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المدرسة الوطنية العليا في الأمن
السيبراني

THE PITCH DECK GUIDE

FOR FOUNDERS IN A CYBERSECURITY INCUBATOR

A Practical Field Guide for Students and Early-Stage Founders

National School of Cybersecurity (NSCS) — Incubator Program
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*“Investors and juries do not evaluate slides. They evaluate
a conviction, carried by a team, about a real problem”.*

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How to Use This Guide?

This guide was written for students and early-stage founders building their first pitch deck inside a cybersecurity and deep-tech incubator. Whether your project addresses phishing detection, digital transformation in healthcare, smart campus services or cybersecurity awareness platforms, the same structural logic applies — with important differences in emphasis and framing depending on your domain.

Work through the guide sequentially. Each section builds on the previous one. By the end, you will have a clear, field-tested framework for constructing a pitch deck that earns trust, communicates value precisely, and opens doors.

The guide is structured around the eleven slides of a professional pitch deck, organized into four blocks: Innovation, Business Model, Technical Presentation, and Team. For each slide, you will find its objective, required content, concrete examples, best practices, and the most damaging mistakes to avoid.

Methodological Note:

All quantitative examples in this guide are explicitly marked as illustrative and for pedagogical purposes only. Every figure you present in your own deck must be accompanied by a verifiable, citable source.

This discipline applies to your slides as rigorously as it does to any professional document.

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Part I — The Logic of a Pitch Deck

What a Pitch Deck is — and What it is Not

A pitch deck is not a project report, a condensed business plan, or a technical whitepaper. It is a persuasion instrument: a carefully sequenced narrative designed to move an evaluator from scepticism to conviction in less than fifteen minutes.

In the context of a cybersecurity incubator, your audience is technically literate. It will immediately detect conceptual approximations, unsourced data claims, and hollow promises. Your deck must therefore accomplish two objectives simultaneously: tell a compelling story and demonstrate a genuine technical depth.

The best pitch decks are not the most visually elaborate. They are the ones that make an evaluator walk out of the room thinking: I want to see where this goes. Every decision you make when building your deck should serve that single outcome.

The Five Questions Every Evaluator Carries

Before your first slide appears on screen, every juror or investor is already running a mental checklist. Your pitch must answer these five questions in sequence — without them ever being asked aloud:

- Is this problem real and painful enough for a specific and identifiable person?
- Is this solution the most credible and effective way to address that problem?
- Is this team the best-placed group to execute at this moment?
- Is the market large enough to justify the investment?
- Why now — and why can't an existing player simply copy this?

If your deck answers all five convincingly, you have done your job. Structure everything else around these five questions.

Four Concepts That Must Never be Confused

One of the most persistent sources of confusion in early-stage pitch decks is the conflation of four distinct concepts. Understanding the precise difference between them is a prerequisite for building a credible deck.

Definition:

(1) The Problem answers: What pain is real, for whom, how severe, and why do current alternatives fail?

(2) The Solution answers: “How does it work?” It describes the functional mechanism of your product.

(3) The Value Proposition answers: “For whom, what measurable value, and why better than the alternatives?” It articulates the benefit and the differentiation.

(4) The Market Opportunity answers: “How large is the economic opportunity?” It sizes the addressable market with a rigorous methodology.

Each of these answers belongs to a separate slide. Combining any two on a single slide systematically damages the clarity of your argument.

The Full Deck Architecture — 11 Slides, 4 Blocks

A professional pitch deck for a deep-tech startup should contain between ten and twelve slides. This guide recommends eleven. Each slide carries exactly one primary idea. Every slide earns its place by advancing one of the five evaluator questions.

#	Title of the slide	Block	Primary objective
01	Cover Slide	Introduction	Identity, tagline, first impression
02	The Problem	Innovation	Build urgency — real, quantified pain
03	The Solution	Innovation	Product mechanism — what it does and how
04	Value Proposition	Innovation	For whom, what measurable value, why better
05	Market Opportunity	Innovation	Market sizing via rigorous bottom-up method
06	Business Model	Business	Revenue model, pricing, key commercial metrics
07	Traction & Roadmap	Business	Proof of progress and forward milestones
08	Technical Architecture	Technical	Stack, data flows, security by design
09	Competitive Advantage	Technical	Positioning matrix, barriers to entry, IP
10	The Team	Team	Founder-market fit and complementarity
11	The Ask & Vision	Closing	Specific, quantified ask and 5-year vision

Part II — Slide-by-Slide Guide

Slide 1 — Cover Slide

Objective: Create a memorable first impression and communicate your project identity in under three seconds.


Required content: Project name and tagline, logo, institution name, date and event context.



The tagline is the first thing your audience will remember — and often the only thing they will recall after twenty other pitches. It must not describe your product; it must state what does it accomplish for the user. Test it by completing this sentence mentally: “**Thanks to this product, [user X] can now [concrete outcome] without [main friction]**”. If your tagline cannot pass that test, rewrite it.

 **Illustrative example:**

- **Weak:** “A cybersecurity solution for SMEs”.
- **Strong:** “PhishGuard: Phishing stops before it reaches the inbox”.
(Illustrative example for pedagogical purposes only)

 **Best Practice:** Your tagline must survive out of context.

If someone reads it without seeing the rest of the deck, they should immediately understand who benefits and what problem is solved.

BLOCK 1 — Innovation (Slides 2 to 5)

This block constitutes the narrative core of your pitch. Its logic is strictly sequential: each slide must build directly on the previous one.

The progression runs from establishing urgency (Problem), through showing the mechanical response (Solution), to articulating distinctive value (Value Proposition), and finally sizing the economic opportunity (Market).




Skipping or merging any of these stages weakens the chain of reasoning.

Slide 2 — The Problem

Objective: Build urgency. Your audience must feel the problem before they are ready to hear about your solution.

Required content: Context (one sentence) → Quantified pain with a cited source → Market gap (why existing solutions fall short).


The Problem slide is structurally the most important in your deck. An evaluator who does not feel the pain will not understand why your solution exists or why it matters. This slide must answer three sub-questions in strict sequence: What is the context in which this problem lives? Who suffers, how badly, and how frequently? Why do current alternatives fail to solve it?


