



How to Run Pitch Events

*A Guidebook
Co-Developed by and for
Ecosystem Actors in
Malawi*



Implemented by



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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the “How to Run Pitch Events” guidebook is to serve as a practical guide to be used by Malawian ecosystem organizers to design and plan startup and entrepreneurship pitch events.

The guide was developed as part of the Ecosystem Hack organized in partnership with GOPA-AFC and EYA! ATVET from 18th to 21st Dec 2023 in Lilongwe. Using a first draft of the guidebook ecosystem organizers from Malawi conceptualized pitch events geared towards particular needs of the entrepreneurs they support in their communities. The evaluation of this exercise showed that the vast diversity of needs by ecosystem leaders would require a versatile toolbox of instruments rather than a one-size fits all pitch event concept. Thus, this guidebook is thought of as a practical, self-service tool that ecosystem organizers work through before the organization of their events.

The core of the guidebook is the “checklist” that offers organizers an orientation about what elements they need to prepare depending on the goal of the pitch event. The introductory part of the guide is meant to help making the right choices.

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How to use this Guidebook

Being a self-service toolkit, the guidebook offers a checklist to be printed or downloaded by the organizers of a pitch event and to be filled during conversations with your organizing team and target groups.

For first-time organizers or experienced organizers who want to get inspired, we introduce the many variations of pitch events in the following chapters. The introduction contains references to all the questions in the guidebook. For more convenient orientation, small boxes with references to each question number are placed on the side. Read them from A to Z or pick the topics you are interested in, then turn back to the checklist to prepare your event.

Finally, you can fill the checklist with your pitch event design at the conceptualization stage of the event (about 6 months before). You are then able to use it as a reference or a tool to onboard partners.

Good luck with your events!

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Malawi's Startup Ecosystem is in its infancy still.

Malawi is a nascent entrepreneurial market with a low level of startup activity and entrepreneurial training. Only 18% of founders in Malawi have made use of entrepreneurial training based on findings of the FinScope MSME Survey 2019. In Zambia, the rate was 49%. Also, only 2% of the founders identified in Malawi are university-educated, compared to 53% in Zambia.

The lack of formalized and entrepreneurial training sets the context in which pitch events for entrepreneurs in Malawi are organized. To make use of pitch events, entrepreneurs need to overcome a sizeable knowledge gap in regards of business acumen and market understanding.

The Way Forward

To achieve a fast and effective onboarding of startups, the following elements can be used to organize successful pitch events:

- ➔ Provision of easy-to-use tools for the preparation of pitch presentations like templates and toolboxes
- ➔ Available online courses on pitching for international experts
- ➔ Review videos of pitch presentations by startups in other countries
- ➔ Intensive preparation sessions with mentors and peers before the actual pitch event

At the same time, Malawi's economy is largely disconnected from global innovation trends, and few business leaders show interest in startup investment. The country's economy is concentrated largely in the wholesale and retail sector with 70% of turn-over and has limited activity in innovative business fields.

However, ICT services exports as share or total trade (2.3%) for Malawi rank in the Top 50 worldwide (48th), and in the Top 10 in Africa (6th). This shows that a nascent digital economy exists and successful businesspeople in this field might become business angels or supporters of local startups. Pitching events should be looking to connect startups to these proponents of a transformation in the economy with priority.

Next to the ICT sector, innovative business leaders might exist in the sectors of tourism, agriculture or music and crafts. In conclusion, the following learnings can be deducted for the organization of pitch events in Malawi:

- ➔ Involve forward-thinking business leaders from the ICT, tourism and other innovative fields as mentors, jury members, or speakers in the organization of pitch events.
- ➔ Make use of pitch events as a tool for a cultural shift, raising awareness and interest in entrepreneurship among university students, government employees and business managers.
- ➔ Prepare Malawian entrepreneurs to be ready for international pitch events outside the country to attract potential investors and clients.



Introduction to Pitching

***“Eat when the meal is ready, speak when the time is
ripe”***

(African Proverb)

1. What is a “Pitch”?

A “pitch” is a polysemous concept used in a variety of fields, including sport (baseball), business, academic research, etc. In business, pitch is inspired by the baseball metaphor based on the idea that the best way for entrepreneurs to establish partnerships or attract resources is to launch (pitch) their idea, project, product, or service by targeting a specific audience (investors, customers), and striving to convince them to invest in their venture. An [article](#) published in the *Journal of technology management & innovation (2020)* highlights this idea:

Pitch has been usually defined using the *baseball pitcher* metaphor and the *elevator pitch* cliché. The baseball metaphor supposes a person (the entrepreneur) throwing an idea (pitching) to a specific audience (stakeholder) (Belinsky & Gogan, 2016). The *elevator pitch* cliché, on the other hand, represents the idea of an oral presentation occurring in the time lapse of an elevator ride (e.g., from the first until the tenth floor), in which an innovator has to be able to sell his or her idea to an investor on such a short time.

Here are two definitions that might help to better understand the pitch concept:

“A pitch is the presentation of a concept, product, service, or idea aiming to convince an audience into taking action. Entrepreneurs use pitching to attract investors, customers, and businesses to secure new contracts and partnerships.” ([eSignals](#), 23.01.2023).

“Pitching is usually defined as a brief presentation of a new project or idea for the purpose of selling or obtaining investment. Pitching can be referred to one of the types of corporate proposals initiated by a business entity to establish business relations with partners, in this case with the investment community.” (Balakhonskaya & Balakhonsky, 2021).


