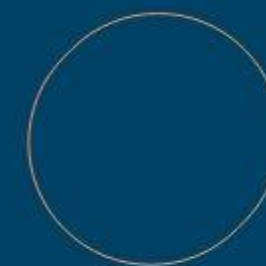


WELCOME

CLASS OF 2026



Telling and Selling Your Story

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Course Title	Presenters
✓	May 26, 2026	Entrepreneurship 101 – What It Takes To Commercialize Your Tech	Allison Yacci, DataCicada
✓	Jun 2, 2026	Discover Customer Discovery	Olga Petrova, University at Buffalo Kathryn Cherney, Binghamton University
✓	Jun 9, 2026	Evaluation of the Opportunity – Patentability and Marketability Basics	Joy Goswami, SUNY RF Peter Fallon, SUNY RF Garrett Smith, SUNY RF
✓	Jun 16, 2026	How To Win Grants – Mastering Non-Dilutive Funding Sources	Kirk Macolini, InteliSpark
✓	Jun 23, 2026	Mastering Startup Agreements & Exit Strategies	Rich Honen, Phillips Lytle
✓	Jun 30, 2026	Team Chemistry – Leveling Up Your Company	Doug Benel, SUNY RF Ana-Maria Galeano, Galeano Law Firm
✓	Jul 7, 2026	Strategies for Unstoppable Success	Arel Moodie, Reed Oak
📌	Jul 14, 2026	Telling and Selling Your Story	Michael Lightman, Hate Your Deck
9	July 20- July 24	1:1 Meeting With SUNY Venture Advisors	
10	Jul 28, 2026	Demo Day and Graduation	You!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- You should have all received information on Demo Day and the pitch guidelines. If you have questions, send an email to s4@rfsuny.org.
- You must sign up for office hours with Venture Advisors if you are selected to pitch for Demo Day. The Venture Advisors office hours will be held next week: July 20–July 24. Spots will fill quickly and email will be sent after class today.
- Mark your calendars for July 28! Demo Day starts promptly at 2:00 p.m. Please register to attend.



LEADERBOARD

 Leaderboard			
#	First Name	Last Name	Points
1	Batuhan	Erkat Cohen	29
2	Ilya	Deadoff	22
3	Dinesh	Venugopal	20
3	Erica	Sharpe	20
3	Karlheinz	Strobl	20
3	Patrick	Oduro	20
7	Hayford	Perry Fordson	19
7	Huiyuan	Guo	19
7	Margarita L.	Dubocovich	19
7	Mehdi	Ghayoumi	19
7	Uttam	Singiseti	19
12	Aaron	Glass	18
12	Arathy	Kartha	18
12	Guanhua	Yan	18
12	Jason	Tepper	18
16	Adan	Gomez	17
16	Aniritha	Thirumurugan	17
16	Michael	Magid	17
19	Aishwari	Talhan	16
19	Eric	Mountain	16
19	Sayanti	Mukherjee	16

 Leaderboard By Campus		
#	Campus	Points
1	University at Buffalo, SUNY	417
2	Binghamton University, SUNY	229
3	Stony Brook University	122
4	University at Albany, SUNY	102
5	Upstate Medical University	91
6	SUNY College of Optometry	70
7	SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry	49
8	SUNY Oswego	28
9	SUNY Empire State College	26
10	SUNY Canton	19
10	New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell University	19
12	Buffalo State, SUNY	18
13	Monroe Community College, SUNY	14
14	Farmingdale State College, SUNY	11
15	SUNY Brockport	7
16	SUNY Cortland	6
16	UCAWD/SUNY ATTAIN	6
18	FIT State University of New York	4
19	SUNY Polytechnic Institute	3
20	Harvard Medical School	1
20	SUNY Cobleskill	1

Meet the S4 Demo Day Judges



Olivia Goldstein
CEO, Upstate
Venture Connect



Seth Mulligan
Chief Ventures Officer,
Griffiss Institute



Zachary Pecenak
Director, Innovation Venture
Fund, NY Ventures



Patty Rechberger
Innovation Fund
Manager, Fuzehub



Sonya Smith
State Director, New
York SBDC



SUNY Startup Summer School
Class of 2026

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Awarded to

Name

Nicholas Querques
Vice President of Innovation and
Partnerships
SUNY Research Foundation

July 28, 2026

Date





If your team is pitching
on Demo Day

Participated in I-Corps teams



Joined the SUNY
Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Network LinkedIn Group

Perfect attendance to
all 8 instructional webinars





University at Buffalo
takes the win for highest
participation points

Top 4 leaderboard: individuals with
the highest participation points



The team(s) who win a TAF
Catalyst Investment.