 **Methodological Note:** Mandatory sourcing. Every statistic you present on this slide must carry a visible, citable source — a government report, an industry study, a CERT advisory, a peer-reviewed paper. An unsourced figure immediately damages credibility before a technical jury or an experienced investor. If a verified source is not yet available, reformulate qualitatively: “The majority of Algerian SMEs have no formal security policy” rather than an unverifiable percentage. Qualitative precision is more credible than a fabricated number.

Illustrative Example:

- **Context:** “Higher education institutions in Algeria handle large volumes of sensitive personal data with no dedicated security infrastructure”.
- **Pain:** “According to Kaspersky Report 2024, phishing incidents have increased significantly over the past three years, resulting in data breaches and administrative disruption”.
- **Gap:** “International solutions such as Proof-point and Mimecast often require continuous cloud connectivity and may raise compliance concerns under Algerian Law 18-07, particularly regarding data localization, making them unsuitable for most public institutions”.

(Illustrative example for pedagogical purposes only)

 **Best Practice:** Use one strong, single visual to anchor the problem emotionally: a screenshot of a real anonymized phishing email, an incident frequency trend graph, or a relevant press headline. One memorable image is worth ten statistics on a slide.

 **Common Pitfall:** Formulating a problem too broad to be actionable. “Cybersecurity is a growing global challenge” is a context statement, not a problem. A problem is specific, painful for a defined segment, measurable, and unsolved by existing alternatives. If your problem statement could appear in any industry pitch deck, it is not sharp enough.

Slide 3 — The Solution

Objective: Explain what your product does (its mechanism) clearly enough that any evaluator can understand it.

Required content: Functional description in two to three sentences → Core mechanism → Simplified interface or system overview → Primary user interaction.

This slide answers the question “How?” It does not yet answer “Why us rather than anyone else?” (that is the exclusive role of Slide 4). The boundary between the two slides is precise and important: The solution describes the mechanism of your product; the Value Proposition explains the benefit that mechanism delivers and why it is superior to alternatives. Crossing that boundary on this slide dilutes both arguments.





When describing your solution, structure your explanation using the logic benefit → mechanism → proof, rather than feature → attribute → specification. Non-technical evaluators grasp the user gain first and the technical mechanic second. Engineers in the room will follow both layers comfortably; business evaluators need the benefit established before the mechanics become meaningful.

Illustrative Example:

- **Weak (feature-first):** “PhishGuard is a browser extension with zero configuration and offline mode”.
- **Strong (benefit-first):** “PhishGuard reduces the risk of phishing-related compromise among institutional staff by analyzing each incoming link in real time using an NLP-based classifier. It operates without requiring continuous internet connectivity, making it well suited for deployment in restricted, low-bandwidth networks commonly found in Algerian public institutions. The solution was validated through a pilot involving 150 users across three institutional networks, achieving a measured false-positive rate below 4%”.

(Illustrative example for pedagogical purposes only)


 **Best Practice:** Show the product on this slide. A UI mockup, a functional system diagram, or a short demo clip substantially increases memorability and credibility. Evaluators who have seen the product “even briefly” are far more likely to remember it after fifteen other pitches.

 **Common Pitfall:** Entering architectural or stack-level detail on this slide. Technology choices, threat models, and data flow diagrams belong on Slide 8. Here, the level of abstraction must remain accessible to a non-technical evaluator without sacrificing accuracy for the technical ones.

Slide 4 — Value Proposition

Objective: Articulate precisely why your solution creates superior, measurable value for a specific customer, compared to any alternative they currently have.


Required content: Central value statement → Measurable user benefits → Differential positioning → Problem-solution-segment alignment.

 **Definition:** A Value Proposition answers three questions simultaneously:

- (1) **For exactly whom?** Name the specific customer segment, not a broad category.
- (2) **What concrete, measurable value?** Quantify the gain or the eliminated pain wherever possible.
- (3) **Why better than the alternatives?** Identify the specific differentiating factors, not generic advantages.


It does not discuss market size. That is the role of Slide 5. Mixing the two arguments on one slide weakens both.

A strong value proposition can always be expressed in a single declarative sentence. If yours requires three sentences, a nested list, and a footnote, it is not yet clear enough. Work on it until it fits in one sentence without losing its meaning. That discipline forces the clarity that makes the slide compelling.

 **Illustrative Example:** PhishGuard Value Proposition (illustrative):

- **For:** IT managers at public institutions and SMEs in Algeria
- **Value:** Elimination of phishing risk without external cloud dependency, advanced IT expertise, or procurement of foreign-licensed software.
- **Differentiation:** The only solution trained on Arabic/French phishing corpora, deployable fully offline, and built for compliance with Law 18-07.
- **One-sentence version:** “PhishGuard is the only anti-phishing platform trained on Arabic-language corpora, deployable without internet connectivity, and designed for Algerian regulatory compliance.”

(Illustrative example for pedagogical purposes only)

 **Best Practice:** Use a two-axis positioning matrix on this slide to show where you sit relative to existing alternatives. Choose the axes based on what your target customer actually uses to make purchasing decisions — not axes that flatter you automatically. A matrix that looks too convenient will be immediately identified as biased.

This positioning matrix must reflect customer-perceived value, using axes that represent actual decision criteria and usage trade-offs — not structural competitive barriers (slide 9).



For example, a competitive positioning matrix may place ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini in the high-reasoning/high-breadth quadrant, while more specialized tools occupy narrower segments, making differentiation immediately visible to the audience.



⚠ Common Pitfall: “Our market is large” is not a value proposition. Market size is an argument for the investor, not for the customer. A customer does not choose your product because your TAM is high; they choose it because you solve their specific problem better than anyone else. Keep these two arguments on separate slides where they each receive the weight they deserve.