There are several classes of pitch, and each class has its own type of purpose (Sabaj et al., 2020). For more information on pitch classes and purposes, see [here](#) (pages 57-58). Although this guide is more geared towards organizing events in connection with entrepreneurial, business and venture pitch classes, it could also be useful for other purposes (customer pitch, media pitch, etc.).

2. Knowing How to Pitch

The Pitch Canvas[©]

An entrepreneurial brainstorming tool that helps you structure and visualise your pitch on one page.

<h3>Simple Statement of what change you and your product are making in the world.</h3> <p>A memorable one-sentence explanation of what you do for customers.</p> 	
<h4>Pain (+ Gain)</h4> <p>What problem are you solving for your customers? What does the pain result in? What opportunities do you provide for people to be faster, more cost-effective, more efficient, happier, safer? How many people need this problem solved - market size? Have you validated that people will pay to have it solved?</p> 	<h4>Product</h4> <p>As simply as possible: what does your product do for customers? How does it work? How have you tested it with customers? (Be sure not to let the product dominate the pitch.)</p> 
<h4>Product Demo</h4> <p>Live demo? (always risky, but powerful if it works...) A screenflow movie of a working app convinces this is for real. Physical product convinces you can execute. Screenshots are also OK, but can look like a mock-up - moving product on screen is better. Can you show a real customer using it?</p> 	<h4>What's Unique</h4> <p>Technology/Relationships/Partnerships. How do you help your customers get results differently to your competition, or alternatives? Show you have researched the market and know what competition is out there.</p> 
<h4>Customer Traction</h4> <p>Success so far? Pilot customers? Major brands? Progression in users or downloads? Customer reference quotes or movies? PR coverage? Competition wins? Use data and facts to strengthen your case.</p> 	<h4>Business Model</h4> <p>How do you get paid? What's the opportunity for growth? How can you scale beyond your current scope: new industries, territories, applications of partnerships and technology?</p> 
<h4>Investment</h4> <p>Have you invested money yourself? Have you raised money so far? How much are you looking for now? How many, and what type of investor are you looking for? What expectations do you have of your investors; network, expertise? What big steps will you use the investment for? What milestones will you reach with the money?</p> 	<h4>Team</h4> <p>What relevant experience and skills does your team have that supports your story? Brands worked for? Achievements? Sales success? What binds you together as people and as entrepreneurs to fix this problem? What's special about the character of your team, that will make you stand out and be memorable?</p> 
<h3>Call To Action and End Statement</h3> <p>Finish the pitch strongly with a clear request for the audience to take action - what is their first next step?</p> 	

<h3>Why You?</h3> <p>NOTE: Why You? can show up in any part of the pitch. Why do you care about solving this problem for your customers? How has your life been affected by this industry and business? Why should your audience have confidence that you will do what you say you are going to do?</p> 



DESIGNED BY: Best 3 Minutes Presentation Services
Developed from an original idea by David Beckett



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Please feel free to share The Pitch Canvas[©].
Ensure you reference Best3Minutes.com after each use.

In this section, we discuss how ecosystem organizers can prepare startups to pitch on their events. Developed by David Beckett, the [Pitch Canvas](#)® is a brainstorming tool to help entrepreneurs think through their pitch to investors, partners, and customers. The pitch canvas is structured as follows:

Pain (Gain)

The pain and the gain describe succinctly the problem the entrepreneurs/founders aim to solve and the opportunities they intend to provide for their customers and other stakeholders. The problem should be described in an approachable way, emphasizing its human aspects –using stories, pictures, videos etc.- so as to capture the audience's attention and sympathy. Moreover, it is critical to use relevant data (existing data and/or survey data collection) to highlight the number of people who need this problem solved (market size) and if they are ready to pay for solutions. For instance, in the Malawian context, one of the recurring problems is the unemployment of young people. The human aspects of such a problem could be addressed by highlighting the implications or effects of unemployment on young people, in particular poverty, the weakening of social ties within families, lack of self-esteem, and so on.

Product

The product or service is an important aspect of the pitch. Thus, it is crucial to describe it clearly and convincingly and, above all, to demonstrate its usefulness and impact on potential customers, using relevant data (cost-effectiveness, efficiency, safety, etc.). In addition, the pitcher might introduce a few examples of successful customer experiences (if any). Finally, the pitcher should take care to ensure that its presentation of the product/service does not dominate the pitch process.

Product demo

Properly presented, the product demo can be a crucial part of the pitch process. A live demo? A screenshot? A specimen of the physical product? A screen flow movie of a working app? Showing a real customer using the product? For each case,

it's important to take into account the audience's expectations and the nature and purpose of the pitch.

What's unique?

The aim is to convince the audience of the unique nature of the product or service proposed. Thus, trying to answer the following questions is critical to the success of the pitch. What is unique about your product? What technology, relationships, or partners do you bring to the table? How are you different from competitors?

Customer traction

Customer traction is a crucial step in the pitch process, especially if the purpose is to raise funds. Customer traction is critical in that it serves as proof of a company's success. From this point of view, it is essential to demonstrate that there is a solid customer base and that sales are being made. A persuasive customer traction mobilizes data and facts to highlight the progression in users or downloads, customer reference quotes or movies, competitions won, etc.

Business model

In general, the business model is the subject of much debate among the audience. This is because the audience, in this case investors, want to know more about the strategic plan put in place to make money. Thus, it is crucial to convince the audience that there are opportunities for growth and explain how the team will get paid. Another important aspect is to highlight the scale-up strategy developed beyond the current scope: new industries and territories? Applications of partnerships and technology?