QUESTIONS ABOUT S4?

Email Us at S4@rfsuny.org

Let's jump into our LAST session!



Who here has built a deck?

Who has gotten **FEEDBACK**
on that deck?

Did you make the **changes?**



Did the feedback

GO AWAY?

What people **say** they want...
...versus what they **actually**
want

**Are two different
things**



Sometimes I'll start a sentence and I don't even know where it's going. I just hope I find it along the way.

Insanity (noun)

**Doing the same thing
repeatedly and hoping for a
different outcome**

How to Build a Deck

The common philosophy to building decks is literally insane. It is time for a **new approach**.



But first, **who am I?**



MBA



Peace Corps



Accelerators



Venture Fund



World Bank

Ask me about:

Cycling, running, climbing, sci-fi, parenthood, writing a kids book, or tell me about your nerdiest hobby



Mike Lightman

Founder and CEO of Hate Your Deck

Brilliant Founders, Sh*t Stories



When our decks **don't work**

Raising is tough



Less conversations



First calls are rough



Takes too long

When our decks **don't work**

Raising is tough



Less conversations



First calls are rough



Takes too long

Our collateral is off



Elevator Pitch



Website



Thought Leadership

When our decks **don't work**

Raising is tough



Less conversations



First calls are rough



Takes too long

Our collateral is off



Elevator Pitch



Website



Thought Leadership

We forget our value



Why are we special?



Strategy?



Why our returns?



THE CONTENT

(Don't) Hate Your Deck

① Foundation

② Storytelling

③ Putting the Deck Together

Today is about foundation



- ① 4: Pieces of Content
- ② 4: Storytelling Mistakes
- ③ How to Frame a Deck
- ④ The BEST Deck Hack

Objective of a Deck

Objective of a Deck

Get the meeting

1

ARE YOU FOR ME?

I should read your deck and
know what you do



Objective of a Deck

Get the meeting

1

ARE YOU FOR ME?

I should read your deck and know what you do

2

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

Whoever reads the deck should be able to ask you questions unique to them.



Objective of a Deck

Get the meeting

1

ARE YOU FOR ME?

I should read your deck and know what you do

2

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

Whoever reads the deck should be able to ask you questions unique to them.

3

MEMORABLE

I should be able to tell a stranger what you do and how you are unique 1 week later.



Investors need both information and story



"Fire good. All like fire. But sometimes fire not good.
That why Og make exciting new product. Og call it
'Bucket of Water.'"

Why story?

Evocative



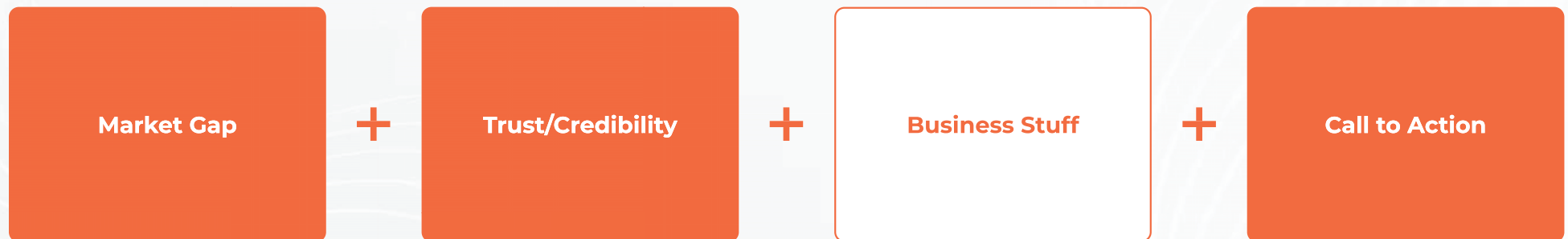
Why story?

Evocative

Memorable

*Our goal: tell these 4 and these 4
alone*

4: Critical Pieces of Content



Market Gap

*What is wrong with the market,
why has nobody fixed it*

ONE

INDUSTRY

What does the world look like today?