Slide 5 — Market Opportunity

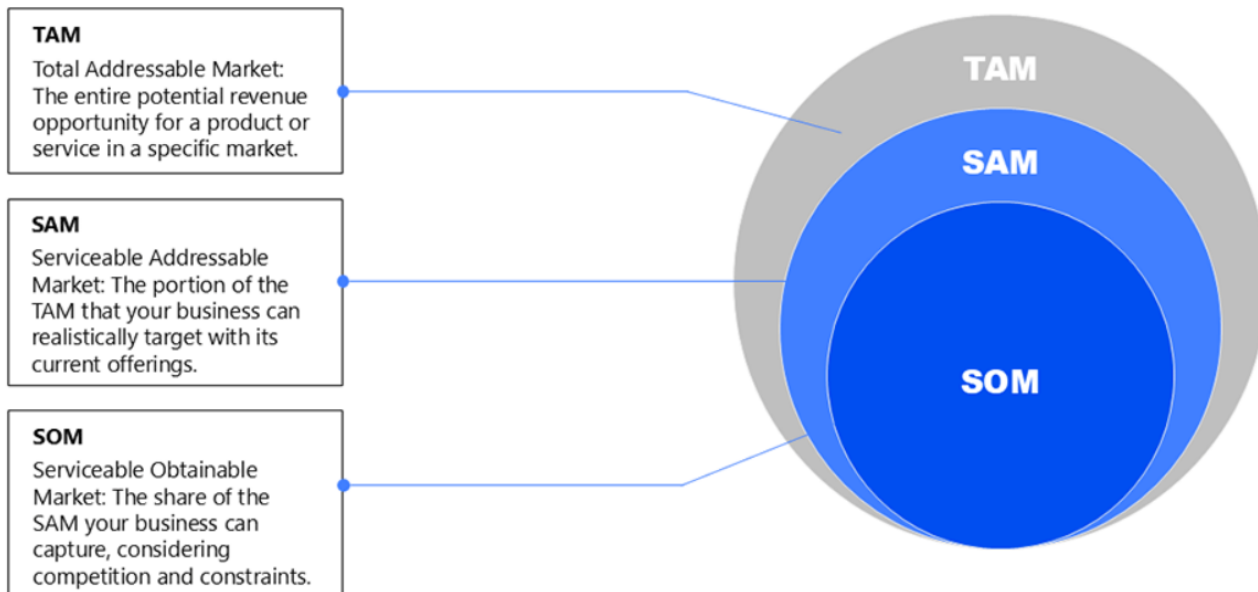
Objective: Demonstrate that the economic opportunity is large enough to build a significant company, using a rigorous, traceable methodology.

Required content: TAM → SAM → SOM with explicit hypotheses, calculation base, conversion rate, average contract value, and time horizon.

A strong market slide presents three nested market sizes:

- **TAM (Total Addressable Market):** The full global or national market for this category.
- **SAM (Serviceable Addressable Market):** The portion you can realistically reach with your solution.
- **SOM (Serviceable Obtainable Market):** What you plan to capture in the next 2–3 years.

MARKET SIZE



i Methodological Note: The bottom-up method is required. A top-down sizing without explicit assumptions (ex: “if we capture 1% of a \$10 billion market...”) is systematically treated as decorative by experienced investors and is one of the most discredited formulas in all of startup pitching. The bottom-up method starts from the number of real, identifiable target customers, applies defensible conversion assumptions, and arrives at a projected revenue figure. Its value lies precisely in the fact that it forces you to state your assumptions, making your reasoning auditable and discussable.



The calculation template to follow is straightforward. Begin with the total number of target units in your segment, with a cited source for that number. Apply a Year 1 conversion rate with a stated rationale. Multiply by the volume of customer units acquired. Multiply by the average annual contract value. That gives you your Year 1 ARR. Extrapolate over three years with a stated and justified growth rate. Every input must carry either an assumption or a source.

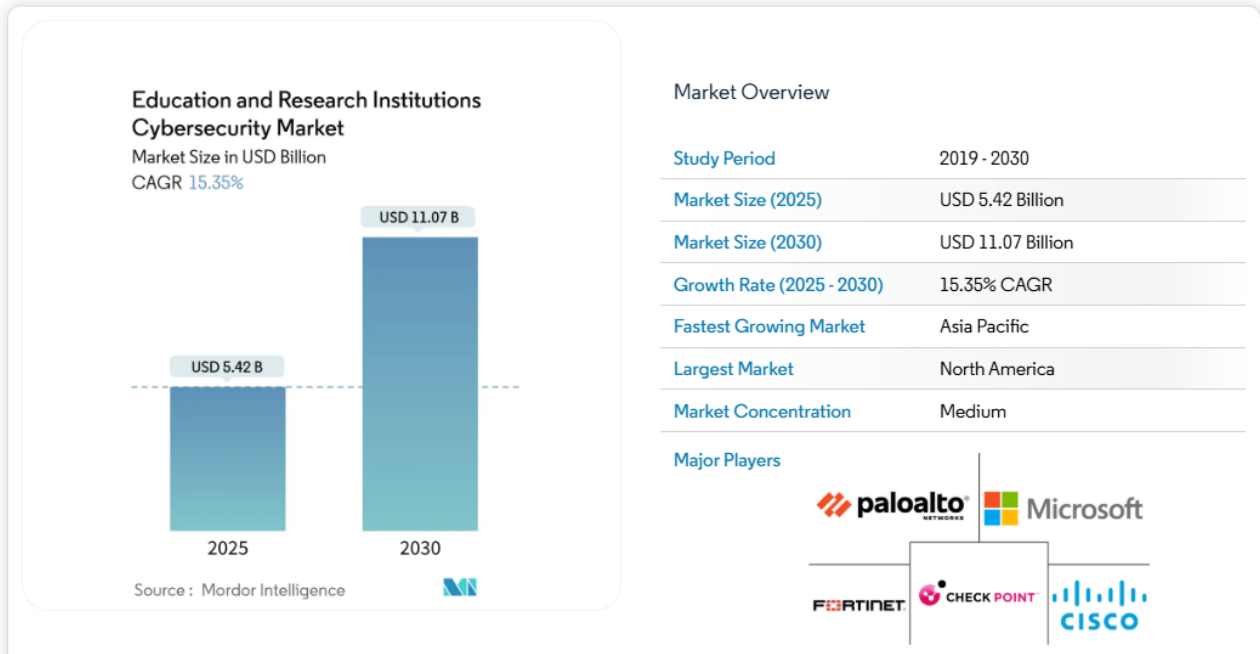
🧩 Illustrative Example:

- The global cybersecurity market for education institutions is estimated at approximately USD 5.4–5.8 billion in 2025 and is expected to nearly double by 2030 (see figure below) [Source: Intelmarket Research, Mordor Intelligence].
- **SAM:** Algeria has approximately 107 public higher education institutions [Source: MESRS 2023]. At an estimated average IT security budget of 0.8 million DZD per

institution and an assumed adoption rate of 33%, the addressable segment is estimated at 28.5 million DZD.

