lab2sky

founder workbook / 04

the evidence-led pitch

a clear story, with something behind every claim

creation in motion

what you will leave with

a twelve-part storyboard and a short, stage-appropriate company explanation

for founders preparing a first introduction or an investment discussion.

time: 60-90 minutes for the story; longer to assemble supporting evidence.

bring: your customer learning, current product view, dated results and the decision you want the audience to make.

02 make the problem easy to understand

03 explain why a business could exist

04 show progress and its limits

05 make the next commitment explicit

06-07 your fillable working pages

download a copy before filling it in. use a pdf reader that supports forms, save it and reopen to check your entries. you can also print it or use the text edition. lab2sky does not receive your entries.

all examples and figures are illustrative, not lab2sky portfolio results or investment thresholds.

make the problem easy to understand

start with the customer's world. the examples follow one fictional cold-chain software company, not a lab2sky portfolio business.

01 / purpose: say what the business does

write one plain sentence naming the customer, the useful result and the mechanism. the reader should be able to repeat it without your voiceover. avoid a stack of technologies or a claim to transform an entire sector. the purpose gives the rest of the deck a clear job.

worked example / illustrative

"we help small food distributors respond to temperature exceptions during delivery, using alerts that fit their dispatch workflow." this identifies a customer and a task without claiming proven reductions in food waste.

check: test the sentence with someone unfamiliar with the company.

02 / problem: show the existing situation

describe a specific recent problem, the current alternative and its consequence. use a dated customer observation or operational record with permission. explain what is known and what is estimated. one vivid story can introduce the problem, but should not be presented as proof of how often it occurs across a market.

worked example / illustrative

four of six dispatchers interviewed in august described learning about an excursion late. the slide names the small sample and the manual-call workaround; it does not claim that most distributors have the same problem.

check: include how the sample was selected and what it cannot establish.

03 / solution: show a useful workflow

show the user moving from input to decision to action. a simple sequence or product image often explains more than a feature list. label prototypes, simulations and live product clearly. explain what happens when the service cannot deliver its intended result.

worked example / illustrative

a sensor flags an exception; the dispatcher sees the relevant route; a responsible person decides the next action. the slide labels the interface as a prototype and notes that unreliable connectivity is still being tested.

check: show what changes for the user, not only what the software contains.

field notes / 02

explain why a business could exist

connect timing, access and a reason to switch. avoid making a large market estimate do the work of a commercial argument.

04 / why now: identify a relevant change

describe a change that creates urgency or makes a previously impractical approach feasible. connect it to a customer decision and support it with a dated source. a broad technology trend is context; it does not establish that this customer will buy this product.

worked example / illustrative

a customer group has started collecting usable telemetry but still resolves exceptions through manual calls. the opportunity may lie in making that data actionable; the team still has to test the workflow and willingness to pay.

check: explain what would happen to the opportunity if the change were slower than expected.

05 / first market: build the reachable case

name a first segment, the buyer and the route to access. use a bottom-up estimate with explicit assumptions: reachable accounts, realistic spend and capacity to serve. keep it separate from actual traction and distinguish the initial segment from the larger long-term opportunity.

worked example / illustrative

illustrative segment: 200 identifiable distributors x r24,000 annual price = r4.8 million potential annual segment revenue at full penetration. this is a sizing assumption, not a forecast or evidence that those accounts will buy.

check: show the source of the account count and why the price is plausible.

06 / alternatives: respect the current choice

show the real alternatives, including manual work and doing nothing. explain the trade-off that makes switching worthwhile and the difficulty of doing so. a credible advantage can be a workflow, data right, distribution relationship or technology, but each needs support and may weaken outside the first market.

worked example / illustrative

manual calls are flexible and familiar. the proposed service could improve response visibility but adds integration and training. the team plans a pilot that measures whether the benefit outweighs that extra work.

check: avoid an unsupported comparison table in which every competitor loses every category.

field notes / 03

show progress and its limits

use evidence appropriate to your stage. an honest early-stage story is more useful than a mature-company story built from guesses.