Investment

This part of the pitch is of great interest to the audience. In fact, over and above the search for funding as such, investors are particularly interested in knowing what efforts have been made or what initiatives have been taken to access other funding. They are also particularly interested in the amount of money to be raised, the next important steps once the investment has been granted, the milestones to be reached with the funding, the types of investors with whom to

establish partnerships, and the expectations placed on them. It is therefore critical to get all these aspects right.

Team

According to several specialists, a company's human capital is one of the most important factors justifying an investment decision. It is therefore a crucial aspect to develop during the pitch. In particular, the following elements should be highlighted: the relevant experience and skills, the brands worked for, the achievements, the sales success, the special character that will make the team stand out and be memorable.

Call To Action and End Statement

It's highly recommended to finish the pitch strongly with a clear request for the audience to

take action and get to know which next step to take first.

Why you?

- Why do you care about solving this problem for your customers?
- How has your life been affected by this industry/business?
- Why should your audience have confidence that you are driven to do what you promise, no matter what?

Answering these questions convincingly allows us to give a clear signal to the audience (or the jury) that they have well-founded reasons to consider opportunities for collaboration.

Learn more on the Pitch Canvas

See the pitch canvas explained [here](#) and find [other useful information](#) to help you better understand the pitch canvas.



Designing a Successful Pitch Event

3. Designing a successful pitch event

3.1. Conceptualization

To conceptualize a compelling pitch event for startups, it's essential to **identify the core challenge or opportunity the event aims to address**.

AI Tools for Pitching

AI and generative AI have entered almost every field of activity. Pitch decks are no exception. The number of AI tools has grown considerably in recent years. This [video by Stéphane Nasser \(Founder OpenVC\)](#) compares [13 AI tools](#) for pitching and helps you choose which to use, taking into account the objectives of your pitch and the expectations of your audience. You can try them out yourself to get an idea of what they're all about, so that you can use some of them when preparing your pitch deck.

Understanding the purpose behind presenting startups to a selected audience is crucial. This includes clarifying the unique value propositions of the startups being showcased and determining how they align with the needs and interests of the target audience. The target groups may include business angels, seed investors, venture capital firms, corporates seeking innovation, the wider business community, media publications, potential talent for recruitment, the general public for market validation, crowd investors for crowdfunding campaigns, or any other relevant stakeholders. **Every target group has different needs** and by tailoring the pitch event to cater to the specific needs and interests of these diverse audiences, startups can leverage their support to accelerate their growth trajectory and achieve their business objectives effectively.

The following examples illustrate some potential types of objectives a pitch event can have.

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Investors Pitch:

The most known type of pitch events invites startups to pitch in front of investors with the perspective to obtain financial investment in exchange for a share of equity in the company. For this type of event to be successful, it is important to target matching types of investor for the startups presenting. There are [8 stages](#), linked to the development of a new startup, which investors typically consider. Most investors focus on a limited number of these stages in their strategy.

If startups have not yet received funding, pre-seed investors are the right target group. As we did not observe mention-worthy investment activity in the Malawian startup scene yet, most investment pitching events in Malawi would likely focus on pre-seed investors or on international seed investors.

- **Pre-seed investors** are often individuals or institutional players who are giving small amounts of funding in the riskiest stage of the business where often no product exists. In the context of Malawi, this might be wealthy businesspeople from the ICT, agriculture or tourism sectors or government or donor organizations with grant schemes for entrepreneurs.
- **Seed investors** provide a higher amount of funding in comparison to pre-seed investors, but also expect a stronger business case that is proven by a structured validation of the product on the market. The startups in this stage should have a working prototype they can show to customers and start initial sales conversations. A proof of concept could be delivered by first pre-orders for the final product or the sale of a [Minimum Viable Product](#) that emulates the value provided of the full product on a smaller scale and with less automation. To identify potential international VCs with an interest in Malawi, online platforms like [Crunchbase.com](#) or [OpenVC](#) can help, like the US-based Praxis investment firm that invested into GGEM

Farming and Rays of Hope Malawi in the country before.

To facilitate investment during a structured pitch event, several essential elements can be put in place to provide investors with comprehensive information and streamline the matching process:

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- **Matchmaking Database:** A database containing detailed information on startups participating in or applying to the pitch event. Such a database could be made available as an excel or google sheet or via a tool like [f6s.com](#), which provides a free application portal. This database enables investors before the event to filter and search for startups based on criteria such as industry, stage, revenue, and funding requirements. Providing detailed profiles of each startup, including their business model, market traction, team members, and financial projections, allows investors to make informed decisions about which startups to engage with. In the event, investors can be matched more directly and do not need to listen through pitches of startups they are not interested in.
- **Data Rooms:** Secure virtual data rooms where startups can share confidential documents and information with interested investors. These data rooms ensure that sensitive information, such as financial statements, intellectual property documentation, and legal agreements, is shared securely and only accessible to authorized parties. By providing access to data rooms, startups demonstrate transparency and facilitate due diligence processes, which are crucial for investors evaluating investment opportunities.

- **Financial Projections and Due Diligence Materials:** Comprehensive financial projections, including revenue forecasts, cost projections, and cash flow statements, provide investors with insights into the startup's financial health and growth potential. Templates for such projections are available on the internet, for example [here](#). Additionally, due diligence materials such as legal documentation, regulatory compliance records, and customer contracts help investors assess the risks associated with the investment and ensure that the startup is well-positioned for success.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Structured networking sessions and one-on-one meetings between investors and startups allow for direct interaction and relationship-building.