- **SOM (Year 1):** Target 15 pilot institutions → 33% conversion rate → 5 signed contracts → average annual contract value: 800,000 DZD → Year 1 ARR: 4,000,000 DZD.
(Entirely illustrative validate every figure on your real market data before presenting)

Education And Research Institutions Cybersecurity Market Size and Share



✓ **Best Practice:** Show your calculation on screen, not just the result. A jury that can see the reasoning, even if they disagree with one of your assumptions, will engage with it. A jury that only sees a final number will simply distrust it. Make your logic transparent and your assumptions explicit.

BLOCK 2 — Business Model (Slides 6 and 7)

Slide 6 — Business Model

Objective: Prove that the project is economically viable: who pays, on what terms, how much, and that the commercial mechanics are understood and defensible.

Required content: Revenue model with justification → Pricing structure → Key commercial metrics → Unit economic viability.

The choice of revenue model must be justified by the specific realities of your startup, not by a generic belief about what investors prefer. The three determinant parameters are your customer type (B2B, B2G, or B2C), your typical sales cycle length, and whether the value you deliver is recurring or one-time. In cybersecurity and deep-tech, a wide range of models coexist and all can be credible, the question is which one fits your actual go-to-market reality.

Below some metrics that should be read as context-specific benchmarks rather than universal rules. Their interpretive value is strongest in recurring SaaS businesses; in institutional licensing, hybrid-service models, or long-cycle procurement environments, they remain useful only when recalibrated against the project's actual commercial structure and revenue dynamics.


Revenue model	When to use it — Cybersecurity and deep-tech cases
Monthly/Annual SaaS	Awareness platform, continuous monitoring tool, or threat intelligence feed. Typically suited to SME or mid-market B2B clients. Shorter sales cycle, under three months.
Institutional Licensing	Security tool deployed inside a public organization (university, hospital, ministry). One-time or multi-year purchase. Requires navigating formal procurement processes.
Hybrid Services + Software	Common at early stage: professional services (audits, training, implementation) generate early revenue while the software product matures toward recurring licensing.
Freemium → Premium	Training or awareness platforms where free-tier adoption creates the user base and paid tiers monetize advanced features, reporting, or organizational dashboards.
Per-incident/Transactional	On-demand penetration testing, forensic investigation, or vulnerability assessment. High margin per engagement but difficult to scale without a repeatable delivery model.

Beyond naming a revenue model, an experienced incubator jury expects you to demonstrate command of the commercial viability metrics that show whether the model can sustain a real business. These metrics are not optional detail, they are the evidence that you understand unit economics, not just revenue.

Metric	What it reveals — Indicative SaaS B2B benchmarks for context
CAC “Customer Acquisition Cost”	How much does acquiring one customer cost? In a healthy SaaS model, CAC should be recovered within twelve months and remain well below LTV.
LTV “Lifetime Value”	Total net value generated by a customer over their relationship with you. LTV/CAC $\geq 3x$ is a widely cited benchmark for SaaS viability.
Sales Cycle	Time elapsed from first contact to signed contract. In B2G (Algerian public sector), this cycle can exceed six to twelve months and must be accounted for in your cash flow planning.
Gross Margin	Revenue minus direct delivery costs. Mature SaaS businesses typically target above 70%. At early stage with a services mix, the figure will be lower → explain the trajectory.
NRR “Net Revenue Retention”	Percentage of recurring revenue retained (and expanded) year over year. NRR above 100% (expansion revenue from existing customers) is a powerful indicator of product-market fit.
MRR/ARR	Monthly or Annual Recurring Revenue. The primary traction metric for any subscription model and the first number sophisticated investors will look for.

Illustrative Example: PhishGuard (Illustrative Business Model):

- **Model:** B2B SaaS + Institutional License (public sector/B2G)
 - **Pricing:** 1,200 DZD per user per month (private); 960,000 DZD annual flat fee per institution (public)
 - **Estimated sales cycle: 2–3 months (SMEs); 6–9 months (public procurement)**
 - **Indicative CAC:** 45,000 DZD | Indicative LTV: 180,000 DZD | LTV/CAC ratio: $\approx 4x$
- (Entirely illustrative, calibrate every figure on your real cost and pricing data before presenting)

 **Common Pitfall:** Confusing revenue with funding. Revenue flows from customers who have paid for your product or service. Funding comes from investors, grants, or incubation programmes. These are structurally different and must never appear in the same line of your financial model. Presenting a grant as revenue signals a fundamental misunderstanding of business model mechanics.

Slide 7 — Traction & Roadmap

Objective: Demonstrate real, credible progress (even if partial) and present a forward plan grounded in measurable outcomes.

Required content: Past milestones with dates → Measurable current traction → 12-to-18-month outcome-oriented roadmap → Key partnerships or institutional endorsements.

This slide answers the most consequential implicit question in any pitch: are you people who execute, or people who plan? **Even at a very early stage, evidence of execution exists** (user interviews, prototype, tests) it simply looks different from what it will look like at Series A. Understanding what constitutes credible traction at your specific stage is essential to presenting this slide with confidence.



At the student or pre-seed stage inside an incubator, valid traction includes: a functional prototype tested by real users, signed letters of intent from prospective clients or partners, documented beta user feedback, acceptance into a recognized incubation or competition programme, a scientific publication on the underlying technology, or a filed patent. Any one of these is more powerful than a roadmap with nothing in the past column.