PROBLEM

What is wrong with the market,
and why has nobody fixed it?

ROOT CAUSE

Why has nobody fixed it?

TWO

THREE

FOUR

PAIN FELT

What is the pain users feel because of this?

SOLUTION PROPOSED

What are you doing differently?

WHAT'S NEXT

Where are you going from here?

MARKET ARBITRAGE

Industry

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

VONTËLLE

Did you know...

1-in-4 Americans wear glasses?

As an industry, the top 15 eyewear brands made \$150B in 2021

Ray-Ban

OAKLEY

GUESS

Persol

ace &
tate

WARBY
PARKER

TOM FORD
EYEWEAR

GUCCI

3

MARKET ARBITRAGE

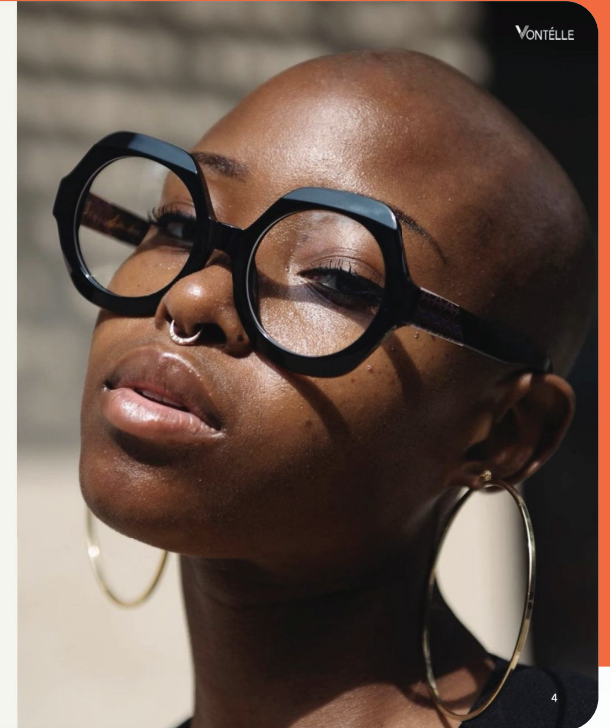
Problem

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

So, what's the problem?

If you're a person of colour, then your glasses probably hurt your face.

This includes people that are of African descent, Native American, Asian, Polynesian, Latino, biracial people and others.



MARKET ARBITRAGE

Root Cause

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

The eyewear industry focuses on fashion – not faces

Glasses are built assuming one size fits all, though there are three key factors.

Some brands adjust one or two, but rarely all three.



Pain Felt

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

VONTÉLLE

Why does it hurt?

Aside from the discomfort of poorly fitted glasses, it can lead to...



Indentations
Across nose and cheeks
from being too tight



Headaches & Pain
From having too short
temples (legs)



Eye fatigue
Also known as asthenopia,
from small frames

MARKET ARBITRAGE

Solution

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

Introducing Vontéle:
glasses designed to fit
around the **bone**
structure of (most)
faces around the world



8

MARKET ARBITRAGE

What's Next

BUSINESS STRATEGY

VONTÉLLE

We've proven the product & market

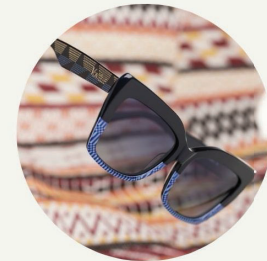
Now we're focused on **growth** in three key areas



Increase our
brand awareness



Increase direct-to-
consumer trading



Expand our retail
placements

15

Trust & Credibility

Prove it

ONE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Everything you accomplished since you started

TEAM*

Why is this the right team?

TECH VALIDATION

What have you built to date?

TWO

THREE

FOUR

MARKET VALIDATION

Do customers want it?

STRATEGIC INVESTORS

Has any strategic validated this?

*This normally isn't where the team slide goes, but it falls under Trust & Credibility



TRUST & CREDIBILITY

Accomplishments

TRACTION

VONTÉLLE

SUCCESS STORIES

We began marketing in 2021.
We have doubled our revenue every year

66,000+
glasses sold

\$X
TTM

~X%
margins

\$110,000
grants

100%
5-star reviews

\$20
COCA

50%
repeat purchase rate

~1,000
retail locations

11

TRUST & CREDIBILITY

Team

BUSINESS STRATEGY

VONTÉLLE

LEADERSHIP

Our experienced founders are
integrated into every part of the business



Tracy Green - CEO

Tracey is a former Chief Financial Officer at various NYC hospitals and the NYC Department of Education. She has amassed a strong professional career which has developed her leadership skills, business strategy and financial acumen, which she utilizes to lead Vontéllé.



