

Best Practices for CPG Pitch Slams

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At its core, **a pitch is a story with a protagonist** (good guy) **and antagonist** (bad guy), **a showcase of past performance, future expectations, and a call to action.**

As a brand you're going to need a compelling pitch to build your empire. It will need to be convincing, authentic, and timely. Data helps but, in the beginning, not having it won't be held against you. You'll need to feel comfortable delivering the pitch and able to improve it over time.

Most of the pitches you will give will go to two audiences - retailers and investors. There's a little spur off of the investor fork and that is Pitch Slam competitions. These are similar to what you see on the TV show *Shark Tank*, but are usually shorter (3-5 minutes), have a visual element like PowerPoint or Canva, and contain more emotional appeal than the average boardroom pitch.

Your goal is to come out strong. You have about 15 seconds to make it or break it with the audience; get them on your side with an emotional appeal and strong, charismatic personality. The people in the audience and the judges will usually come from the industry and are die-hards for a good, heroic story. Talk about why your product is beating the odds or will change the food landscape (but be realistic - and don't overuse the phrase "category disruptor.")

Time management on stage is essential. If the competition is 3 minutes long, get it down to 2:45 in practice so you have some buffer time. Remember, you only get one shot so make it count!



Pitch slams are stories, and good stories have two things in common:

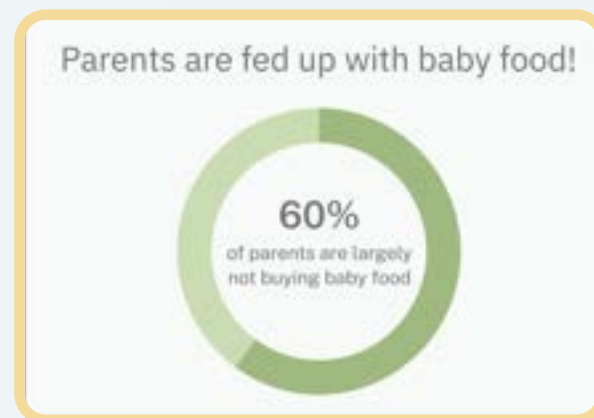
1. There is a clear difference between **the protagonist (you!)** and **the antagonist (other brands)**
2. The story starts **in the middle of the action**

In literature, starting in the middle of the action is referred to as "in medias res," and you'll see this device used in almost every piece of entertainment. Action movies don't start with a long monologue from the hero telling the audience their name, work history and why they're happy to be here – they start with the hero kicking some ass!

Don't waste precious time telling us who you are, start by telling us what intractable, important problem made you so agitated you had to put everything aside to fix it yourself.

Pitch slam presentations usually **follow this pattern:**

Problem



Solution



Comparison

Our Brand	Big Brand A	Big Brand B
✓	✗	✗
✓	✗	✗
✓	✗	✗
✓	✗	✗

Past Performance



Customer Response



Future Expectations



The Team



The Ask or Next Milestone



Quick closing restating how this product or brand will fix the problem, and a **call to action** to the audience and judges

Let's go through each of these sections →

Problem: What is it? Who is it plaguing?

The duty of an entrepreneur is finding a problem worth solving. In many cases the problem is personal to the founder or is troubling society at large (and therefore has a large addressable market.) Often this slide will have some TAM (total addressable market - the size and growth of the market, often paired with your obtainable slice of that market) information on it. Using big numbers or simple charts (pie or bar) can get this point across quickly.

Parents are fed up with baby food!



Solution: If the problem is the antagonist of the story, this is where the protagonist comes in.

How is your brand or product different than what currently exists? Often this slide is more nuanced and can show off a raft of current solutions that are flawed in some way, but ends on the protagonist brand or product being the perfect solution.

We believe kids should be eating food that's **fresh, organic, & REAL!**



Comparison: Deeper dive on the antagonist(s) vs the protagonist.

What are the key differentiators? How do they stack up against the competition?