Illustrative Example: PhishGuard — Illustrative Roadmap:

- **Q1 2026:** MVP validated, 3 beta institutions enrolled, 150 test users (detection rate measured and logged)
- **Q2 2026:** Pilot results published; first 10 paying clients on-boarded

- **Q3 2026:** Arabic-language interface released; institutional messaging API integration completed
- **Q4 2026:** Pilot expansion to Tunisia and Morocco via regional CERT partnership
(Illustrative example, replace with your actual milestones and dates)

✓ **Best Practice:** Frame every milestone as a measurable outcome, not a technical deliverable. “Reach 500 active users with a measured retention rate above 60%” is a more compelling roadmap item than “Ship the mobile version of the app.” Investors fund outcomes, not features. Jurors remember impact, not delivery schedules.

⚠ **Common Pitfall:** A roadmap with no milestones in the past. If everything lies in the future, you are presenting a wish list, not a proof of execution. Work to achieve at least one concrete, documentable milestone before standing in front of any jury. Even a small result, properly measured and presented, carries more weight than an elaborate future plan.

BLOCK 3 — Technical Presentation (Slides 8 and 9)

Slide 8 — Technical Architecture

Objective: Demonstrate technical rigor: System flows, justified stack choices, data governance, and a security-by-design posture.

Required content: System architecture diagram → Technology stack with justification → Data flows → Security-by-Design block covering six dimensions.

In a cybersecurity incubator, this slide is non-negotiable and scrutinized differently than in any other context. Technical evaluators will probe it for completeness, coherence, and intellectual honesty. It must prove that you have a real, thoughtfully designed system, not a prototype architecture dressed as a production-ready solution.



Think of your architecture diagram as a data-flow map. It should answer: where does data enter the system? where is it processed? where is it stored? how exposed is it at each stage? Use color-coding by layer (for instance, collection layer in one color, processing layer in another, external services in a third, and the security perimeter in a distinct accent color) to make the diagram self-explanatory at presentation resolution.

✂ **Illustrative Example:** PhishGuard — Illustrative Architecture:

- **Collection:** Browser extension (TypeScript) captures URL, sender metadata, and contextual signals

- **Analysis:** Fine-tuned BERT classifier on FR/AR corpus (Python/FastAPI) — local inference, no cloud dependency
 - **Reputation:** Optional VirusTotal API call for previously unseen domains; the system gracefully degrades when offline and executes the call only when network access is available.
 - **Decision:** Rules engine + ensemble scoring → user alert + timestamped admin dashboard log
 - **Admin:** React dashboard with PDF compliance export aligned to Law 18-07 reporting requirements
- (Illustrative example, technology choices must reflect your actual stack and constraints)

The Security-by-Design block is the element that distinguishes a cybersecurity pitch from any other technical pitch. It is not a compliance checkbox, it is evidence that security is embedded in your architecture from day one, not retrofitted after launch. **In a cybersecurity incubator, the absence of this block is an eliminatory signal.** The six dimensions to address are:

Security dimension	Questions to address on your architecture slide
Threat Model	What are the attack surfaces? Who are the potential adversaries? Which attack scenarios have you modelled? (STRIDE, PASTA, LINDDUN, etc.)
Access Control	Authentication mechanism (MFA, SSO, RBAC)? Principle of least privilege applied? Service account management policy?
Encryption	Data in transit (TLS 1.3+)? Data at rest (AES-256 or equivalent)? Key management approach?
Logging & Audit	Access and event logs? Retention policy? Real-time alerting? Forensic traceability for incident investigation?
Regulatory Compliance	Law 18-07 (Algeria)? GDPR if handling EU data? ISO 27001 in your roadmap? Relationship with ANPDP?
Incident Management	Documented incident response procedure? User notification process? Business continuity plan?

✔ **Best Practice:** Build your security-by-design answers into your architecture during the prototyping phase, not as post-production additions. A product that cannot answer the six dimensions above at the pitch stage will not be trusted by institutional clients, regardless of how impressive the core functionality is.


Slide 9 — Competitive Advantage

Objective: Answer the hardest question: why this team, this product, at this moment, **and why can't a larger, better-resourced player simply copy it?**

Required content: Competitive positioning matrix → Named competitors with honest analysis → Barriers to entry → Defensible intellectual property or proprietary assets.

Competition in cybersecurity is never absent, it takes different forms that all need to be mapped. Global enterprise vendors (Proofpoint, Palo Alto, CrowdStrike) address the top of the market with solutions priced and configured for large organizations. Open-source tools exist but are typically unmaintained or require expertise to deploy. Internal bespoke solutions built by IT teams exist but do not scale. And the status quo (doing nothing) remains the number-one alternative for most of your target customers. Your competitive slide must acknowledge all of these honestly.


The axes of your positioning matrix must reflect the actual decision criteria of your target customer, not the dimensions on which you happen to look best. If your target customers care primarily about deployment cost and local regulatory compliance, those are your axes. A matrix whose axes seem designed to place you in the winning quadrant by default will be identified as intellectually dishonest and will damage your credibility on every subsequent slide.


 **Illustrative Example:** Relevant positioning axes for the Algerian public sector market (illustrative):

- **Axis X:** Total annual deployment cost (low → high).
- **Axis Y:** Fit with Algerian regulatory and linguistic requirements (weak → strong).
- **PhishGuard position:** low cost + strong local fit (a quadrant currently unaddressed by global vendors).
- This positioning matrix must reflect defensible competitive advantage, using axes that capture barriers to entry, differentiation, and long-term protectability — not immediate customer value perception (presented in slide 4).

(Illustrative example, validate axis choices through real customer discovery interviews)

Beyond positioning, articulate the barriers that protect your advantage over time. In cybersecurity deep-tech, the most defensible barriers are: a proprietary labelled dataset that took time and domain expertise to build; certifications or accreditations that create a compliance moat; deep integration into client systems that generates high switching costs; and exclusive or anchor partnerships with institutions that control access to your target market.

 **Best Practice:** Name your competitors explicitly and analyze them honestly. Every experienced evaluator carries a mental map of the competitive landscape. Failing to name major players suggests you are unaware of them. Acknowledging them (and explaining clearly why they fall short for your specific target customer and context) demonstrates market maturity and builds credibility.


 **Common Pitfall:** Claiming technical superiority without data. If you state that your detection accuracy is 94%, you must show the test dataset size, the evaluation methodology, and the precision-recall breakdown. Even a benchmark on a limited internal corpus is far more credible than an unsubstantiated performance claim. In a cybersecurity context especially, evaluators know exactly what questions to ask.

