir awards the Bob Arndt Community Caretaker Award to "that entrepreneur or venture whose person/team and company best embodies the core values and mission of Silicon Couloir, which is to align entrepreneurship with community vision to promote a diverse economy and healthy environment for current and future generations". Bob Arndt was a tremendous individual in our community who embodied Silicon Couloir.

If you do plan on presenting an award based on organizational or community values, we have found the most expeditious way to determine the winner is to have your board and/or staff vote on the recipient.



## **Master Slide Deck**

The Master Slide Deck is an incredible opportunity for your organization. It is a time to present to a captive audience and to set the tone for the event, as well as communicate who you are as an organization, what your mission and goals are and, frankly, whatever else you want to impart to attendees and the community.

Normally, the Master Slide Deck will be used to open up the event, with a member of your organization speaking to the audience while flipping through the first section of slides. The Master Slide Deck will also be utilized throughout the event: to introduce sponsors, to introduce panelists, to introduce presenters, to provide audience voting information (if applicable), to introduce a keynote speaker or previous presenting company updates (if applicable), to make a pitch for fundraising while votes are being tallied (or at other opportune times), and to wrap up the event and thank everyone for coming.

Basically, the Master Slide Deck is your template for the event, and it should be customized to your structure, timing, priorities, and community.

The essential basics of a master deck are:

- ☐ Organization logo and mission
- ☐ Organization or event sponsors
- ☐ Any slides the MC want to include for opening remarks
- ☐ Schedule for the event
- ☐ Keynote introduction slides
- ☐ Any slides the keynote speaker wants to include for their talk
- ☐ Company slide decks created by each company in the order they are presenting
- ☐ Slide explaining how the audience vote is captured (See Prizes/Awards section for details)
- ☐ Thank you and closing

But remember, you can customize this master deck however you see fit to make your Pitch Day conform to your organization and your community.

## **Post-Event Assessment**

It's essential to assess and debrief your event so that you can make improvements for the following year.

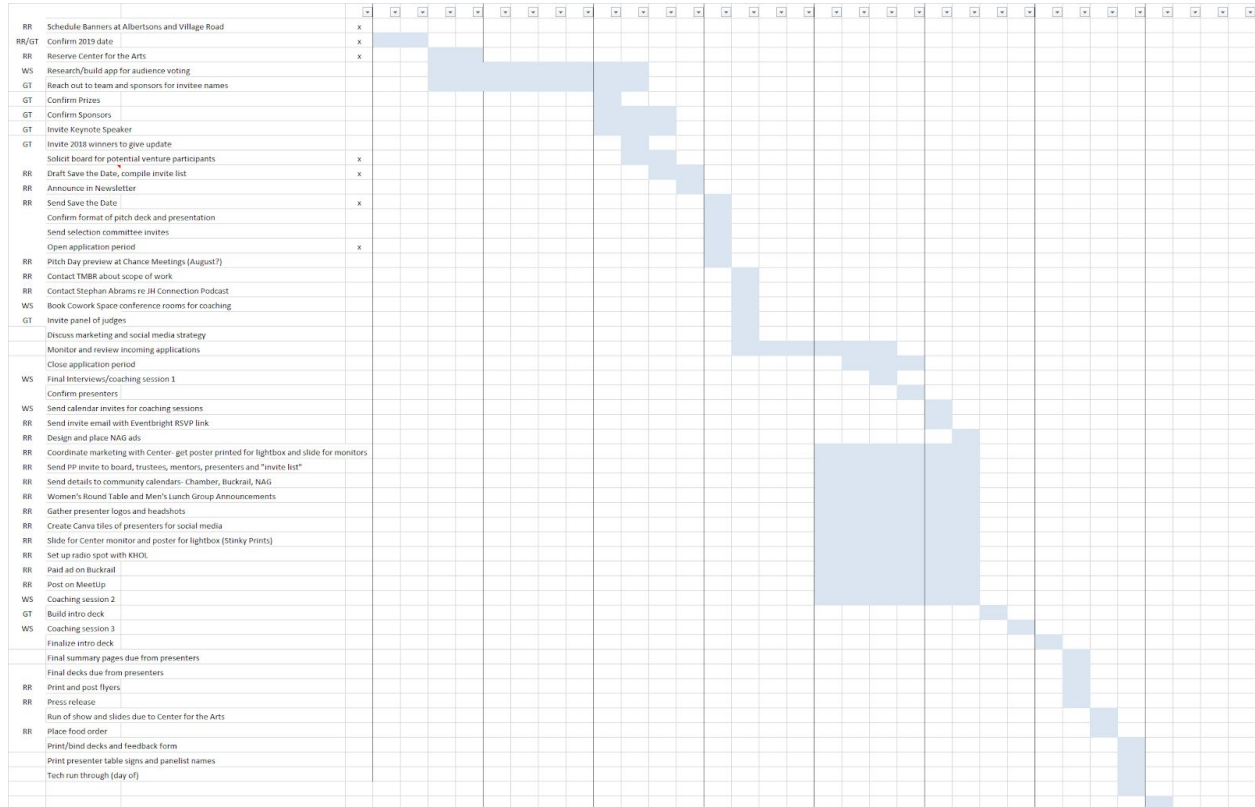
If you included an audience survey in your brochure, record the responses in a spreadsheet. Alternatively, you can send out a digital survey to audience members from the emails collected at registration/upon arrival. Digital surveys created in Google Forms or Survey Monkey have the advantage of easy conversion into graphs or spreadsheets.

