

Online Pitch Playbook

New Rules for Uncertain Times...

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be ready **be** funded **be** launched



Welcome!

I created this Playbook for your use in this time of global crisis. We're all trying to figure out how to make the "new normal" work. Recently, the online presentations I've seen have ranged from good...all the way to cringeworthy. So, I'm sharing my observations and advice, in the interest of getting you the best results possible from how we connect to others for the near-term future: online.

My goal is to help you shine light on the value you bring in this new, uncertain world. For those who don't know me, I have pitch coached more than 3000 clients from 60 countries, who are:

- *Founders and their teams*
- *Intrapreneurs*
- *Researchers and scientists*
- *EU funding grant cohorts pitching for billions (EIT, EIF, ERC, EIC, VIDI, etc.)*

Teams who have taken my 2-day Pitch Coaching Intensive, online and in-person, have gone on to raise an average of \$4M and an aggregate of over \$10B in funding.

This Playbook is a companion guide to [Bethodology](#), four new online pitch coaching programs with live 1:1 feedback from me, so you can continue getting the results you desire and deserve, fast! (More details at the end of this document.)

I would love to know what you found useful in this Playbook and hear your stories about Pitching Online. Feel free to drop me a line, anytime!

Wishing you all well,

Beth Susanne

Table of Contents

I. Creating Your Online Pitch

- A. The 7 Slides You Need Now
- B. Basic Rules of Slide Design
- C. Keeping it Visual

II. New Rules for Online Delivery

- A. Voice Tone
- B. Eye Contact
- C. Body Posture
- D. Camera Angle
- E. Background
- F. Video Conferencing Apps
- G. Lighting & Other Tools

III. Your Call With the Investor

- A. Preparing for Your Call
- B. During the Call
- C. Follow-up After Your Call

Part I. Creating Your Online Pitch

The 7 Slides You Need Now

1. Why Now?



The time is now.
**People need
what Cake offers.**

Why is your technology important to act on *now*, especially given the current reality? [Cake](#) is a tech startup offering solutions to help manage end-of-life decisions. The slide they have chosen to use here not only addresses the question "Why Now?", it's also provocative — as is their name.

2. Why You?

- Who's on the team and advisory board?
- Name and claim your key achievements: what's the big impact you've each had?

3. Problem/Opportunity

- What's the problem? Make it real and easy to relate to.
- Who has it? How many? How do you know? Back up your claims.
- Show market segment knowledge: stats, examples, research, links.

Tell your story through the problem.

4. Solution: What/How?

- What's your solution?
- How does it work?
- Why are you better?
- Do you have a prototype? IP protection (patents)?

Use simple, descriptive language.

5. Proof/Traction

Some Early Metrics



"The lack of trust in the modern age shows a critical need for a platform like Karma..."

TECHCO

"Karma scores could make it easier to navigate sometimes unreliable online marketplaces like Craigslist."

BuzzFeed

"A solution to sketchy online encounters..."

builtin

"This is a clever approach to a big problem..."

WIRED

This may be your most compelling slide.

Talk about customers and partners that are already interested. What critical hurdles have you surpassed? How? You need to show:

- Route-to-market
- Volume
- Cost
- Conversion

6. Business Model

How will you make money?

Show metrics that drive revenues: customers, unit sales, new products/markets, expansion sales.

Describe Top 1-3 Revenue Sources:

- Prioritize by size, growth, and/or potential
- Cite current market activity / customer behavior as proof
- Show how you get to break-even (or profitable)... *Ideally, on the current round of funding you're raising*

Common Revenue Models:

- Direct: e-commerce, subscription, digital goods, brands
- Indirect: advertising, lead gen., affiliate / CPA

What If's? e.g., can't sustain price, costs don't decline, takes twice as long to make each sale, etc.

7. The ASK

This is your call to action, presented along a timeline.

- How much money? Is it the right amount?
- How do you plan to take in funding?
- Key achievement dates/use of proceeds?
- What have you received to date, and what have you done with that money?
- Partners? Clients?

End with a powerful summary (could be your tagline or mantra). Your whole pitch on one slide — make it memorable, unique. Make them want to act NOW.

Basic Rules of Slide Design

Your slides matter *more* online.

*Remember:
ONE idea per slide.*

If you have a lot of ideas to get across, use more slides.

All eyes will be on your slides.

In person, [you are the focus of your pitch – not your slides](#). Your slides are merely there to support you. However, your deck gets a lot more attention when you're pitching online. Be sure to adhere to these basic rules of design:

Consistent branding, font and colors.