Nancey Harris - COO

Nancey is an experienced senior sales executive who has worked at conglomerates such as Viacom and Black Enterprise. With a strong history of revenue generation, sales and marketing, Nancey builds relationships with ECPs, big box retailers and major partnerships.

Business Stuff

50% Teaching
50% Flex

ONE

NEW PRODUCT

If applicable, describe the new product you're launching

MARKET

How do you make money, who is your market, how big is your market, etc

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Who are you competing against?

TWO

THREE

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

How will you beat them?

TEAM

This is where the team slide goes

FOUR

BUSINESS STUFF

Business Model

BUSINESS STRATEGY

VONTÉLLE

Profit margin

Our costs are in **4 key areas** – frames, packaging, prescriptions and shipping –with a standard X% markup depending on the brand name.

[Click to view profit report \(Q2 2023\)](#)

Contract manufacturing in China with MOQ of 300 per SKU

3PL from Clearvision Optical

Lens fitting by MH Optical

\$190 Avg. gross profit (Retail)

\$X Avg. gross profit (Wholesale)

BUSINESS STUFF

Market

BUSINESS STRATEGY

MARKET #3

White label

Who:

- Larger retailers that offer eyewear
- Insurance companies

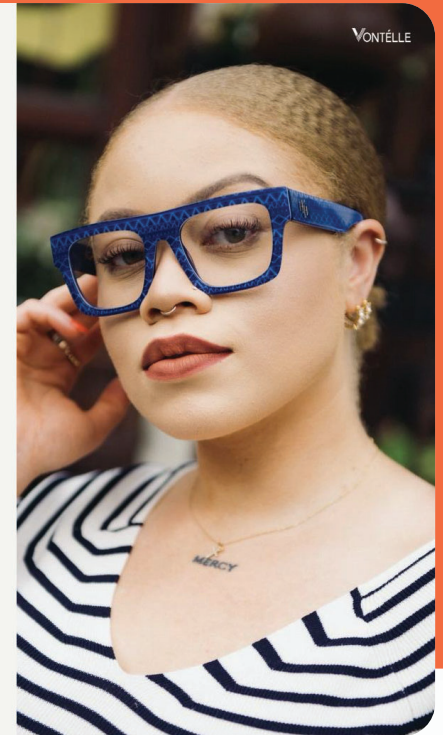
Why: Companies often pay 'wholesale plus' when selling private label brands. and would benefit from lower prices with their own branding.

Problem solved: Private label glasses can be low quality or unfashionable.

Current contracts:

- Multiple leads for initial XK unit orders.
- Currently in conversations with ...

Total market size: 30+ big players that make white label products.



Call to Action

And what's in it for me??

ONE

PROJECTIONS

Historic & Future Revenue

TWO

ASK & MILESTONES

How will you hit an inflection point in your company?

THREE

EXIT

How will get your investor 5-7X in 5-7 years?

FOUR

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME

Raise and Ask

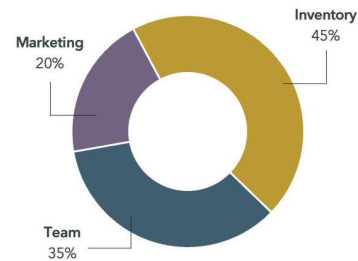
INVESTMENT

OUR ASK

We are raising \$2M

Continue **doubling in revenue** every year, white label, and licensing deals more quickly - and to grow our sales & marketing team.

