

Perfecting the Pitch

**Having ideas is easy.
Bringing them to life is hard.**



Christine Heffernan | Founder, VerdantEthos.org | Duke University MBA | October 2025



Ideas are Ubiquitous

u·biq·ui·tous

/yoō'biqwədəs/
adjective

present, appearing, or found everywhere

Plentiful Inexpensive Simplistic



From Idea to Reality

The background of the slide is a sunset or sunrise scene with a bright sun in the center. A silhouette of a person is jumping from a dark, jagged cliff on the left towards a dark, jagged cliff on the right. The word 'FAILURE' is written in large, bold, black letters on the left cliff, and the word 'SUCCESS' is written in large, bold, black letters on the right cliff. The person is in mid-air, jumping from the 'FAILURE' cliff towards the 'SUCCESS' cliff.

**Difficult, Rare (Valuable)
Misunderstandings
Underestimations
Poor Execution**

Inventors Digest: [Why Most Ideas Fail](#)

Harvard Business Review: [Why Start-Ups Fail](#)

Idea Graveyard

99% of Good (and Bad) Ideas:
Death by *Execution*

"Ideas are worthless. Execution is everything."

— Scott Adams, creator of *Dilbert*



wework

friendster

Articulation

Strategy

Support

Resources

Let's Demystify

**The Business Case
for Change**

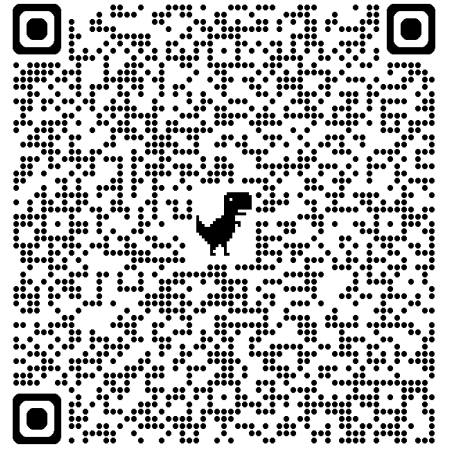
**The Perfect Pitch
for Funding**

**Selling Solutions
to the C-Suite**

**Memorable
Executive
Storytelling**



Verdant Ethos:
Pitch Perfect: Communicating
With Impact



**Today: 101 Level Basics
/ Foundation**

**Later: Options for
Deeper Dive**

The High Fast Ball





**Christine
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Founder

Verdant Ethos: Principled Growth Advisory

Management Consultant

GTM Strategy, Large Enterprise Sales & Alliances, Portfolio, Operating Performance, Global Markets & Cultures

Regulated Industries Executive

Healthcare, Government, Tech, Hospitality

Speaker + Coach

Professional Development Leader of 5,000 member network, Guest Lecturer for Duke U.

Global MBA

Duke University

Find me on LinkedIn >>>

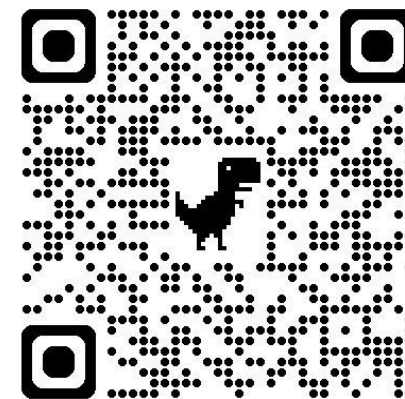
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/christinemheffernan/>



Verdant Ethos

Principled Growth
Advisory

Learn More



www.verdantethos.org

For Individuals

For Organizations

For Investors



Your Interest In



Persuasive Pitches

What is a Pitch?



flag · ship
/flæg-ʃɪp/
noun

1. *the ship that carries the commander of a fleet or subdivision of a fleet and flies the commander's flag*
2. *the finest, largest, or most important one of a group of things (such as products, stores, etc.)*