- Same font for headlines, sub-headers and body text
- Your logo in the same place on every slide
- Remember to align your content so it's clean

LARGE font (between 22 - 48 point).

- Big numbers for big ideas
- Smaller numbers for smaller ideas

When you have too much text...

- Limit bullets to 3 lines per slide, if you can
- Split heavier text up with animation (one per slide)
- Keep animations simple (click: *appear*, click: *disappear*)

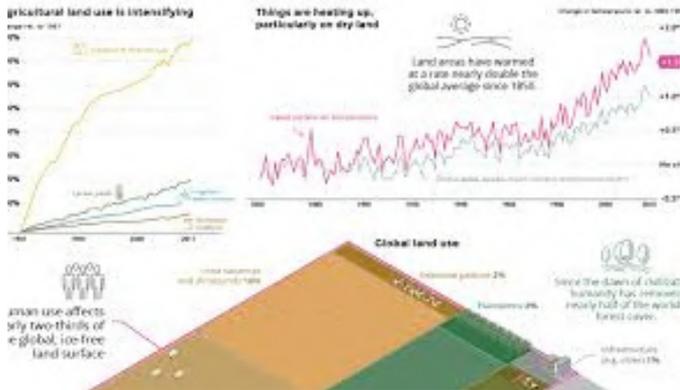


Play it safe!

Avoid audio, video, and fancy animations if you can. You'll reduce the chance of something going wrong due to a slow Internet connection.

Keeping it Visual

Too much detail



Just the headline and image



Too many bullet points

Who is Doing What Well?

Green Buildings	Green Products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy-efficient buildings proved their worth (TI, Intel, Cymer, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy savings Better resource use Increased value at sale Metrics for credits? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon storage Energy generation Selling wastestream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEMI members= many "one-attribute" standards to use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> S23-0708 (Energy efficient) S16-0307 (End of Life) GRI G3 Guidelines ANSI "sustainable" SDOs in high-tech arena <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASTM - Products Next IEEE - Ad hoc 2/09 Sustainability + Earth-monitoring network Leonardo Academy - 600,000 WCA 1/14/17

Superimpose numbers on image



Tips on Image Use

- Not too many images at once. Aim for 1 per slide, or a maximum of 3
- Don't stretch, add fancy filters, or over-manipulate the images
- Images should always be high-resolution, never pixelated
- Use image libraries online, don't pull from Google



The best websites for royalty free images:

- [Unsplash](#)
- [Pixabay](#)
- [Pexels](#)

Voice Tone



Communication through eye contact and body language are greatly diminished on camera. How you use your voice is *essential*.

If there are more than 4 people on the call, whether you're pitching on a screen or a mobile device, your voice tone matters MUCH more than your body language, since your body can now be reduced to the size of a postage stamp.

You can make your presentation more dynamic, bring up the energy, convey emotion, and emphasize key points by modifying these 3 aspects of your voice:

- **Volume**
- **Speed**
- **Pitch**

If you're nervous, they'll be able to hear it in your voice. You need to have a warm, engaging demeanor. Even if you've presented your pitch a hundred times, it should come across fresh and compelling every time.

Avoid reading your script or your slides (which can be tempting to do online)! First memorize your script, and then *practice, practice, practice* until you can deliver it naturally.



How to manage your nerves and sound confident:

Relax the muscles in your face by doing the [So, Hummmmm](#) breathing technique that I teach, before your call, and then the [Trigger Visualization](#) to mentally prepare for a successful pitch.

Watch my video on [how to manage your voice tone](#), to help you understand how to modulate your voice so that you come across as confident, resourceful and ready to execute the next steps.

Eye Contact

"As anyone who has been on a video call knows, people tend to look more at themselves than at the camera or even at others on the call. Video chats have also been shown to inhibit trust because we can't look one another in the eye. Depending on the camera angle, people may appear to be looking up or down or to the side. Viewers may then perceive them as uninterested, shifty, haughty, servile or guilty." - [Why Zoom is Terrible](#), *The New York Times*, 29 Apr 2020

- **LOOK INTO THE CAMERA LENS** instead of off to the side, at others in the gallery, or anywhere else besides the camera (keeping your eyes on the camera for 2 or 3 seconds at a time, then you can glance away and look back again, and repeat).
- Online, eyes of speakers/presenters tend to go up, or to the side, when thinking about what to say. Therefore, **PREPARE WHAT YOU WILL SAY IN ADVANCE** so that you're comfortable looking into the camera directly when speaking.