These opportunities enable investors to ask questions, seek clarification, and gauge the startup's team dynamics and communication skills. Facilitating meaningful connections between investors and startups enhances the likelihood of successful investment outcomes and fosters long-term partnerships.



Media Pitch:

A pitch event for startups that welcomes media and press representatives serves as a potent platform to amplify brand exposure and foster valuable connections. In Malawi, the leading newspapers like Malawi Nyasa Times, The Nation or the Times Group could be targeted. By showcasing their innovative ideas and solutions, startups gain visibility among influential journalists and media outlets, potentially securing widespread coverage that can significantly boost their market presence and attract customers or investors. Additionally, the presence of media professionals provides startups with the opportunity to refine their messaging, receive constructive feedback, and further develop their strategies for engaging with broader audiences. Thus, think about engaging the journalists as jury members who provide feedback. The media pitch event can be organized in concert with an investor or customer pitch event or as a stand-alone. It is important however to make the experience conducive to the objective by providing media representatives the elements they need to report:

- **Press Release:** A clear and concise document outlining essential information about the startup, including its mission, product/service offerings, unique value proposition, notable achievements, and upcoming milestones. This serves as the primary source for journalists to gather key details about the startup's story.
- **High-Quality Images or Videos:** Visual assets showcasing the product or service in action or illustrating its features and benefits. Compelling visuals enhance the storytelling potential of journalists' coverage and attract readers' attention.

- **Company Logos:** Providing access to high-resolution logos ensures consistent branding across media coverage and reinforces the startup's visual identity in journalists' reports.
- **Executive Bios:** Brief biographies of key team members or executives, highlighting their expertise, background, and contributions to the startup. This helps journalists understand the people behind the company and adds credibility to their coverage.
- **Background Information:** Relevant background information about the startup, its industry, market trends, and competitive landscape. This context enables journalists to provide insightful analysis and perspective in their reporting.
- **Exclusive Interviews:** Offering journalists the opportunity for exclusive interviews with company representatives or access to additional information not available to the public. This fosters deeper engagement and can lead to more in-depth and comprehensive coverage of the startup's story.



Customer Pitch:

Opportunities for startups to present their solution to potential customers are often provided by trade fairs or in incubator programs. In the Malawian context, a side event during the International Trade Fair in Blantyre could be conducive to attract international customers. In 2023 the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) did exhibit innovative products like a Malawi developed drone during the event and gained positive attention. Further, more frequent customer pitch events could be developed in Malawi that target potential customers for local startups, e.g. from the tourism industry, educational institutions, healthcare providers, financial services and even international donor organizations.

By providing startups with the opportunity to showcase their innovative products or services directly to a targeted audience of prospective customers, these events play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between supply and demand. Startups are able to articulate their value propositions, address customer pain points, and demonstrate the relevance of their offerings in real-time. Meanwhile, potential customers gain firsthand insights into emerging solutions that address their specific needs, fostering opportunities for collaboration, partnership, and ultimately, driving innovation within the market. Again, the setup of such an event differs significantly from the setup of an investor or media pitch. Startups should for example be able to provide the following materials to future clients:

- **Product Demo:** Interactive demonstrations or prototypes that showcase the functionality and benefits of the product or service.
- **Customer Testimonials:** Quotes or testimonials from satisfied customers that validate the effectiveness of the solution and build trust.
- **Case Studies:** Detailed examples of successful implementations or use cases that illustrate the impact of the solution in real-world scenarios.
- **Brochures or One-Pagers:** Collateral materials summarizing key features, benefits, and use cases of the product or service for attendees to reference.
- **FAQs:** Anticipated questions and answers to address common concerns or objections raised by potential customers.



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Finally, the success of a pitch event depends to a large extent on mastering a number of elements, including logistics, time management, the type of pitch, press materials, data relating to startups, awards, etc. Consider the following elements you can design to match the event format with the objectives of startups and target group.

3.2. Choice of the Location and Stage

Depending on the type of pitch event, its size and your objectives, you need to make a clear choice of location and stage for your event:

- **Event stage:** Ideal for large-scale pitch events with a significant audience and high-profile stakeholders. Creates a sense of grandeur and excitement, enhancing the overall experience for attendees.
- **Office-Like Environment or Co-Working Space:** Suitable for smaller, more intimate pitch events focused on 1:1 meetings, data rooms and private conversations.
- **Outdoor Venue or Open-Air Space:** Suited for pitch events with a focus on sustainability, agriculture, or eco-friendly tourism initiatives.
- **Virtual Platform or Online Space:** Leveraging video conferencing platforms, virtual event software, and interactive tools, organizers can host pitch events online, reaching a global audience without geographical limitations.

3.3. Budget

When planning a pitch event, crucial budget items include venue rental, audiovisual equipment, marketing and promotional materials, catering, participant materials (such as name badges and printed agendas), and travel and accommodation for key participants or judges. To keep costs manageable, partnering with local businesses or organizations can be highly effective. Venue costs can

be reduced or waived by collaborating with a co-working space or a business incubator. Local restaurants or food vendors might offer catering at a discount in exchange for exposure. Similarly, audiovisual companies may provide equipment at a reduced rate for sponsorship acknowledgment. These partnerships not only minimize expenses but also enhance the event's community engagement and networking opportunities.

Budget Item	Expected Cost
Venue Rental	Medium
Audiovisual Equipment	Medium
Marketing & Promotion	Small
Catering	Medium
Participant Materials	Small
Travel & Accommodation	Large
Prizes & Awards	Medium
Event Staff	Small
Decorations	Small
Miscellaneous	Small

3.4. Format of the Pitch

As well as location and stage, it's just as important to determine the format of the pitch, particularly in terms of presentation time, allowing questions, showing a presentation or even a technical demo.