Use of funds:



Milestones we would hit:

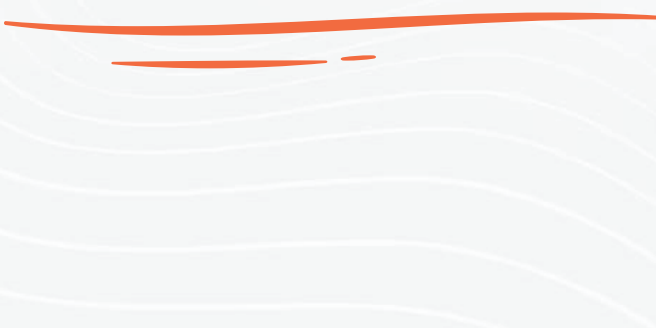
- ✓ 200,000 glasses sold per year
- ✓ 100,000 D2C, retail, licensing
- ✓ 1-2x white label contracts (50K-100K)
- ✓ \$X ARR

VONTÉLLE

26

Even with the right content, you need a good story

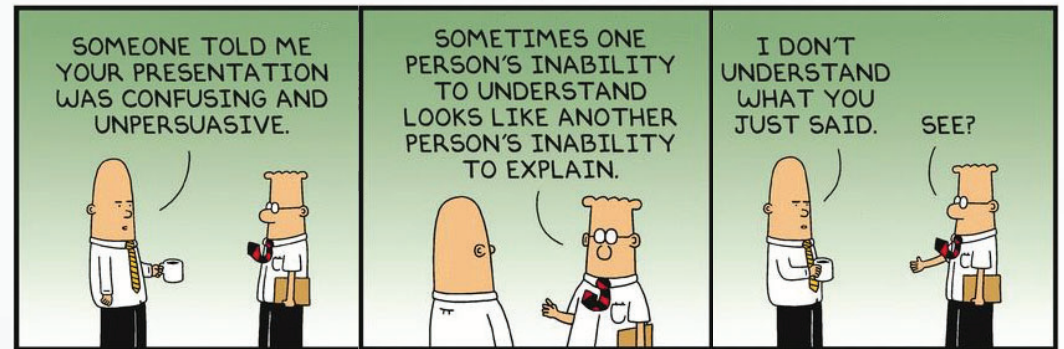
Here are **4 storytelling mistakes** that
will kill any story!