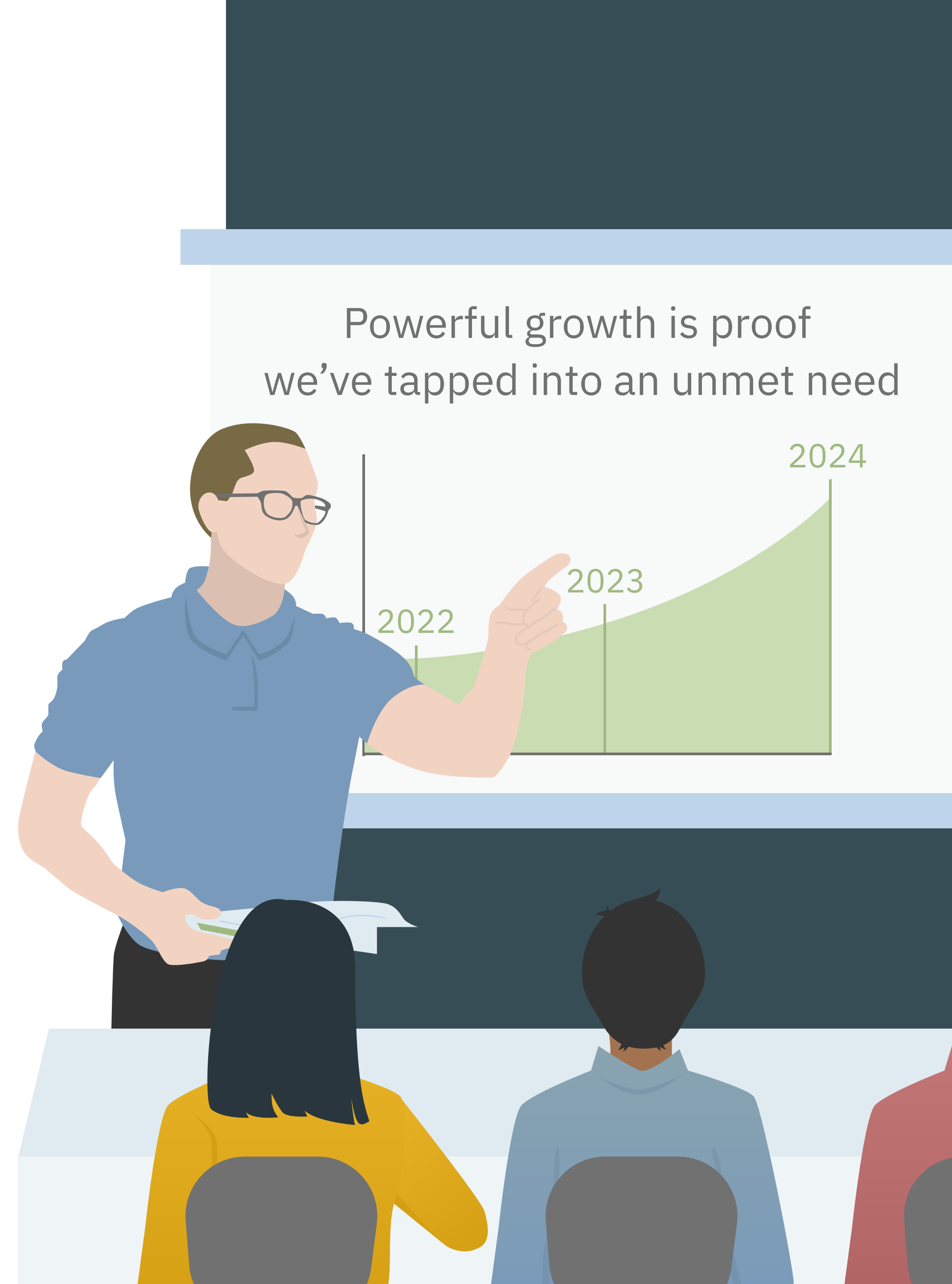
When it comes to naming (or shaming!) the competition, don't be afraid to take a swing at brands bigger than you.



Past Performance: How has the protagonist gained traction in the market?

Show off sales figures, velocities, trended sales, or margin data. Add in context for each milestone.

Use a variety of clear visuals for your data - a mix of big numbers, bar or line charts. Avoid tables of information.



Customer Response: How are people responding to what you are doing?

These are usually chock full of clips or snippets from social media or marketing channels. Is your product living up to your own hype? Tell that story through the words and experiences of others.



Future Expectations: What's your plan for the next 2-5 years?