Watch out for roving eyes



Don't touch your face



Body Posture

DO...

- Sit up straight (imagine being pulled from the crown of your head up to the ceiling).
- Keep your shoulders back and down.
- Adjust your distance to the camera, so we see only your head (with a bit of space above your head), and your upper torso/upper rib cage.

DON'T...

- Touch your face! It's distracting to your audience, and could make you appear nervous and fidgety.
- Scratch your nose or do *anything else* with your nose!
- Play with your hair or ears.
- Look too serious.

Laptop Camera Angle

Always angle the laptop camera so it's *at or slightly higher than eye level*.

Don't sit too close to your laptop. Make sure you're arms-length away, or that you can reach it with your arms slightly bent. If too close, the laptop has a wide-angle lens and will distort your face.

I use a 12-inch square file box and set my laptop upon it, which brings my eyes to the perfect height to look into the lens. For more informal calls, I use a [Laptop Stand](#) and it works well. I just put a couple of wide, thick books underneath my laptop and put the stand on them, and then I am looking my audience in the eye.

You want to have bright-eyes, not sleepy, downward-looking eyes.

Forehead forward



Looking down

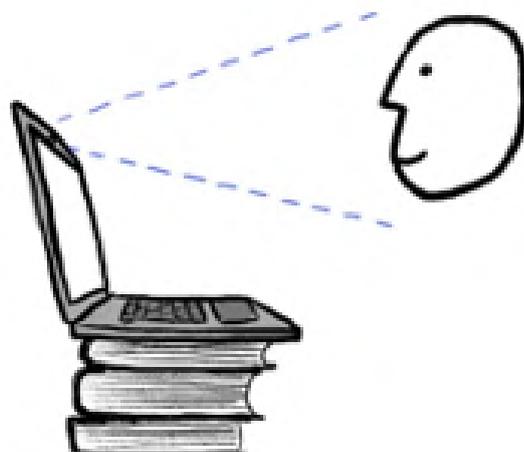


Head too low



Getting the right angle:

- The **WORST ANGLE** will always be from below (it will show chins and neck wrinkles that you didn't even know you had!)
- The **BEST ANGLE** is looking slightly up into the camera, which helps you keep your chin up slightly and helps keep your eyes a little more open.
- **LOOK AT THE CAMERA**, not at the chat or the people you can see in the gallery.



Background

Your background *must* be neat and orderly!

Try to have a dedicated room to keep one area tidy behind you so you can sit down, anytime of day or night. It can be a totally disorganised mess around you, but no one will see that, so keep one small area of your space neat, so that you look like you've got it together.

If any of you have been watching Trevor Noah's *Daily Social Distancing Show*, he changed his background after a couple of weeks, from a bookshelf with some distracting objects on it (including two abstract bowls that looked weird), to a screen with the name of the show and a different, simpler bookshelf, both at right angles so his face and torso were at the junction of the screen and the bookshelf. The result was much more business-like and less distracting.

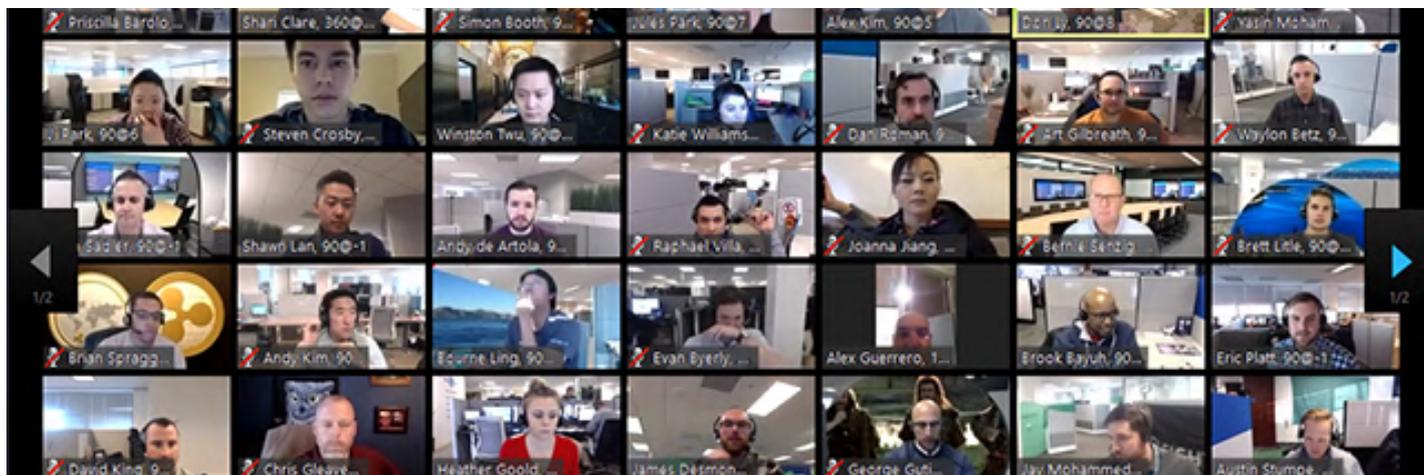


Virtual Backgrounds: Help or Hindrance?