You should also survey your presenting companies, coaches, and panelists to garner their feedback on what worked and what needs improvement.

Sit down with your team to debrief the event no more than two weeks afterwards. What went well? What can be improved upon? What changes should be made for next year? Capture the ideas in a document that can be referred to later.

## Appendix A – Gantt Chart

Below is a sample Gantt Chart for a Silicon Couloir Pitch Day. This sample is not meant to be comprehensive or in final form - it is to be used for illustration purposes only.





## **Appendix B – Pitch Deck In-Depth Slide Explanation**

Slides	Successful use of this slide would leave the audience with...
1. The Problem and why I, or someone, should care	A very clear understanding of the problem that people are struggling with, or deep desire they have. Not simply that you came up with a cool idea that could make money. A new widget is interesting as a gimmick and might entertain an audience. But a problem that needs solving, or desire that needs to be fulfilled, sets the hook with sophisticated investors and motivates them to lean in.
2. The Solution (your product or service)	A very clear, specific, and easily explained solution (your product or service) that solves the aforementioned problem or fulfills the aforementioned desire.
3. The Customer (clearly identified) and Market (how big)	A detailed explanation of who your perfect customer is. By showing an investor that you deeply understand the ONE perfect customer who will be magnetized to your idea, you give them confidence that you have: 1) The ability to laser focus as an entrepreneur and 2) The ability to communicate effectively to the people who really matter most to your brand. Our world is very noisy these days. If you try to message to and manage a broad sample of our population, with limited funds and experience, you will likely become scattered and unsuccessful.
4. The Delivery Mechanism that connects your product/service to the customer (how to go to market)	Confidence that you not only have a good idea but that you also have a clear understanding of how to navigate complicated distribution channels.



5. The Value Proposition (how does this business monetize) and how do you get paid?	Knowledge of how the pricing model works and how customers actually pay you for the amazing new product/service you have dreamed up. A good idea is nothing without sales.
6. Who are your competitors and what is your unfair advantage (key differentiation points)?	How YOU are perfectly positioned, better than anyone else, to execute on the brilliance you have already laid out. Why will you be able to perform where others cannot? What experience, knowledge, or intellectual property have you developed that sets you apart?
7. What are the key financial projections and relevant milestones?	Confidence that you have thought through the numbers of running a business. Even if you are an entrepreneurial dreamer, show us that you have given significant thought to your financial realities. What happens at key milestones and why does that matter? What happens when you hit X number of customers or scale your production to Y? What conditions do you need to create to make that happen?
8. Who are the people on the team and why should I invest in them?	Confidence that you have the right people on the figurative bus, in the right seats. Additionally, you have identified the key next seats to fill and a strategy to do so.

## **Appendix C – Pitch Day Participant Pledge**

The following is a sample letter that is used to engage participants in your Pitch Day and to help them understand the commitment being made by the organization sponsoring Pitch Day as well as their time and effort commitment to ensuring a successful event for all parties involved.

July 15, 2019

Dear Pitch Day Finalist,

Congratulations on being selected as a Pitch Day Finalist! As you know, the entire Silicon Couloir community is cheering you on and ready to help however we can.

You will be hearing from us in the very near future about the next steps in the process, specifically, creating an Executive Summary and scheduling coaching sessions to ensure that you and your company excel on Pitch Day. Please note that these coaching sessions are a mandatory part of the Pitch Day process.