MISTAKE 1

Curse of Knowledge



MISTAKE 1

Curse of Knowledge

PROBLEM OVERVIEW

Current Glaucoma Testing Models



2D Cell Culture



Animal Models



Human Cadaver Eyes

Not Translatable

2D Cell Culture and Animal Models

Unreliable

Varying Quality

Time

Long Wait Time, Short Shelf Life

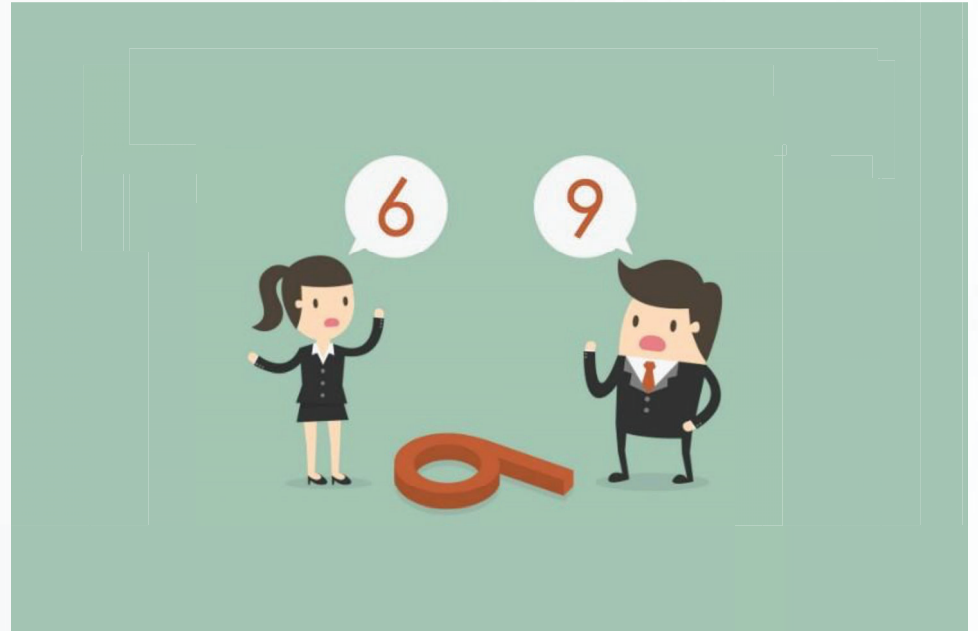
Expensive

Limited Supply, Single Endpoint



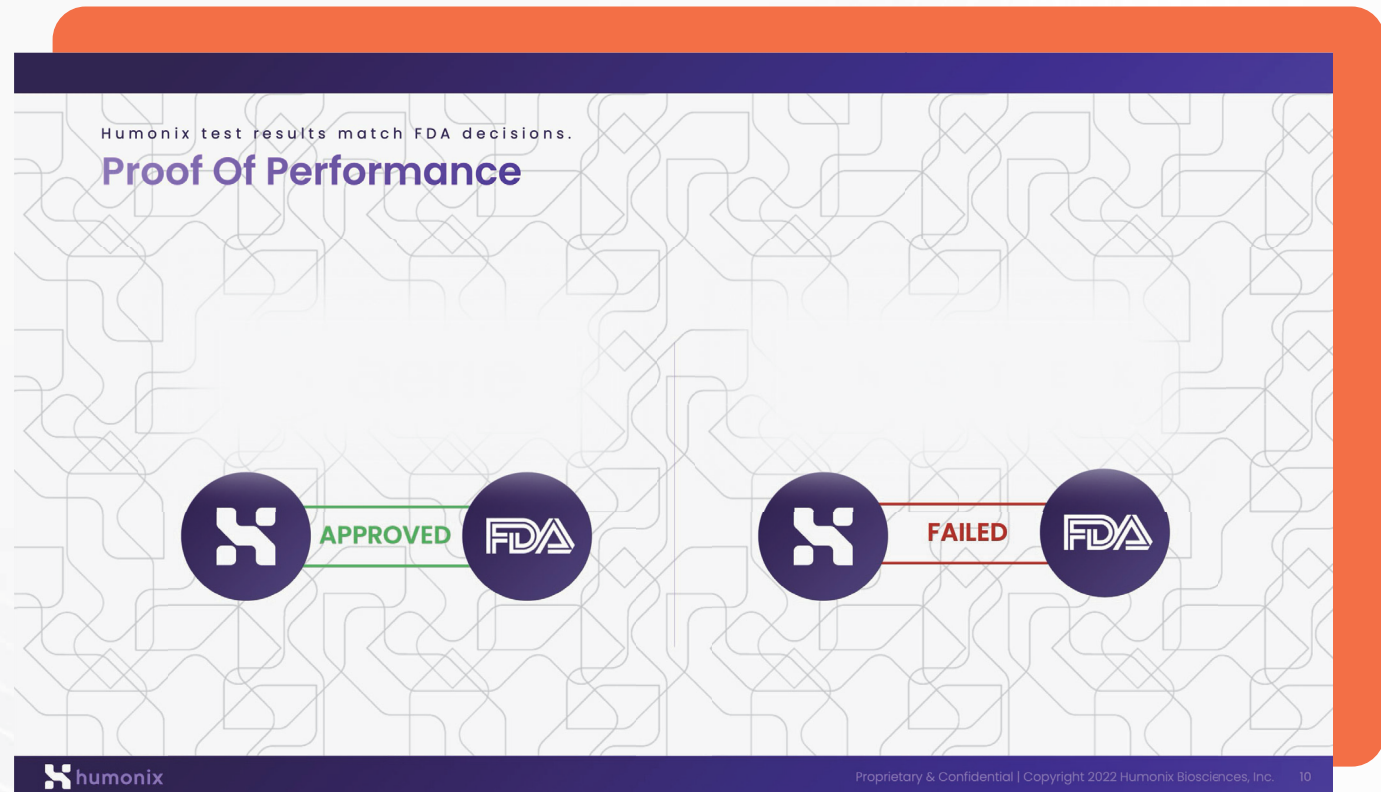
MISTAKE 2

False Consensus Effect



MISTAKE 2

False Consensus Effect





MISTAKE 3

Bad Bragging/ Trust Statement

There's no such thing as
bragging. You're either lying
or telling the truth.

Al Oliver

MISTAKE 3

Bad Bragging/ Trust Statement

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Internationally recognized, prior scale-up and M&A experience.