Virtual backgrounds can make you look artificially superimposed, glow around the edges, or worse. Below on the left, you can see what I mean! On the right, I imported a clean photo of my office, activated my physical green screen, and it works. If you have problems, check that your processor is compatible. *Only use a virtual background if it looks natural and is not distracting.*



Tech Check!



Video Conferencing Apps

If you lose the connection or if it gets too weak, it could send the wrong message.

An important decision when going to an online meeting format is figuring out what type of video-conferencing software to use. You'll want to make that decision well in advance of the meeting and do a test run beforehand to ensure everything goes well.

Popular platforms for online meetings include: [Zoom](#), [Google Meet](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), [WebEx](#), and [GoToMeeting](#).

Some have a limit on the number of attendees, and some have time limits, so do your research and find out what works best for your group. If the platform requires members to install software on their computers, be sure to send them a link before the meeting, as well as any login information necessary.



Take 15-30 minutes before your call for a "tech check":

- Check your Internet speed
- Test microphone and headphones
- Start your call with video/sound off
- Use computer audio, so screen share is in sync
- Set up any polls in advance (if you use them)

Lighting

Diffused natural light



Always make sure your face is evenly and well-lit. Here are a few tips that can help:

- **BEST LIGHT:** Soft, diffused natural light, front-lit. Facing a window with natural daylight is good BUT not a window with full-on direct sunlight (too intense).
- **WATCH FOR SHADOWS:** Light from the side, above, below or behind will cast harsh shadows on your face, or backlight you.
- **USE A LAMP:** If the lighting is not adequate, place a desk lamp on the other side of your laptop, shining towards you (not directly on your face).
- **USE A LIGHT RING:** Use a light ring placed behind your laptop for more subtle lighting. I use two, as my space is very open with a lot of direct sunlight (shadows).
- **USE A LUME CUBE:** Specially designed lighting for the laptop or smartphone, recommended by Zoom.
- **USE A SCREEN:** If the light source is behind you and cannot be modified, try using a screen to remove backlight. This also helps simplify a busy background.
- **AT NIGHT:** Always test artificial lighting and find the right balance before your meeting.

Back-lit



Green (blue) screen



How to find the best lighting on your face, in your home:

Using your phone in selfie mode, move around until the light is distributed over your face evenly — no shadows or silhouetting. Notice where the light is coming from when you have the best results, so you can recreate the same lighting for your meeting. If the natural light you have at home is not ideal, use artificial lighting. Remember to test it first!

Other Tools

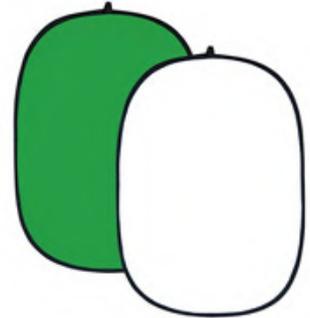
Microphone



Smartphone Tripod



Green Screen



Lume Cube



Light Ring



Don't let poor sound or image quality get in the way of your funding!

All of these tools are optional, but can greatly enhance your sound, image quality and stability when you pitch online. A webcam is also useful if you don't already have a high quality camera on your phone or computer.

If you need to make a lot of video calls, or if the few calls you make REALLY matter, below are some links to good products you can use, which I have personally tried and tested.



Recommended products (most available on Amazon):

- [Microphone](#)
- [Smartphone Tripod](#)
- [Green Screen](#)
- [Lume Cube](#)
- [Light Ring](#)
- [Webcam](#)

Preparing for Your Call

Part III.

Your Call with the Investor

*Don't jump on
the call without
sending your
presentation
ahead of time!*

Here's a quick checklist:

1. Email your pitch deck before the call

Sharing the deck before your call means that you can (and should) encourage the investor to ask questions or highlight topics they want to focus on in advance. It also means that you can direct everyone to view the document on their individual screens to avoid any screen-sharing challenges.