Our mission is simple: Silicon Couloir aligns entrepreneurship with community vision to promote a diverse economy and healthy environment for current and future generations.

We believe in a community of local entrepreneurs who not only receive support when needed, but also offer help to others when possible. Your actions leading up to and following Pitch Day will help continue to build this envisioned community.

The coaching sessions and prize packages are generously donated by individuals we refer to as Community Caretakers. These people truly care about the growth of entrepreneurship and have offered their time and money to help you succeed. As the steward of these gifts, we feel obligated at Silicon Couloir to make sure their use is consistent with the desires of our supporters, and our organizational values.

Therefore, to ensure a consistent level of engagement with our community, and meaningful use of your prize package, we ask that you sign the pledge that is attached to this letter.

I and the rest of the Silicon Couloir team look forward to working with you throughout this journey!

Regards,

Executive Director  
Silicon Couloir





## **Silicon Couloir Purpose**

Silicon Couloir aligns entrepreneurship with community vision to promote a diverse economy and healthy environment for current and future generations.

## **Silicon Couloir Values**

**Taking Action:** We value the Teton-forged spirit of adventure, grit, and determination that builds a foundation for taking calculated risks to achieve impactful and aspirational goals.

**Community Caretaking:** We value and fuel the growing culture of leadership, participation, collaboration, and citizenship that inspires and enriches our tight-knit, welcoming mountain-town community.

**Entrepreneur Empowerment:** We value personal connections that allow for sharing knowledge, experience, and inspiration while also helping build entrepreneurial self-confidence and a clear path toward an envisioned future.

**World-Class Effort:** We value the focus and discipline to grow, improve, and put forth monumental effort in everything we do as a model for business pioneers.

**Fun:** We value laughter, good times, and the close relationships born from both.

## **Pitch Day Presenter's Pledge**

As a presenter at the Annual Silicon Couloir Pitch Day, I pledge to continue my engagement with the entrepreneurial community of the Tetons in the following ways:

1. **Consistent Reporting.** I pledge to submit a regular update (quarterly preferred) to Silicon Couloir that includes company progress, use of prize money, next milestones, and areas of support needed. I understand this update will be made available to the Silicon Couloir Board of Directors and Board of Trustees. I will identify any information in the update I do not want shared with the general Silicon Couloir audience or public.
2. **Event Attendance.** I pledge to attend Silicon Couloir events whenever possible including the monthly Chance Meetings event. Additionally, I pledge to make myself available to deliver progress reports at future Pitch Days and other Silicon Couloir events as reasonably requested.
3. **Passing It On.** In the spirit of Silicon Couloir's mission, I pledge to do everything I can to work with the entrepreneurial community in the Tetons region – as well as other stakeholders in the region - to ensure that we maintain a diverse and healthy economy within a diverse and healthy natural ecosystem that makes this region so unique.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D – Additional Pitch Day Docs**

This is a list of additional documents that will help your organization prepare, plan, and run Pitch Day. It is not meant to be exhaustive and you may prepare other materials that suit your needs.

- **Pitch Day Invite List** with names and email addresses (include anyone in your organization's ecosystem, donors, elected officials, local business people, community leaders, academics, and any other people who you think may be interested in receiving an individual invite to Pitch Day)
- **Pitch Day Master Deck and Notes**
- **Pitch Day Selection Committee Applicant Interview Schedule**
- **Pitch Day Event Volunteer Schedule** (including: volunteer name, volunteer relation to organization, volunteer location, time frame for volunteer to be at location, and notes tasks for each volunteer/location; i.e., John Smith, Board Member, Welcome Table, 3:30-4:30 PM, "at least two people at welcome table at all times")
- **Pitch Day Materials List** (a listing of materials needed for the actual Pitch Day event, including item, item quantity, location for item to be placed/used, person responsible for a specific item, and any additional notes for each item)
- **Pitch Day Sign-in Sheet(s)** (including Name and Email address)
- **Pitch Day Application Acknowledgement Email Letter** (including: date/time of interview with Selection Committee, some info on interview, i.e., "you will have 8 minutes to present your deck and then a 10 minute Q&A from the Committee", thank you for applying)
- **Pitch Day Applicant Tracking Spreadsheet** (including Company, Principal Name, email address, Date Application Received, if application meets guidelines, Interview Date, Interview Time, Interview Location, if Company accepted interview date/time, other notes, i.e., interview will be by Zoom video")
- **Step-by-Step Pitch Day Marketing Plan**
- **Pitch Day Flyer**
- **Pitch Day Flyer Location Doc** (including general geographic location to place flyers about the event, specific locations within each geographic area, # of flyers per geographic area, person responsible for placing flyers in each geographic area, date flyers to be placed in each geographic area)
- **Pitch Day Presenter "Day of" Memo/Instruction for Pitch Day Participant Entrepreneurs** (very specific as to times, where entrepreneurs should sit and stand, etc. – the idea is to provide them with all the info they need so they can focus on their presentation and not worry about logistical details)
- **Pitch Day Budget** (including specific line items grouped into categories such as Direct Event Expenses, Direct Marketing/PR Expenses, Direct Event Planning Expenses – including staff time and outside contractors)



