A LEAD-IN FROM THE CFO STACK · FOR FOUNDERS RAISING IN 2026

The 1001 Nights Pitch

A 15-slide investor deck *that talks numbers.*

For post-MVP founders with pilot revenue, a 30-page deck nobody finishes, and a financial model that stopped getting updated three months ago.

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Scheherazade was the original founder.

1001 nights. One story per night. The Sultan stays awake.

You will pitch your company over a thousand times before it raises. Most of those pitches happen in someone's inbox, in twenty seconds, with a deck open in another tab. The investor is the Sultan. They have heard 1001 stories this quarter and most ended the same way.

Your job is not to be louder. It is to be the deck they reopen tomorrow. This document is the 15-slide structure that earns the second night.

BUILT FOR

- Post-MVP founders. You shipped. People paid.
- Pilot revenue or paid LOIs. Not vanity TAM.
- Bootstrapped or pre-seed. Cap table still clean.
- Decks at 25-35 slides that nobody finishes.
- Financial models that stopped updating because the future got noisy.

Why your current deck is 30 pages.

You wrote a memoir. Investors funded a thesis.

30-page decks almost always share three traits. Recognise yours:

SYMPTOM 1 — STORY-AND-NUMBERS DISCONNECT

Slide 4 says 'we are the AI-native operating system for X'. Slide 19 shows revenue going from £12k to £8M in 36 months with no mechanism connecting the two. Investors notice. They stop reading.

SYMPTOM 2 — MODEL PARALYSIS

You stopped updating the model in month 4 because every assumption forked. So you keep the deck and ditch the spreadsheet. The deck inherits the rot.

SYMPTOM 3 — NO EXIT, NO MATHS

There is no slide on who buys this company, at what multiple, on what timeline. Without an exit thesis, the £8M ARR slide is decoration.

The 15-slide spine.

Every slide answers one question. Every question is an investor's.

- 01 Cover — Company, one-line thesis, raise size, stage.
- 02 Problem — The expensive status quo, quantified.
- 03 Insight — The non-obvious thing you know that they don't.
- 04 Product — One image, one workflow, one outcome.
- 05 Traction — Pilot revenue, retention, paid LOIs. Real numbers.
- 06 Market — Bottom-up TAM. Three lines of arithmetic, not a McKinsey chart.
- 07 Business model — Unit economics on a single page.
- 08 Go-to-market — Channel, CAC, sales cycle, first 50 customers.
- 09 Competition — 2x2 you actually believe in. Why you win.
- 10 Team — Why this founding team, this problem, this decade.
- 11 Financials — 5-year P&L summary. Three scenarios.
- 12 Use of funds — What 18 months of runway buys, milestone by milestone.
- 13 Exit thesis — Comparable acquisitions, strategic acquirers, IPO logic.
- 14 The ask — £X for Y%, lead investor profile, close timeline.
- 15 Appendix index — what's available on request (cap table, model, references).

The 5-year projection that survives diligence.

Five layers. One file. Update monthly or do not bother.

LAYER 1 — REVENUE ENGINE

Drivers, not totals. Customers x ARPU x retention. If you cannot change one assumption and watch ARR move, you do not have a model — you have a hardcoded forecast.

LAYER 2 — UNIT ECONOMICS

CAC, gross margin, payback, LTV/CAC. One row each. Monthly granularity for years 1-2.

LAYER 3 — COHORT DYNAMICS

Retention curves by cohort. This is what separates a £2M company from a £20M one and investors know it.

LAYER 4 — WORKING CAPITAL

Days sales outstanding, days payable, inventory if relevant. Cash is not revenue.

LAYER 5 — SCENARIO STRESS TESTS

Base, bear, bull. Same model, three switches. Bear case must still fund the next round, or revise the ask.

What investors actually buy.

Not your dream. Their exit.

VCs return capital through exits. If your deck does not include an exit slide, you are asking them to invent one. Most will not.