- **5-Minute Pitch:** Ideal for introducing many startups to a broad audience or potential investors within a limited timeframe. Q&A sessions following each pitch are optional and can be another 5 minutes to allow for audience interaction and clarification of key points.

- **30-Minute 1:1 Meeting:** Suited for startups looking to engage in deeper discussions and establish direct connections with potential clients or partners. Most important is the matchmaking before that allows both startups and target group to decide who they want to engage with.
- **Panel Discussion or Roundtable Format:** Involves multiple startups participating in a moderated panel discussion or roundtable format.
- **Reverse Pitch:** Flips the traditional pitch event format by having potential customers or investors pitch their challenges, needs, or investment criteria to startups. Startups then have a chance to approach them afterwards with a more tailor-made pitch.
- **Demo Day or Product Showcase:** Showcases startups' products or prototypes through live demonstrations, interactive exhibits, or product showcases. This format allows startups to highlight the functionality, features, and benefits of their products in a hands-on and experiential manner, attracting interest from potential customers, partners, and investors.
- **Pitch Event with Award Ceremony:** This format combines the excitement of a pitch event with the recognition and prestige of an award ceremony. Startups deliver their pitches to a panel of judges or an audience, showcasing their innovations, business models, and impact.
- **Hybrid or Customized Format:** Combines elements of multiple formats to suit specific objectives, audience preferences, or logistical considerations. For example, a pitch event may include a combination of public pitches, private meetings, and panel discussions tailored to the needs of different stakeholders. Customized formats allow organizers to design unique experiences that maximize engagement and deliver optimal results for startups and participants alike.

Pitch Templates

Provide your startups with design templates for pitch decks with tools like Slidego.. It offers free templates for Google Slides and PowerPoint. However, we must be careful not to make presentations too stylized by relying too heavily on technology. We should leave enough room for intuition, inspiration, improvisation - in short, for the human being, with all his or her strengths and weaknesses, freedom and spontaneity.

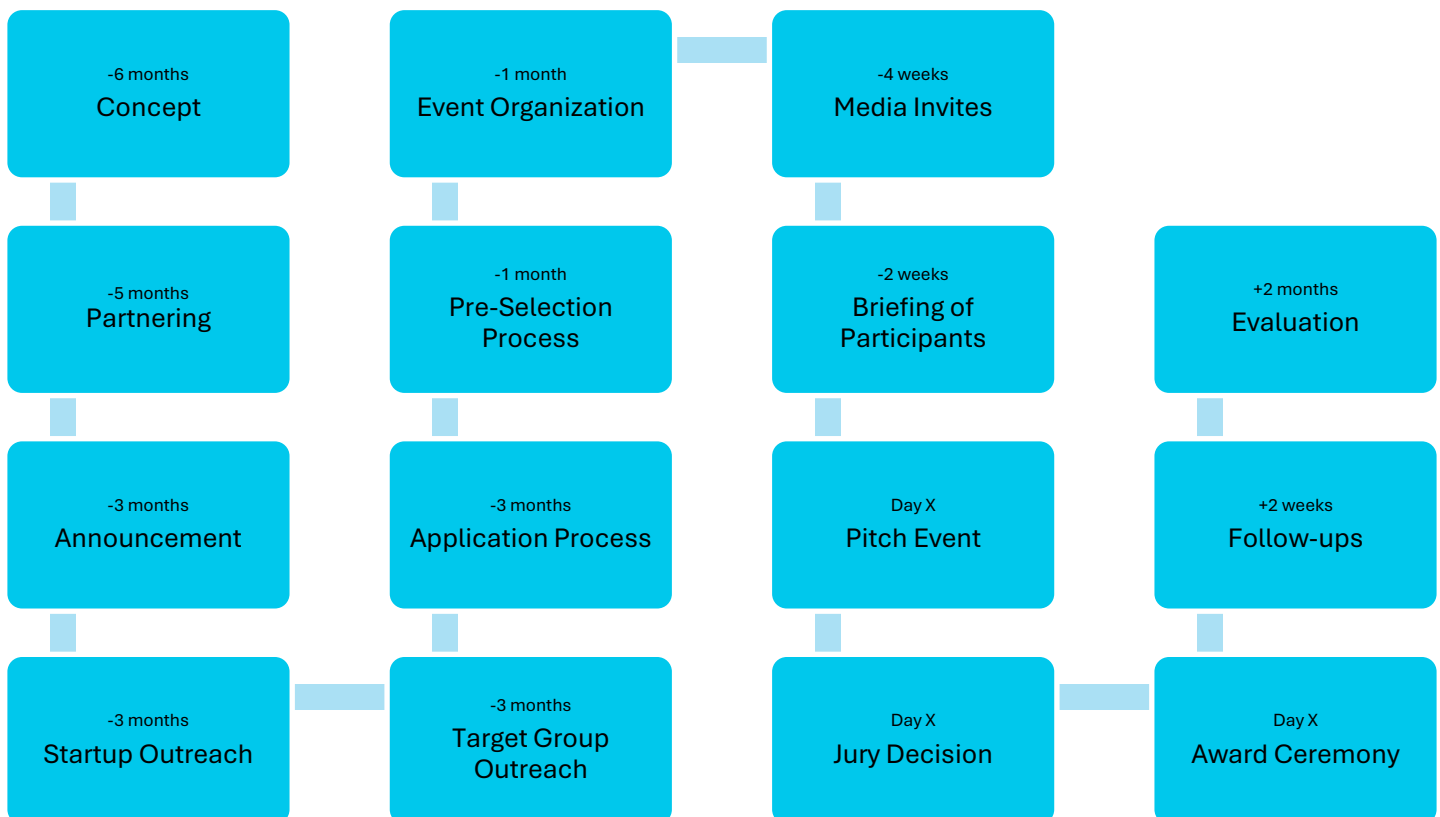
3.5. Implementation Timeline

There is no standard approach to organize a pitch event. Once again, it all depends on the type and purpose of your event. We suggest an approach that ranges over six months from the conceptualisation to the evaluation of your event.