- **Pitch Day Company Executive Summary Template**
- **Pitch Day Panelist Award Voting Matrix**
- **Sample Pitch Day Schedule**



## Appendix E – Sample Presenter Company Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

### Quick Facts

#### Product Information

- Cloud-based software as a service (SaaS) platform
- Anticipated MVP launch: Oct 1, 2019
- First-to-market platform to measure branded content on the first page of search results
- Launching with freemium model (Oct 2019)
- Premium (paid) model will roll out early 2020

#### Financial Profile

- \$70,000 spent on development to-date / bootstrapped
- **2019:** 1K freemium subscriptions / \$0 revenue
- **2020:** 2.25K premium subscriptions / \$600K revenue
- **2021:** 4K premium subscriptions / \$4.4M revenue
- **2022:** 9.5K premium subscriptions / \$8.2M revenue

#### Partnerships / Marketing

- Visably Founder / CEO owns a PR agency
- 2019 beta-launch within circle of marketing industry friends, influencers, and agencies
- Rely on PR + SEO to boost freemium subscriptions in anticipation of rollout of premium platform.

### Management Team

**Chris Dickey** — Founder + CEO  
Principal + Owner at Purple Orange PR

**Simon Goldstone** — Lead Project Engineer  
AWS Software Engineer

**Fred Seymour (PhD)** — Lead, Machine Learning  
CTO, Blue Spruce Analytics

**Nate Moch** — Advisor  
VP Product Teams, Zillow

**Adam Olien** — Advisor  
CTO + co-Founder, Abodo

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### Company Overview

Visably is the first SaaS platform to provide multi-channel brand intelligence on the first page of search. Visably will enable marketers and agencies to measure, manage and create first-page brand visibility strategies for their company or client across 3rd party websites.

### Core Competencies

Our minimum viable product is a “freemium” cloud-based software that cross analyzes any keyword search against a brand name (or product) to determine the total number of brand mentions on the first page of search results. After every link is categorized as “yes / brand mention” or “no / brand mention,” the software will then sub-categorize the mentions by channel or “type” of site: 1) earned media, 2) paid media, 3) e-commerce, and 4) brand-owned media.

### Market Opportunity

The global SEO software market is expected to grow at an annual rate of 14.83% from 2018-2022 and the estimated total global spend on marketing data analytics services in 2018 was \$46 billion. The global marketing industry is thirsty for better data analytics to measure and track campaign success. From a 2018 survey of executive-level marketing professionals, 77% indicate that communications can still do a better job at measuring and proving its impact on business objectives, and 54% place analytics and reporting among the top three most important activities for brands (up 10% from previous year).

### The Pain

Despite the fact that billions are sent on services to improve brand domain SEO ranking, it's exceedingly rare to rank in the first page of search results for popular non-branded keywords. Unfortunately, unless your brand or website is ranking in one of these 10-top positions, the likelihood of being discovered in organic search falls below 1%. The brand marketer's goal line needs to shift from “how do I get my website on the first page of search results?” to “how do I get my **BRAND** on the first page of search results?”

### Value Proposition

Visably's primary value proposition is to enable marketers to measure, manage and create first-page visibility strategies for their brand across 3rd party websites. This basic functionality will be provided at no cost. Premium models begin when a brand manager or agency needs to track brand performance over time across multiple keyword sets.

### Competitive Advantage

- First to market with this solution
- Site-categorization will be hard to replicate (e.g. machine learning)
- Company Founder has a strong background in influencer marketing, content optimized SEO, and national public relations