WHAT THIS SLIDE MUST CONTAIN

- Three named comparable acquisitions in the last 36 months — company, acquirer, multiple.
- Strategic logic — why each acquirer needed what each target had.
- Your placement on that map — which acquirer profile fits you in 5-7 years.
- Revenue multiple range at exit, applied to your year-5 ARR.
- Implied valuation. Implied return on this round's price.

> *If a VC cannot do the maths from your exit slide back to a 10x on this cheque in under 60 seconds, you have not given them an exit thesis.*

What to remove from your 30-page deck.

If it does not move the term sheet, it is decoration.

- Mission statements longer than 7 words.
- Generic market TAM slides sourced from a 2019 Gartner PDF.
- Team slides with everyone's hobbies.
- Technology slides that show a stack diagram instead of an outcome.
- Customer logos you do not have permission to use.
- Roadmap slides beyond 18 months.
- Any slide that contains the word 'synergy'.
- Awards from accelerators the investor has never heard of.

RULE

If two slides answer the same investor question, you have one slide too many.

Before you press send.

Twelve questions. Honest answers only.

- Can a stranger explain your business after reading slides 1-3?
- Does slide 5 contain a number an investor can verify?
- Does your TAM survive bottom-up arithmetic?
- Is your gross margin on slide 7, not page 12 of the model?
- Are CAC and payback on the same slide?
- Does your competition slide name your three real competitors?
- Does your team slide answer 'why you, why now'?
- Do your financials show three scenarios, not one hockey stick?
- Does use-of-funds tie line-by-line to a milestone?
- Does your exit slide name three specific acquirers?
- Is your ask one sentence?
- Is the file under 8MB and under 15 slides?

Pitch once. For equity. 10x.

We rebuild the deck and the model. You raise the round.

Most founders we work with arrive with the same three artefacts: a 30-page deck, a financial model last updated four months ago, and a Notion doc of investor feedback they have not had time to action.

We compress that into a 15-slide deck and a defensible 5-year model in a fixed window. The deliverable is investor-grade — built to survive a partner meeting at a top-tier fund.

THE MANDATE

- 15-slide investor deck — rebuilt from your story upward.
- 5-year financial model — five-layer architecture, fully driven.
- Exit thesis with named acquirers and comparable maths.
- Use-of-funds tied milestone-by-milestone to the model.
- Two rehearsal sessions with live partner-style questions.

THE STRUCTURE

Engagement is structured for alignment: a fixed prep fee plus equity warrants that only convert on a successful raise. We win when you win. Hence: pitch once, for equity, 10x.

Is this for you?

Two profiles. Be honest about which one is you.

PRIMARY FIT — FOUNDER CEO WHO NEEDS VISIBILITY, FAST

You want to see how the work is being done. You read every doc. You will be in the room for every rehearsal. You will sign off on every number. The deliverable is yours; we are the engine.

SECONDARY FIT — FOUNDER WHO DOES NOT ENJOY THE EQUITY GAME

You know the deck and model are blocking the raise. You do not want to learn cap-table structuring on the job. You are willing to pay for speed and to log changes quickly so we can move. You want a partner, not a tutorial.

NOT A FIT

- Pre-MVP. Come back after the first ten paying customers.
- Founders who want to debate the structure rather than ship the round.
- Anyone who needs eight weeks to find an hour.

If this resonates.

One conversation. Thirty minutes. No deck required.

We take a small number of mandates per quarter. The first conversation is a 30-minute call. Bring the deck if you have one. If not, bring the question that is actually blocking you.

ON THE CALL WE COVER

- Where the deck breaks and where the model is fragile.
- Whether your stage matches the funds you are targeting.
- Two or three structural fixes you can apply this week, regardless of mandate.
- Whether a Pitch Once mandate is the right next step — or whether something else is.

BOOK THE CALL

thecfostack.app/pitch-deck-audit · Elena Suciu · Founder, The CFO Stack

Tell me a story.

Then show me the numbers.

The CFO Stack is an AI-native fractional CFO and UK SEIS/EIS advisory practice. We work with a small number of post-MVP founders per quarter on investor-grade decks, models, and capital strategy across the UK, EU and Switzerland.

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