BLOCK 4 — Team & Closing (Slides 10 and 11)

Slide 10 — The Team

Objective: Build trust by demonstrating founder-market fit: the conviction that this specific team is the best-placed group to solve this specific problem at this specific moment.


Required content: Roles and individuals → Core competency per role with evidence → Concrete execution proofs → Team complementarity → Mentors and institutional endorsements.

 **Definition:** Founder-market fit describes the unique alignment between a founding team and the problem they are attacking. It answers: why do these specific people understand this problem more deeply than anyone else? Have they experienced it from the inside? Do they have access, networks, or data that others cannot easily replicate? Have they already executed in a comparable domain or context? It is the single most personal and irreplaceable element of any pitch.


In a deep-tech incubator, academic credentials are a starting point, not a conclusion. What evaluators are actually assessing is your demonstrated capacity to execute on problems of comparable complexity. Structure every team member's presentation around the logic role → core competency → concrete execution proof. This ordering communicates that you understand what it takes to build the company, not merely that you have relevant degrees.



The ideal complementarity for a deep-tech founding team is a triangle of three distinct profiles: a technical profile responsible for product construction; a domain profile with sector-specific knowledge and customer relationships; and a business or growth profile responsible for distribution, commercialization, and partnerships. If your team lacks one of these three, name it explicitly and name the mentor who fills the gap or the near-term hire you are planning to address it. Acknowledging a gap and showing a plan is far stronger than ignoring it.

 **Illustrative Example:** Recommended format per team member:

- **[Photo] — Yacine Rahmani**, Co-founder & Technical Lead
- **Role:** Product development and system architecture
- **Core competency:** Strong foundations in cybersecurity, programming, and secure software design
- **Execution proof:** Built a phishing-awareness prototype as part of a final-year project; participated in a university CTF; contributed to "SafeT" a small open-source security tool (Illustrative example, replace with real team backgrounds and verifiable achievements)

 **Best Practice:** Mentors and institutional endorsements carry strong signal value at the early stage. A recognized domain expert, a CERT or cybersecurity agency advisor, or an anchor

institutional partner validates the legitimacy of your approach to evaluators who do not yet have enough direct evidence to assess your team on its own track record.

⚠ Common Pitfall: The team slide becoming a collective CV. A list of diplomas and internship titles is not a demonstration of founder-market fit. Evaluators need to answer one question from this slide: why can this team (and only this team) execute on this specific problem? Everything on the slide should serve that single question.

Slide 11 — The Ask & Vision

Objective: Close the pitch with a precise, actionable request anchored in an inspiring long-term vision.

Required content: The specific, quantified ask → Planned use of requested resources → Five-year impact vision → Contact information.

This slide fulfils two distinct and complementary functions: informing evaluators of your immediate, concrete needs, and inspiring them with your long-term ambition. An ask without a vision lacks aspiration and feels transactional. A vision without a specific ask lacks traction and feels academic. Both must be present, and they must reinforce each other.



In an incubator context, the ask can take several forms that are not mutually exclusive: incubation support in the form of workspace, mentoring, or equipment access; an institutional pilot partnership with a named type of organization; strategic introductions to a specific category of partner or investor; or a fundraising round with a precise amount and a clear breakdown of how the capital will be deployed. The more specific the ask, the more credible it is.

Illustrative Example:

“We are requesting six months of incubation in the NSCS programme with access to the SOC Lab, and a pilot partnership with two public institutions for beta deployment by July 2026. We are also open to discussions with early-stage investors for a pre-seed round of 4,000,000 DZD to finalize the detection model and hire a first commercial profile.

Our vision for 2030 is to make PhishGuard the reference platform for phishing protection across Algerian public institutions, with 500,000 protected users in the education, health, and administrative sectors”.

(Illustrative example, replace with your actual ask amounts and targets)

✓ Best Practice: End on the vision, not on a number. Numbers close arguments; vision opens imaginations. Your final sentence should leave the evaluator with a clear mental image of the future you are building — and a sense that they would want to be part of building it with you.

Part III — The Six Disqualifying Mistakes

These six errors are the most frequently observed across student and early-stage founder pitches. Each one is potentially eliminatory in a competitive incubator selection process. Audit your deck systematically against each of them before any presentation, and treat any “yes” as a required fix, not a style preference.

Mistake	Why It Damages Your Pitch	How to Fix It
#1 — Information Overload	The brain cannot read dense text and listen to a speaker simultaneously. Overloaded slides force the audience to choose between following you and reading, so they will do neither effectively, and they will retain less of both.	Apply the one-idea-per-slide rule without compromise. Use the “newspaper headline” test: can the core message of each slide be expressed in a six-word title? All supporting detail belongs in your verbal delivery. A visible rule of thumb: if a slide requires more than thirty seconds to read in silence, it has too much on it.
#2 — Generic, One-Size-Fits-All Deck (Copy-Paste Pitch Deck)	A pitch deck is not a document to reuse unchanged. It must be rebuilt for each occasion, because the ask, the audience, and the startup’s stage of development are never exactly the same. The founder must adapt the emphasis, depth, and slide ordering every time.	Treat every pitch as a new configuration, not a reusable file. Start from a core narrative, then adapt structure, emphasis, and level of detail to the specific context: who is evaluating you, what you are asking for, and where your project stands today. Adjust slide ordering, depth, and examples accordingly. Before presenting, be explicit about which version you are delivering and why.
#3 — Excessive Technical Focus	Engineering founders often spend the majority of the pitch demonstrating technical sophistication. Non-technical evaluators lose the thread early and never recover the emotional connection to the problem which is the connection that drives conviction.	As a readability benchmark: approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of your presentation time should establish the problem before the solution is introduced. This proportion adjusts with the audience higher for a business jury, lower for a purely technical panel. The adjustment is intentional, not accidental.
#4 — Ignoring Competition	“There are no competitors” communicates one of two things to an experienced evaluator: that you have not done your market research, or that the problem you are solving does not actually exist at scale. Both interpretations are severely damaging.	Map at minimum three competitive categories: direct competitors offering similar solutions, indirect competitors solving the same problem differently, and the status quo (doing nothing, which remains the default choice for most prospective customers). Name them. Analyze them honestly. Explain why each one falls short for your specific target segment and context.
#5 — Absence of Proof	A pitch built on a sequence of unsourced assertions progressively erodes evaluator confidence. By the final slide, the dominant mental state of the audience is uncertainty: the precise opposite of what a pitch is designed to produce.	Apply a systematic sourcing discipline: every statistic presented carries a visible citation; every performance claim includes the measurement methodology; every request for trust is backed by a concrete execution proof from the past. Even partial or preliminary proof (a small test benchmark, five customer interviews, one signed letter of intent) is exponentially more credible than an assertion alone.
#6 — Unclear Business Model	Without a credible, specific path to economic viability, the project is positioned as a research initiative rather than a startup. Incubator juries draw this distinction consistently and precisely, and they use the business model slide to do it.	Articulate your model in one sentence before building the slide: “[Customer type] pays [amount] per [unit or period] for [specific delivered value].” Then build backward from that sentence to establish your pricing logic, sales channel, and unit economics. Add the key commercial metrics (CAC, LTV, gross margin, sales cycle) to demonstrate that the model is not only logical but also sustainable over time.