2. Review any questions in advance

This one is primarily for the investors, and it helps the founders set the agenda by taking the time to go through the deck and telling them the areas you want to focus on and key questions you want to cover in the meeting. This is good to do in a non-remote world as well!





3. Set a clear agenda ahead of time

Don't wing it! Always set an agenda and manage the time allocated for the meeting (the previous tip really helps on this front). Sending the agenda ahead of time may help you stick to it, but be aware of what indications the investors give in real time, as to how they intend for the meeting to be run.

4. Decide who will address which questions

Always decide before you get on the call with others from your team, WHO will answer which questions. As a rule of thumb, only 1 or 2 people from the team (including the founder) should be on the call, unless the investor requests otherwise.

5. Immediately before the call

Ensure your WIFI connection is stable, clean up your desktop, close out of any other programs that may be running on your computer, and make sure there is no background noise.



Practice your pitch out loud with slides, before your call.
You should be able to do it at least 5 times flawlessly.

During the Call

Basic Tips

- Don't talk over each other: Interruptions happen more easily during video calls. Be sure to coordinate your responses to the investor's questions.
- If your video is on, remember that even when you are not talking, they can still see you. As I have taken my coaching more and more online, watching people forget that they're on video has ranged from distracting all the way to cringeworthy.
- Keep the noise from kids, dogs, vacuums, etc., to a minimum if possible. If you can't, then mute yourself when you are not talking (you will probably want to do this anyway, if there are more than 3 of you on the call).

Delivery & Interaction

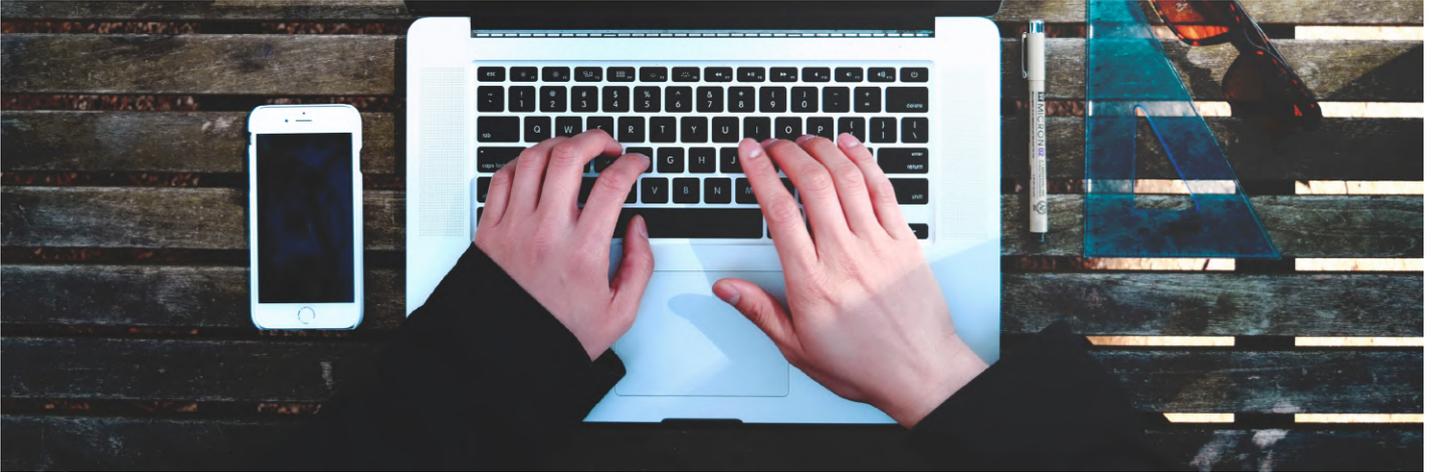
How you present your pitch online depends on what the investor asks for.