Over the span of six months, the event organization unfolds in a strategic sequence. Initially conceptualized,

the event solidifies its purpose and themes. Partnerships are then forged, ensuring collaborative support. Three months before the event, announcements are made, accompanied by targeted outreach to startups and the intended audience. The application process opens, and pre-selection begins a month prior to the event. Event logistics are meticulously organized, followed by media invites and participant briefings. On the event day, startups pitch their ideas, with jury decisions and award ceremonies marking the culmination. Post-event, follow-ups nurture connections, while a two-month evaluation period reflects on the event's impact, guiding future improvements.



3.6. Partnering & Target Group Outreach

To ensure the impact of the pitch event, partners are crucial to ensure access to the target group as well as credibility of you as a trusted broker.

AI Pitch Trainer

Pitchyouridea is a concrete example of how you can leverage technology to design a successful pitch. It's AI-powered and can be used to refine and perfect your startup in preparation for investor pitches by providing a realistic simulation environment, targeted questions, immediate transcription, and automated pitch deck creation. Although still in beta phase, this tool offers an excellent environment for pitchdeck innovation.

Tap into existing networks and relationships within the Malawi startup ecosystem to identify potential partners and leverage warm introductions. Engage with industry associations, incubators, accelerators, and business networks to amplify outreach efforts and build credibility.

Strategic partnerships can be built across multiple coming events and should involve the most relevant stakeholders. It is worth combining multiple pitch events of various organizers in Malawi into one series and attract the largest possible partners together. This could for example involve activating financial institutions who have to play a brokering role towards institutional and private investors in the country.

Offer tangible benefits and recognition to partnering organizations to incentivize their participation and support. This may include logo placement on promotional materials, recognition in event signage and communications, speaking opportunities during the event, and access to exclusive networking sessions or VIP experiences. Highlight the visibility and exposure that partners will receive before, during, and after the pitch event to showcase their commitment to support the startup ecosystem in Malawi.

Collaborate with partnering organizations to co-create marketing and promotional campaigns that amplify the reach and impact of the pitch event. Leverage their networks, communication channels, and social media platforms to generate buzz, drive attendance, and engage target audiences. Encourage partners to share event announcements, updates, and highlights with their stakeholders to maximize exposure and participation.

Explore value-added opportunities for collaboration beyond the pitch event itself. This could include organizing follow-up workshops, mentorship programs, or investment clinics to provide ongoing support and guidance to startups. Facilitate connections and partnerships between startups and partnering organizations beyond the event to foster long-term relationships and facilitate growth opportunities within the Malawi startup ecosystem.

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3.7. Announcement & Startup Outreach

Outreach to startups should typically be organized as a competition. Startups and Entrepreneurs should apply with information on their venture and meet certain requirements.

Organize a call for startups that is then published and shared in the startup community. Utilize

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startup-focused online platforms, forums, and communities to reach potential participants and encourage engagement. Leverage partnerships with startup incubators, accelerators, industry associations, and entrepreneur-

ship networks to extend the event's reach and credibility within the startup ecosystem.

Additionally, host informational webinars, workshops, or pre-event meetups to provide insights into the pitch event format, pitching tips, and benefits of participation. By implementing a strategic and comprehensive promotion strategy, organizers can effectively attract startups to participate in the pitch event and maximize its impact.

It is important to plan enough time for the outreach, as applications require startups time and effort. Ideally from the peak of the campaign until the deadline you have still several weeks of time. Often a last-minute prolongation of the deadline can help to encourage those who felt they could not finish it to complete their application.

AI Tools for Evaluating

ChatGPT is a good example of how generative AI can be used to pitch and evaluate startups. In a short [article published on LinkedIn](#), [Brian Porter](#) (CTO and technologist) shares an experience of how ChatGPT can be mobilized to help founders fine-tune their pitch and investors carry out a first filter. Concrete examples from the simulated conversation with a startup founder around cost management, revenue streams and competitive landscape are illustrated. These examples, including limitations and advantages, demonstrate that ChatGPT "can be a powerful tool for startup founders and investors alike".

3.8. Startup Selection & Evaluation Criteria

Common selection criteria for startups participating in a pitch event often revolve around various aspects of the startup's stage of development, team composition, revenue generation, investment needs, technology focus, and geographic provenance. These criteria help ensure alignment between the startups' profiles and the objectives of the pitch event. Some typical requirements include:

- **Team Composition:** Acceptance of solo entrepreneurs or teams of founders, depending on the event's preferences and goals.
- **Revenue Stage:** Acceptance of startups at different revenue stages, ranging from pre-revenue (no revenue generated) to

having secured recurring revenue or having acquired their first pilot customer.