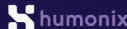
Kim Southern
CEO
25+ years;
C Level Positions
Life Sciences/Technology



Karen Torrejon, Ph.D.
Founder & CSO
10+ years;
Drug Discovery/Delivery
Chemistry/Physics Background



Feryan Ahmed, Ph.D.
Co-Founder & CTO
20+ years;
Pharma R&D
Drug Discovery/Development

 **humanix**

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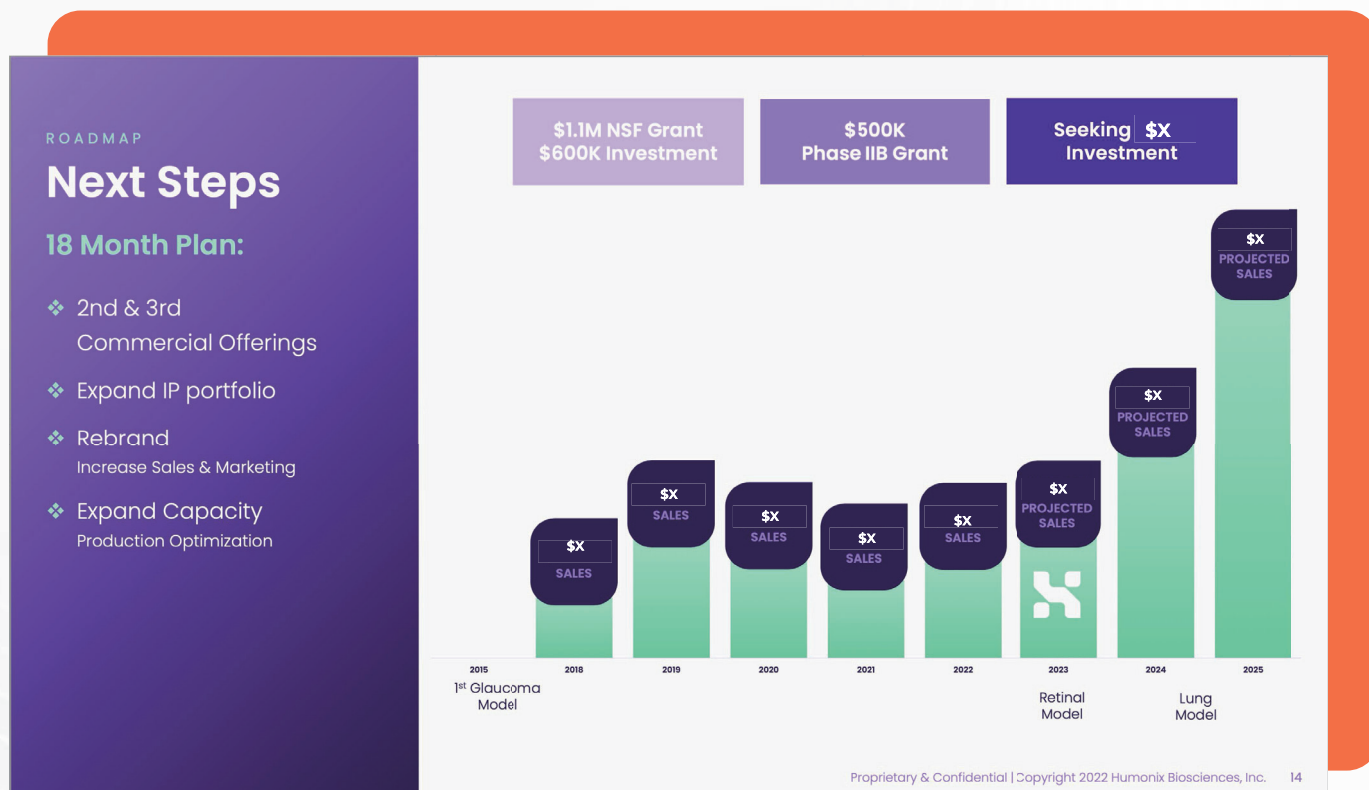
MISTAKE 4

Ugly Slides



MISTAKE 4

Ugly Slides



How do I build the right deck?