Part IV — Using Generative AI Intelligently

Generative AI tools (Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and others) have become legitimate productivity instruments for founders. Used intelligently, they accelerate the process of structuring, refining, and testing your pitch narrative. Used naively, they produce generic, hollow decks that experienced evaluators recognize instantly. The key distinction is to use AI as a demanding evaluator of your thinking, not as a replacement for it.

Where AI Adds Genuine Value

Generative AI tools — Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and others — can be highly useful when they are used as demanding assistants rather than substitute founders. Their value is strongest when they help you test your thinking, improve clarity, and explore alternatives faster than you could do manually. Used this way, they accelerate judgment; used carelessly, they produce generic output that weakens credibility.

- **Structural critique:** Share a rough slide-by-slide outline and ask the tool to identify logical gaps, unsupported claims, weak transitions, and questions a sceptical evaluator would ask at each slide. Use the feedback to stress-test the argument before you invest time in visual design.
- **Consistency check:** Ask the tool to verify whether the problem, solution, value proposition, business model, and ask tell one coherent story. This is especially useful for detecting slide-by-slide contradictions or repeated ideas that dilute the pitch.
- **Audience-specific reframing:** Paste the same core message and ask for versions adapted to an academic jury, an incubator committee, a partner institution, or an investor. This helps you adjust tone, emphasis, and level of technical depth without changing the substance.
- **Reformulation for mixed audiences:** Paste a technically dense paragraph and ask for a reformulation accessible to a non-technical CFO, ministry official, or evaluation committee member in two sentences. This is particularly valuable for founders with an engineering background who default to precision over accessibility.
- **Headline optimization:** Submit a slide title and ask for ten alternative formulations. Select the most precise and compelling one. This small exercise often produces stronger, more memorable slide headers.
- **Preliminary competitive landscape synthesis:** Use AI to rapidly map the publicly available competitive space before investing time in primary research. Treat the output as a starting map to be validated, not as a final competitive analysis.
- **Objection simulation:** Ask the tool to act as a sceptical jury member, investor, or institutional evaluator and challenge your deck with the hardest questions it can generate. This is an efficient way to uncover weak claims before the real presentation.
- **Q&A rehearsal:** Generate the most likely questions for each slide and prepare short, disciplined answers. This is especially useful for technical teams that need to practice giving concise responses under pressure.

- Clarity and compression: Ask the tool to shorten a paragraph, remove jargon, and turn dense text into a message that can fit cleanly on a slide. The goal is not decoration; it is readability.
- Source-check prompting: Ask the tool to flag statements that require verification, sourcing, or softer wording. This is useful as a warning system, but the final responsibility for checking facts remains with the founder.
- Visual concept exploration: Image generation tools can help you explore visual metaphors or conceptual directions for your Problem slide before you commit to a design choice.

Where AI Fails — and Where You Must Lead

- The founder-market fit story cannot be generated. The personal experience, domain access, and unique insight that make your team's credibility are not things any AI tool can invent. This content must come entirely from you and it is precisely the content that evaluators find most valuable.
- Local market data is frequently absent or incorrect. Figures on the Algerian market, references to Law 18-07, Ministerial Order 1275, ANPDP, INAPI data are not reliably represented in publicly available AI training data. Always verify quantitative and regulatory claims against primary national sources before presenting them.
- Generic AI language destroys credibility in professional contexts. Phrases such as “revolutionizing the cybersecurity landscape with a cutting-edge AI-powered platform” are immediately identified by experienced evaluators as AI-generated filler. Remove any such language from your deck, regardless of its origin.
- Your technical architecture is proprietary. Never paste your system design, unpublished algorithms, or unreleased data assets into a public AI tool. The risk of inadvertent disclosure is real and the cost of protecting your IP is zero.

The Recommended Workflow

The most effective approach follows a draft-critique-revise loop. Write a rough first draft yourself: doing so forces you to confront gaps in your own thinking that no tool will surface for you. Then use AI to apply structured critique: ask it to identify every claim that lacks support, every transition that breaks logical sequence, and every slide where the primary idea is ambiguous. Revise the deck yourself, integrating the strongest feedback. Repeat until the deck holds up to the most sceptical reading you can imagine.

i Methodological Note: The golden rule of AI-assisted pitch building: AI can critique your deck more effectively than it can write it. Use it as a demanding evaluator, not as a ghostwriter. The deck that results from a well-managed draft-critique-revise loop will be authentically yours in substance and structurally rigorous in form — the combination that earns genuine conviction from a jury.

Part V — Oral Presentation Principles

Time, Density, and Proportion: Useful Benchmarks, Not Rules

Guidelines on presentation duration, text density, and time allocation are useful calibration tools, not absolute constraints. In a standard incubator pitch session, a total presentation time of nine to eleven minutes followed by five to ten minutes of Q&A is common and appropriate. In a more technical session with a domain-expert jury, a presentation of twelve to fourteen minutes with integrated discussion may be equally well received. Rehearse both a concise version and a fuller version so that you can adapt in the room without losing coherence.