Show a Realistic growth projection - and make sure it matches the TAM's size. Tell the crowd what you'll need in terms of stores, factory space, and capital to get there.



The Team: Frodo didn't find the ring alone.

Who is aiding you on this quest? Show off their prior success and credentials. This can help build credibility and enhance your brand's investibility.



The Ask or Next Milestone:

What is the next big thing you're focusing on?

A line extension or retailer debut?

Give the audience a tangible vision for the future – and make sure it's grounded in reality.



Quick Closing: Restate how this product or brand will fix the problem.

Pull the narrative thread you laid down on the first two slides through to the end. Quick wrap up (5-10sec) of how you and your team will solve this problem and give a call to action to the judges and crowd ("...and I hope you'll help us fix this problem together!")

Closing is hard! Write a few different closes to your pitch and practice them on a colleague, relative or loved one. Pick the one that get people fired up.

Let's disrupt the baby food category.
Together.



Q&A

In many cases the pitch will be followed by a few minutes of Q&A. These are the most common questions we've heard - so make sure you have good answers for them.

Being honest is the best strategy here. Make sure to know essential business information like margins and revenue because otherwise the judges can count it against you. If you don't know the answer to a question, it's OK to say that and offer to follow up. Don't make something up.

- ? What are your COGS, margins, or unit economics?
- ? Where are you merchandised in the store / what category are you in?
- ? What are your velocities?
- ? Who is your competition?
- ? How easily can you scale?
- ? How are you educating the consumer about your product, and what type of sales traction are you seeing?
- ? What is in your future product pipeline?
- ? What keeps you up at night when considering this next phase of growth?

Judging Criteria

This can vary widely, but you want to make sure you're covering some essential bases:

Packaging & Differentiation

Your packaging is your brand's hardest working salesperson—it's out on the shelf shouting your message into the void 24 hours a day. Good packaging can be the difference between mediocre and fast shelf velocity. Make sure your pitch and packaging are both telling the story of what benefit or value prop your product will bring.

Investability & Scalability

Can you 10x this business tomorrow? Tell the audience about your manufacturing scale. What would hold you back from growth — or can you do it overnight? Also, investors want to have confidence in your business. Know the intimate financial of your business and present a team that is capable of executing on your strategy.

Retailer or Consumer Traction

Like we said before, the mandate of an entrepreneur is finding a problem worth solving. Are people responding to your solution? Show off numbers and the more concrete the better—dollar sales are always worth more than vanity social media metrics.

General Advice

These pitches are HARD - distilling the essence of what you've been busy doing for the last 1-3 years in 3 minutes is incredibly difficult. However, if you've been selected to participate in one of these events, someone out there believes in you. You've got this!

Play Around with the Formula

We've laid out the essentials of what we've seen over the last few years. But disrupting expectations can be powerful - if the audience is expecting you to zig, zagging can snap them to attention.

Simple Visuals Are Instinctively Understood

Simplify charts by removing extra colors and chart labels. If you are listing your retail partners or store footprint, don't list names - a logo cloud is good, and a map of the USA with the logos overlaid on top is even better. Highly technical or dense slides can lose an audience. Protip: can you squint your eyes while looking at the slide and still get the gist? If you cannot, simplify the visuals and message.

Things to Avoid

Accept That Technology Might Not Work

Anticipate that your slides might not show up on time, disappear, or your mic will crackle or cut out. Don't let it phase you! Accept that this could happen and plan to recover. And if the slides totally fail and the tech people are fixing it, memorize a joke or two to fill the dead space.

Don't Rely on Having A "Clicker"

Similar to the previous point, controlling the flow of the presentation might not be in your (literal) hands. Budget some time in your pitch to add in "next slide please" between every slide.

Avoid Text Heavy Slides, Soft Transitions, or Videos

Clicking more than once on a slide is time consuming and takes the audience's eye off of you to absorb another micro-dose of information from the screen behind or next to you. Just put it all out there at once instead of drip feeding content or overwhelming people with bullet points.

General Advice *(cont.)*

Stick the Opening...

Start strong! You may have 3 minutes to pitch, but the first 10-15 secs are make or break to get the audience on your side. Come out swinging, from a place of emotion, or authenticity.

...and Stick the Landing

Pull the narrative you planted in the beginning all the way through to the end - you planted the idea, now leave them with a call to action.

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