

M V E

What investors need to see before they say yes

*A short guide for founders raising their first serious
round*

MICHELLE VAN ECK
STRATEGIST TO FOUNDER-LED BUSINESSES
MICHELLEVANECK.COM

OI

THE PROBLEM

Why most raises stall

Founders pitch the product. Investors buy the structure around it.

A raise rarely stalls because the idea is weak. It stalls because the investor cannot see three things quickly enough: what the business is, whether it is working, and whether this founder can carry it.

Those are questions of clarity, proof and trust. Each one can be prepared before the first meeting.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Six things to have in place before you ask for money
- One test on each page, so you know when it is done
- A ten point checklist at the end

Do the work in order. Each page makes the next one easier.

O2

CLARITY

One sentence

If an investor cannot repeat what you do, they cannot back it, and they cannot introduce you.

Write one sentence that carries three things:

- What you do, in plain words
- Who it is for, named specifically
- Why now, the change that makes this the moment

COMMON FAULTS

- Category language: "a platform", "a solution", "an ecosystem"
- Three audiences in one line
- A feature list where the outcome should be

THE TEST

Say it once to someone outside your industry. Ask them to repeat it an hour later. If they can, it is ready.

03

PROOF

Proof, not promise

Investors discount everything you say you will do. They count what has already happened.

What counts as evidence, strongest first:

- Revenue, and whether it repeats
- Paid pilots with named customers
- Signed intent: letters, contracts, deposits
- Demand you can show: a waiting list, pre-orders, inbound enquiries
- Credible partners who have committed in writing

HOW TO PRESENT IT

- Lead with your single strongest proof point, on the first page
- Give the number, the period and the source
- Leave out anything you cannot document

THE TEST

Every claim in your deck has a document behind it that you could send today.

O4

NUMBERS

The numbers investors check first

You do not need a complex model. You need three answers and the honesty to show what they rest on.

- How much you are raising, and on what terms
- What it buys: the milestones this money reaches
- How long it lasts: your runway in months

STATE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Every model depends on a few inputs. Name the three that matter most, such as price, conversion and cost to acquire a customer. Show what happens if each is wrong by a third.

Investors will find the weak assumption anyway. Founders who name it first are trusted more.

THE TEST

You can explain the raise, the use of funds and the runway in under a minute, without opening the spreadsheet.

05

TRUST

The founder

At an early stage the investor is backing a person. Make that decision easy.

Answer three questions directly:

- **Why you:** the experience that makes you the right person for this problem
- **Why this:** the reason you will still be here in year five
- **What you have built before:** results, with numbers where you have them

CREDIBILITY MATERIALS

- A short bio that reads the same on your deck, website and LinkedIn
- Two or three references who will take a call
- A clear account of who else is on the team and what each person owns

THE TEST

Search your own name. What an investor finds in five minutes matches what you told them.

06

TARGETING

The right investors

Most rejections are a question of fit. A smaller, better list raises faster.

Qualify every name on three points:

- **Stage:** they invest at your size of round
- **Sector:** they have backed businesses like yours
- **Cheque size:** your ask sits inside their usual range

WARM INTRODUCTIONS

- Find the person who knows both of you
- Send them a short note they can forward as it is
- Include the one sentence, the strongest proof point and the ask
- Make it easy to say no. People introduce more when there is no pressure.

THE TEST

For each investor on your list, you can name why they fit and who could introduce you.

07

MATERIALS

Materials that hold up

Three documents, three jobs. Each one should agree with the others.

- **The one page summary** earns the meeting. It is what gets forwarded.
- **The deck** carries the meeting. Ten to fifteen slides, one point per slide.
- **The data room** closes the round. Financials, contracts, cap table, corporate documents, in clearly named folders.

CONSISTENCY

A revenue figure that differs between the deck and the model costs more trust than a weak figure. Check every number, date and name across all three before anything is sent.

PRESENTATION

Design is evidence of care. A clear, well made document tells the investor how you will run the company.

THE TEST

Someone who has never met you can read all three and reach the same understanding of the business.

08

READINESS

The checklist

Ten statements. Answer yes or no. Raise when you have ten.

- ☐ I can state what we do, for whom and why now in one sentence

- ☐ Someone outside my industry can repeat it

- ☐ My strongest proof point is on the first page

- ☐ Every claim has a document behind it

- ☐ I know the amount, the use of funds and the runway

- ☐ I have named my three key assumptions

- ☐ My bio is consistent everywhere an investor will look

- ☐ I have references ready to take a call

- ☐ Every investor on my list fits by stage, sector and cheque size

- ☐ My summary, deck and data room agree with each other

NEXT STEP

If you have fewer than ten, that is the work. MVE helps founders build the positioning, the materials and the investor deck as one structure.

REQUEST A CONVERSATION AT [MICHELLEVANECK.COM](https://michellevaneck.com)