On text density: narrative slides (Problem, Team, Vision) should be light in text, with one headline statement and a single supporting visual. Technical slides (Architecture, Business Model) may legitimately carry more structured content in the form of annotated diagrams or labelled tables, because the information is architectural rather than persuasive. The test is always the same: can the audience absorb the primary message of this slide in under five seconds of visual scanning? If not, simplify or split.


On time allocation by section: in a standard mixed-audience pitch, approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of presentation time establishing the problem before introducing the solution is a sound default. Before a purely technical jury with deep domain knowledge, this proportion can reasonably drop to fifteen percent. Before a business-only audience with limited sector familiarity, it should rise to thirty-five percent or more. The adjustment is always deliberate and audience-driven, never accidental.

Tell, Show, Prove

For every major claim in your pitch, apply the three-step sequence: announce what you are about to demonstrate (Tell), present the evidence: the slide, the demo clip, or the data (Show), and anchor the claim with one concrete example or measured result before moving to the next point (Prove). This structure is the antidote to the most common failure in live pitching: stating a claim and immediately advancing to the next slide before the claim has had time to register in the evaluator's mind.

Handling Technical Questions in Mixed Audiences

When a technically specific question arises in front of a mixed audience, the two-layer answer is your most effective tool. Deliver one accessible sentence for the non-technical evaluators in the room, followed immediately by the technical depth that the domain experts are listening for. This demonstrates two qualities simultaneously — pedagogical clarity and technical command — which are precisely the qualities a cybersecurity incubator jury is trained to assess.

 **Illustrative Example:** Question: “How does your system handle phishing domains it has never seen before?”

- **Layer 1 (non-technical):** “Our system detects the behavioral patterns of a suspicious email independently of the domain — the same way a trained professional recognizes a fraudulent message even from a sender they have never encountered.”

- **Layer 2 (technical):** “Technically, our fine-tuned BERT classifier extracts semantic embeddings from the email body and header metadata. The domain is one feature among eighteen in the ensemble; it is not the primary signal. Our false-negative rate on unseen domains in our internal benchmark — tested on N samples — is X% [replace with real figure before presenting].”

(Illustrative example, prepare your own two-layer answers for the five most probable jury questions)

The Pitch You Must Deliver Without Slides

Every founder should be capable of delivering the Problem and Solution in ninety seconds (without any visual support) in a corridor, at a dinner, or in an elevator. If you cannot explain your project fluidly without your deck, you do not yet understand it at the depth required to pitch it convincingly. Memorize the spoken version of Slides 2 and 3. That spoken version is your baseline pitch, and it must be as fluent and precise as your written deck before you enter any presentation room.

Pre-Pitch Checklist: Eleven Slides, Three Categories

Run through every item on this checklist before any presentation. Treat each unchecked box as a required action, not an optional refinement. The checklist is aligned with the eleven-slide structure of this guide.

CONTENT — Slide-by-slide verification	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 1: The tagline expresses a concrete user benefit, not a product description or a category label.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 2: Every statistic is accompanied by a visible, citable source. Any figure without a source has been reformulated qualitatively.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 3: The solution description is limited to the functional mechanism. No differentiation claims or comparative benefits appear on this slide.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 4: The Value Proposition explicitly answers all three questions: for exactly whom, what measurable value, and why better than the alternatives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 5: Market sizing uses the bottom-up method. All input assumptions are stated, and every base figure carries a source.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 6: The revenue model specifies who pays, how much, and on what terms. At least four key commercial metrics are present and explained.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 7: At least one milestone lies in the past with a date. All future milestones are framed as measurable outcomes, not technical deliverables.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 8: The architecture slide includes a Security-by-Design block addressing all six dimensions: threat model, access control, encryption, logging, compliance, and incident management.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 9: The competitive matrix names real, specific players and uses axes that reflect genuine customer decision criteria — not axes chosen to maximize the apparent advantage.

CONTENT — Slide-by-slide verification

<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 10: Every team member is presented in the sequence role → core competency → concrete execution proof. No slide reads as a collective CV.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide 11: The ask is specific and quantified. The five-year vision is stated in terms of measurable impact, not revenue projections.

DESIGN — Readability and visual discipline

<input type="checkbox"/>	Every slide carries exactly one primary idea that can be absorbed in under five seconds of visual scanning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Text density is calibrated to slide type: lighter on narrative slides, more structured on technical and financial slides.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The color scheme, typography, and visual style are consistent across all eleven slides.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Every diagram and table is self-explanatory without requiring verbal commentary to be understood.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The deck has been exported as a PDF backup and tested for readability on a projector or external screen.

DELIVERY — Preparation and adaptability

<input type="checkbox"/>	Both a nine-to-eleven-minute version and a twelve-to-thirteen-minute version have been rehearsed to fluency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The ninety-second verbal pitch covering the Problem and Solution (without slides) has been memorized and rehearsed aloud.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Two-layer answers (accessible + technical depth) have been prepared for the five most probable jury questions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	A follow-up package (extended deck, financial model, and technical specification sheet) is ready to share on request after the pitch.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The deck has been delivered in front of at least one person outside the founding team before the real presentation.

Conclusion — The Mindset of a Compelling Pitcher

The most important shift you can make as a first-time pitcher is straightforward to state and genuinely difficult to embody: stop thinking “I am presenting my project” and start thinking “I am inviting someone to join a journey.”

A pitch is not a thesis defence. It is not a status report. It is a conversation between a founder who has seen a reality that others have not yet recognized, and an evaluator who is deciding whether to believe in that vision. Your goal is not to demonstrate the volume of knowledge you possess. Your goal is to make your conviction contagious.

Build your deck around the evaluator’s five questions. Anticipate the doubts before they are voiced. Tell a story specific enough to be credible and ambitious enough to be inspiring. Be honest about what you do not yet know — evaluators at this level respect intellectual honesty more than false certainty. Show, through every slide and every answer, that you are the kind of founder who learns fast, executes with discipline, and builds with integrity.

“The best pitch deck is not the most beautiful. It is the one that makes the evaluator walk out of the room thinking: I want to see where this goes”.

That is your real objective. Everything in this guide is in service of that moment. Now, go build it.

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