- **Investment Stage:** Consideration of startups' funding needs and investment stages, including those not seeking investment, pre-seed funding, seed funding, or Series A funding and beyond, aligning with the 8 stages of startup funding.
- **Technology Focus:** Requirement for startups to have a specific technology focus or innovation aspect, depending on the event's thematic focus or industry sector.
- **Geographic Provenance:** Consideration of the startup's geographic provenance, whether it's limited to a specific region, open to national or international startups, or tailored to startups from particular countries or markets.

- **Other Criteria:** Additional criteria may include industry focus, social impact, or alignment with very specific requirements by the groups targeted by the pitch event, like gender of the founders or connection to a specific support program.

For the actual pitch event and in case you plan a jury assessment of the winner(s), you need to use a structured approach. Without a structured approach, investors and entrepreneurs may struggle to evaluate the potential of new ventures effectively. A comprehensive methodology like the [7+1 model](#) provides a framework to systematically assess key dimensions of startup ideas.

To utilize the 7+1 model in the judging of startups during a pitch event, organizers can create an evaluation sheet for jury members to fill out. See a template for an excel to aggregate scores [here](#). Here's how the model can be incorporated into the evaluation sheet:



3.9. Startup Idea Evaluation Sheet

Criteria	Score (0-10 highest)	Comments/Feedback
Market Pain Assessment		Clear Pain Points Identified? [0-10]
		Market Segmentation and Target Customer Personas Defined? [0-10]
		Prioritization of Acute Pain Points? [0-10]
Solution Evaluation		Definition of Startup's Solution? [0-10]
		Superiority of Solution to Alternatives? [0-10]
		Feasibility Validation of Solution? [0-10]
Business Model Examination		Description of Revenue Generation Strategy? [0-10]
		Potential for Generating Monopoly Profits? [0-10]
		Profitability and Distribution Channel Selection? [0-10]
Team Assessment		Evaluation of Founding Team's Qualifications and Experience? [0-10]
		Assessment of Team Composition and Alignment with Startup's Mission? [0-10]
Timing Analysis		Identification of Opportune Moment? [0-10]
		Recognition of Recent Changes or Technological Advancements? [0-10]
Scalability Examination		Assessment of Production, Marketing, Distribution, and Workforce Scalability? [0-10]
		Potential for Expansion? [0-10]
Capital Efficiency Evaluation		Calculation of Return on Investment? [0-10]
		Achievement of High Capital Efficiency? [0-10]
		Cash-Flow Positivity with Minimal Investment? [0-10]
Overall Impression		Evaluate the startup's overall potential [0-10]

The evaluation sheet should include space for jury members to provide comments or feedback for each criterion and an overall assessment of the startup. Jury members can assign scores or ratings to each criterion based on their evaluation of the startup's pitch presentation and supporting materials. Finally, the scores can be aggregated to determine the overall ranking or selection of winning startups. This structured approach ensures that startups are evaluated comprehensively and objectively, helping organizers make informed decisions and identify promising ventures during the pitch event.

3.10. Application Process

The application process for a pitch event can be efficiently managed using a combination of tools to streamline communication, data collection, and evaluation. Here are some tools commonly used for this purpose:

- **Email and Excel:** Create a structured Excel spreadsheet to collect and manage application data, including startup details, contact information, and responses to application questions. Excel can also be used to track application status, evaluate submissions, and generate reports for analysis.
- **Google Forms:** Google Forms is a free and user-friendly tool for creating customized application forms and surveys. Organizers can design and share application forms with specific questions tailored to the requirements of the pitch event.

Responses collected through Google Forms are automatically organized into a Google Sheets spreadsheet, facilitating easy data management and analysis. Organizers can review, filter, and evaluate submissions collaboratively in real-time.

- **Startup Application Platforms:** Platforms like f6s.com, [Gust](https://gust.com) or [YouNoodle.com](https://younoodle.com) provide dedicated online tools to organize the application process for startup events. These platforms offer customizable application forms, automated communication features,

- and built-in evaluation systems to streamline the entire process.

Applicants can easily submit their applications online, while organizers can efficiently manage and review submissions, track progress, and communicate with applicants through the platform.

Additionally, these platforms often include features for team collaboration, document sharing, and data analysis, enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the application process.

- **General Purpose Application Management Software:** Dedicated application management software such as **Submittable** or **SurveyMonkey Apply** offers advanced features for organizing and managing the application process for events.

These platforms provide customizable application forms, automated workflows, and robust evaluation tools to streamline application review and selection. They also offer features for applicant tracking, communication, and reporting, enhancing the overall efficiency and transparency of the process.



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3.11. Preparation of participants

Pitch event organizers play a crucial role in preparing participants, including startups and investors or customers, to ensure they are well-equipped to make the most of the event. For startups, organizers can provide pre-event guidance and resources such as pitch deck templates and [examples from successful startups](#), [pitch coaching sessions](#), and networking tips to help them refine their presentations, articulate their value proposition, and make meaningful connections with investors or customers. Additionally, organizers can facilitate pre-event introductions between startups and potential investors or customers, helping startups establish rapport and schedule meetings in advance. There are apps like [Brella](#) that can be used for this purpose. For investors or customers, organizers can offer pre-event briefings on participating startups, industry trends, and investment opportunities, enabling them to make informed decisions and maximize their engagement during the event. Providing access to relevant information, facilitating networking opportunities, and offering support throughout the preparation process can enhance the overall experience for participants and contribute to the success of the pitch event.



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3.12. Follow-Ups & Evaluation

“The sale is in the follow-up” is a well-known salesperson saying. For example, Microsoft internally advises its sales teams that a customer usually buys only after the 12th contact with the salesperson. The same is true for investors and startups.