07 / evidence: date the learning

use a small number of decision-relevant results. state the period, denominator and evidence source. distinguish interviews, active users, pilots, paying customers and retained customers. if you are pre-revenue, explain what you tested and what changed instead of filling the page with projected revenue.

worked example / illustrative

"six discovery interviews; two organisations agreed to discuss a bounded pilot; no paid deployments yet." this is clearer than "strong traction" and gives the reader a concrete next milestone to examine.

check: pipeline, signed contracts and collected cash must remain visibly distinct.

08 / model: explain continuing value

identify the payer, pricing unit, reason to renew and cost of delivery. separate recurring income from setup or bespoke services. show assumptions when the model is untested. if actual operating evidence exists, reconcile the figures and state what costs and periods are included.

worked example / illustrative

an illustrative r2,000 monthly fee supports ongoing monitoring, with a separate setup charge. delivery costs and support requirements are shown beside the price, and the untested renewal assumption is marked clearly.

check: a subscription billing mechanism does not prove retention or economic viability.

09 / impact: measure the improvement

define the intended outcome, baseline and measurement approach. distinguish reach, use and benefit. report adverse effects or important trade-offs rather than treating them as irrelevant to the story. be clear about what the evidence can attribute to the product and what could be explained by other changes.

worked example / illustrative

the first pilot measures response delay, not avoided spoilage. a later study would be needed to support a waste-reduction claim. false alarms and staff workload are tracked as possible negative effects.

check: do not label a target as an achieved impact result.

field notes / 04

make the next commitment explicit

finish with the people, expansion hypothesis and milestone. make it easy for the reader to understand what you are asking them to consider.

10 / international potential: choose a next test

explain why the problem may repeat in another market and what must be adapted. identify likely buyers, access, local alternatives and delivery constraints. at the build stage this can be a testable hypothesis; a growth-capital case should carry stronger evidence and a budget tied to decisions.

worked example / illustrative

core alerting software may transfer, while connectivity, integrations and partner economics require local validation. the proposed next step is a limited market test, not an unsupported multi-country launch.

check: international ambition is not the same as evidence of international demand.

11 / team: connect experience to the work

show who owns product, customer, commercial and operating decisions. describe relevant delivery experience and the gaps that matter for the next milestone. explain each person's current commitment accurately. do not imply that an adviser, introducer or proposed hire has joined the operating team.

worked example / illustrative

one founder owns product delivery, one owns customer discovery and operations. the company identifies a missing integration capability and specifies whether it will hire, contract or seek a partner to address it.

check: only name people, customer references and affiliations with appropriate permission.

12 / next milestone: link resources to learning

state the decision requested, resources required, milestone, time horizon and principal risk. show what success would unlock and what failure would change. a first introduction to lab2sky does not require a polished deck; if you attach one, use a pdf no larger than 10 mb. investment remains a separate decision.

worked example / illustrative

"we seek a conversation about a two-customer pilot to test actionability and delivery cost over eight weeks. the budget and rollout decision depend on authorised access and the agreed success rule."

check: finish with a precise next conversation, not a funding outcome you cannot promise.

your working page / 01

your twelve-part storyboard

write a one-line message for each slide and the evidence behind it. use an appendix for supporting detail.

01-03 / purpose, problem and solution

what do you do, for whom, what happens today and what useful workflow changes?

04-06 / timing, first market and alternatives

what changed, who is reachable, what do they use now and why would they switch?

07-09 / evidence, business model and impact

dated results, payer, continuing value, delivery cost, baseline and actual versus intended benefit.

10-12 / international, team and next milestone

what may travel, who owns delivery, what help is missing and what commitment comes next?

your working page / 02

your final pitch review

read the deck without presenting it. ask someone unfamiliar with the company to explain it back to you.

the one-sentence explanation

customer + useful result + mechanism. remove jargon the reader cannot explain.

the three claims that need the strongest evidence

list the claim, source, date, definition and any important limit or contradiction.

the next ask and what it unlocks

scope, resources, milestone, owner, time horizon and what would change the plan.

final checks and revisions

actuals versus forecasts; permissions; readable charts; private material removed; pdf under 10 mb.

further reading: writing a business plan, sequoia >

continue online: founder toolkit >