There are three different versions of your story



LEAVE BEHIND

My favorite

PITCH

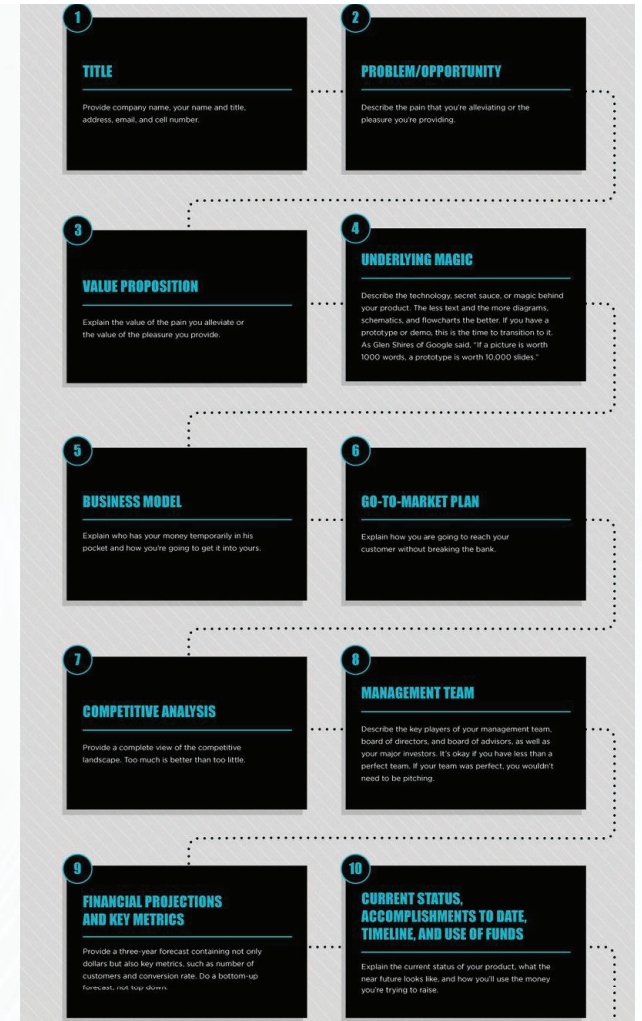
1:1 CONVERSATION

Also my favorite

How much detail?



How long?



Okay...

We need are building a **leave behind** deck that has **minimal detail** and may be **20-30 slides long**. It also needs to be **'fast thinking.'**

Can you think of anything else that follows a similar format?

Children's Books



One Sentence to make a point

Visuals to show evidence of your point

When you read

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna.

the top

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation

sentence of

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna.

every slide,

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Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation

it should feel

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Amet consectetur

you just read

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the startup's

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elevator pitch.

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The Children's Book Fundraising Deck

INDUSTRY

What does the world look like today?

PROBLEM

What is wrong with the market, and why has nobody fixed it?

ROOT CAUSE

Why has nobody fixed it?

PAIN FELT

What is the pain users feel because of this?

SOLUTION PROPOSED

What are you doing differently?

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Everything you accomplished since you started

TECH VALIDATION

What have you built to date?

MARKET VALIDATION

Do customers want it?

STRATEGIC INVESTORS

Has any strategic validated this?

WHAT'S NEXT

Where are you going from here?

NEW PRODUCT

If applicable, describe the new product you're launching

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COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Who are you competing against?

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

How will you beat them?

TEAM

This is where the team slide goes

PROJECTIONS

Historic & Future Revenue

ASK/USE OF FUNDS

How will you hit an inflection point in your company?

EXIT

How will get your investor 5-7X in 5-7 years?

1 Last 'Hack'

Company Overview Slide

1 or 2 sentence description of the company

Brag #1

Brag #2

Brag #3

STORY / TRUST

Company Overview

PROBLEM & SOLUTION

VONTÉLLE

ABOUT US

We're on a mission to provide
inclusive eyewear

Inspired by our African heritage, we pair form with function to empower our customers to walk confidently - in eyewear that truly fits.

100%

Female-owned
enterprise

66K+

Glasses sold
worldwide

2X

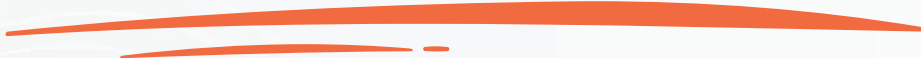
Annual revenue
growth every
year

50%

Change of repeat
purchase

2

What's Next?

A decorative orange swoosh graphic consisting of two parallel, slightly curved lines that taper at both ends, positioned directly beneath the text.

The deck building journey

Framework



How to think about decks



The framework



Some quick hacks



HOW to do it



What is storytelling



What makes us unique



Bragging

Thank You!



Mike Lightman

mike@hateyourdeck.com

hateyourdeck.com/course