Ensure that you support startups beyond the end of the event by allowing them to gather the relevant contact information, get support by your team to speak again to the target group and facilitate if there is a misunderstanding about the goals of the interaction.

Tracking the actual investments, sales, or partnerships established after the event helps organizers also evaluate the event's impact and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. By monitoring the outcomes of post-event interactions, organizers can assess the event's success in facilitating meaningful connections, creating tangible opportunities for participants, and driving real-world results. This data provides valuable insights into the event's Return on Investment, effectiveness in fostering collaboration, and overall value to participants, helping organizers make informed decisions and continuously improve future events.



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Pitch Event Checklist

4. Pitch Event Checklist

<p>1. What is the unique value of the startups you are presenting?</p> <p><i>Describe in your own words who you are inviting to pitch and what makes them interesting, e.g. investor-ready startups with high growth potential or mature technological products ready to be used by industry.</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>
<p>2. Who do these startups pitch to and how can that target group help them grow faster?</p> <p><i>These are the different stakeholders that startups can pitch to. They can influence and be influenced by your pitch event. It is important to identify them carefully as they could be potential partners both for the startups and for you as pitch event organizer.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Business Angels <input type="checkbox"/> Seed Investors <input type="checkbox"/> Venture Capital Firms <input type="checkbox"/> Corporates <input type="checkbox"/> Wider Business Community <input type="checkbox"/> Media Representatives <input type="checkbox"/> General Public <input type="checkbox"/> Crowd Investors <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>3. What format do you choose for the pitch event?</p> <p><i>The format needs to match the needs of the target audience. The more serious the engagement is the more private must the format be. For initial awareness of new startups a fast-moving event could match better.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5-minute Pitch <input type="checkbox"/> Closed 1:1 sessions (30min) <input type="checkbox"/> Panel Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse Pitch <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Product Showcase <input type="checkbox"/> Award Ceremony <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>4. What support offers do you need to ensure a match between the startups and the target?</p> <p><i>Choosing the right elements is crucial to attracting startups and target groups alike, and therefore to ensure the success of your event.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Printed startup profiles <input type="checkbox"/> Pitch trainings before the event (live / online) <input type="checkbox"/> Secure Data rooms <input type="checkbox"/> Media Kit (Press release, Logo, Founder Bio) <input type="checkbox"/> Pictures / Video Content <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

5. Describe your plan and how to implement the pitch event, using a timeline.

Strive to design and implement a battle plan that matches your objectives and the expectations of your target groups (investors, startups, government etc.).

Go into detail how you envision the logistics of the event in a timeline, outlining crucial milestones and describing your and other partners' roles.

Insert your answer here...

<p>6. What are the selection criteria for startups?</p> <p><i>Selecting specific, clear, and relevant criteria will enable you both to target eligible startups, i.e. those that meet the pre-defined criteria in your outreach and to attract the right target audience which relies on you to select only startups matching their general interest.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solo entrepreneurs can apply <input type="checkbox"/> Only teams of founders can apply <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No revenue <input type="checkbox"/> First pilot customer <input type="checkbox"/> Recurring revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Investment stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No investment needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-seed funding <input type="checkbox"/> Seed funding <input type="checkbox"/> Series A funding and beyond <input type="checkbox"/> Technology focus required. <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic provenance: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>7. Competition</p> <p><i>Many pitch events include a competitive element. Do you plan such a competition among the pitching startups? Will there be one or several winners and what is the prize? Also define the criteria and who will be part of the jury.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is there an award? If yes, what kind: <input type="checkbox"/> How many winners: <input type="checkbox"/> Who is taking part in the jury: <input type="checkbox"/> Which criteria do you want the jury to use to evaluate the pitches / business ideas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pitch Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Market Pain <input type="checkbox"/> Solution <input type="checkbox"/> Business Model <input type="checkbox"/> Team <input type="checkbox"/> Timing (of market entry) <input type="checkbox"/> Scalability <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<p>8. Budget needed</p> <p><i>It's very important to determine your budget, including all the costs involved. Beforehand, you need to clearly determine your resources mobilization strategy.</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>

<p>9. Who are your key partners and how do they appear on the event?</p> <p><i>Strategic partners are key to ensure your event is seen as a reputable convention and you are a trusted broker between innovators and stakeholders. Think of how to involve stakeholders as speakers, jury members or other partners in the event. Logo partnerships, marketing booths, product demonstrations, etc. can be benefits that help to involve partners. Possibly you can even win a financial sponsor to provide prizes for the pitch.</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>
<p>10. Branding of event</p> <p><i>The branding of the event is the process of creating a unique brand identity for your event, including logos, slogans, and other visuals that will make your event a success. For that, it is important to design and implement a winning strategy that will enhance the visibility for your brand and products and create an emotional connection between your brand and those who attend or participate in your events.</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>
<p>11. How do you organize the follow up?</p> <p><i>Whether in the run-up to your event or at the end, it's crucial to establish a rigorous follow-up to ensure the success of your event and the planning of future events. It is imperative, however, to carry out a follow-up at the end of your event. Don't wait too long to do this, or you might risk losing the attention and enthusiasm of participants and partners. Send them a thank-you email and ask for feedback, questions, referrals, or commitments. Here, describe clearly how you organize your follow up.</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>

<p>12. Frequency of the pitch event</p> <p><i>Frequency refers to how often your pitch event occurs. Depending on your strategy, objectives, resources, etc., you must realistically determine the frequency of your event (6 months, 1 year, 5 years, etc.).</i></p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>
<p>13. Other relevant elements to add?</p>	<p>Insert your answer here...</p>

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