- Unless the investor has requested otherwise, use screen share mode to show your deck, with a live window with you speaking alongside your presentation.
- Ask the investor how they would like to deal with questions during the call. If you are working with another team member, you might have them read out the questions for you and/or help you answer them.
- It's a good idea to ask the VC how their process may be different now that you are working together remotely.
- **Never close your meeting without establishing clear next steps!**

Follow-up After the Call

Send the investor a quick note with:

- Key bullet points, takeaways from the meeting
- Answers to any questions not fully covered in the meeting



Links to articles used in compiling this playbook:

- [“The best video conference and chat apps for self-isolation”](#) (Lee, *Wired*, 27 Mar 2020)
- [“It’s Time To Meet Online!”](#) (Amann, *Toastmasters International*, Mar 2020)
- [“7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication”](#) (Prof. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA, 1970’s)
- [“How \(Not\) to Pitch Remotely”](#) (Teli, *Sifted*, 26 Mar 2020)
- [“Why Zoom is Terrible”](#) (Murphy, *NYT*, 29 Apr 2020)
- [“Coronavirus will Show the VCs True Colours”](#) (Clifford, *Sifted*, 23 Mar 2020)
- [“Investor Wisdom for Startups’ Coronavirus Pain”](#) (Mawad, *Sifted*, 30 Mar 2020)

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Thanks to Marisa Lopez for her creative design and input on content, and to the rest of my team (Carrie Alderson, Ian Ryder), colleagues, and clients, who provided insightful feedback.

Get focused feedback on your online pitch.



Beth's winning methodology, now available live online.

Fine tune your pitch to what investors, clients and partners really want to hear.

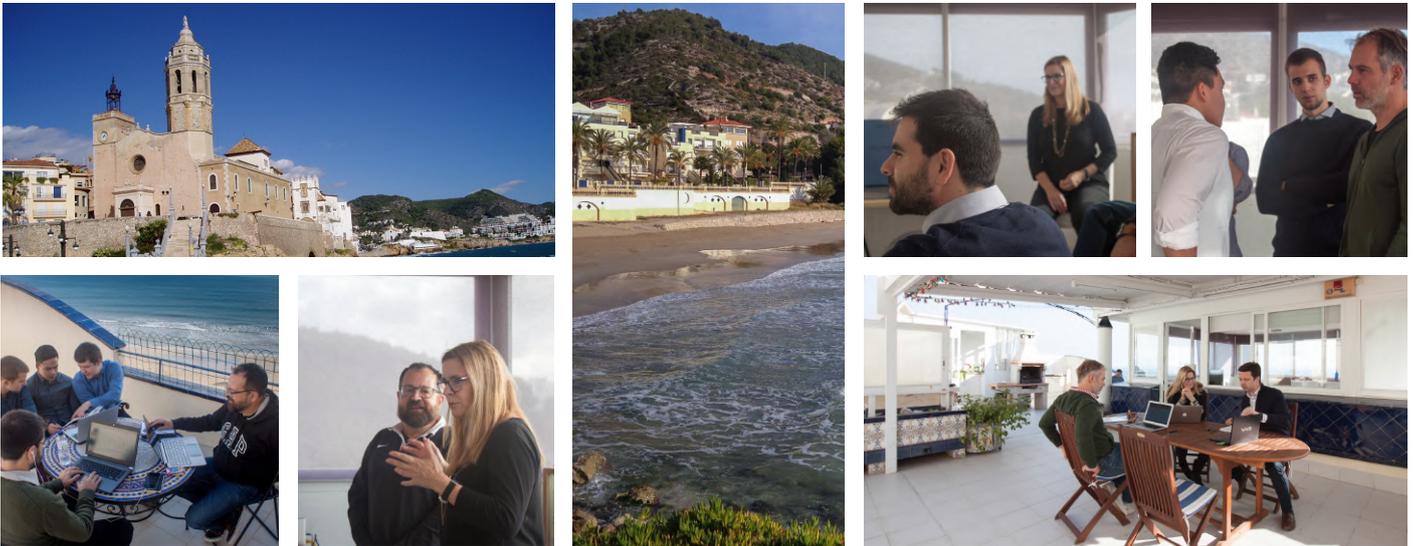
- Ideal for startups, scale-ups, researchers and accelerator teams who need to improve their pitch and have traction in the market.
- Great for professionals and speakers looking to influence and persuade executives and teams to fund innovative ventures, attract talent, and open new markets.

Four new programmes, starting at just 100€ per session.

Beth on Demand	Best of Beth	Beth in Depth	Beth's Blast-Off
Individual/Team	Individual/Team	Individual/Team	Group/3-15 Teams
Fine-tune your 1-minute pitch or resolve a specific challenge.	Refine your 1-10 minute pitch. Understand what works, what doesn't & why.	Refocus and realign your whole pitch - from opening story to investor Q&A.	Transform your pitch in a collaborative environment. Perfect for accelerators.

More information: www.bethsusanne.com/online-pitch-coaching

Connect With Me



Learn more about the clients I help and what they say about me.

[Watch my 2-minute trailer](#)



Get my one pager **be heard**: [5 tips for a perfect pitch](#)



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