First Impression

Key Introduction

Brand / Identity

Pitch Types

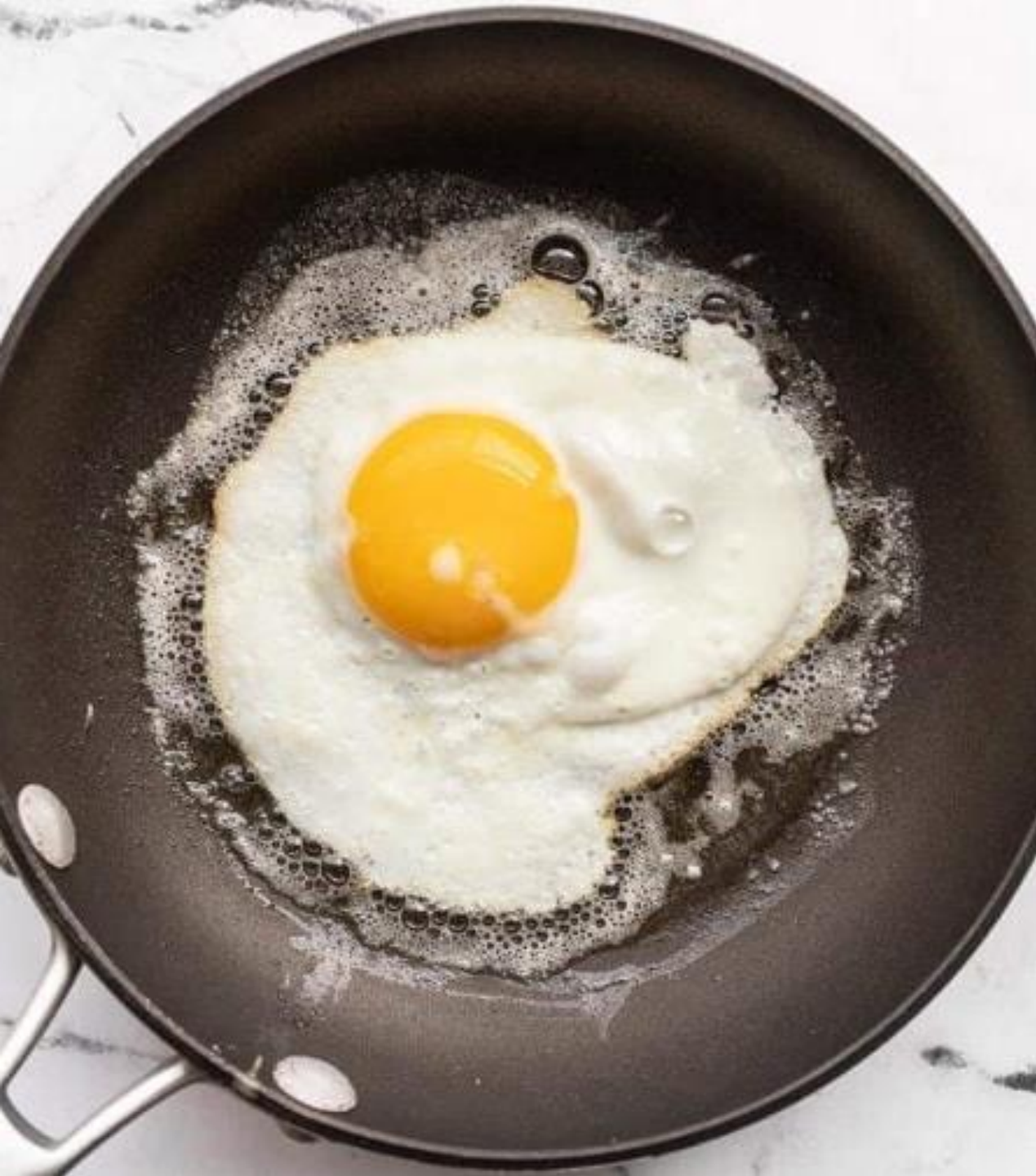
Business Case

Customer Pitch

Investor Pitch



Internal Selling ← → **External Selling**



Great Executive Storytelling



"And that's how Twitter almost crashed the Dow."

Know Your Goal



Resources

Approval

Next Meeting

Network Access

Know Your

Audience



Demographics

Psychographics

Resources

Problem

Market

Rivals

Customers

Solution

Storytelling Building Blocks

GTM

Team

Financials

Risks

Close



Transformation Stories

Feedzai Interview

Hero Stories

MacWorld Keynote 2007

Iconic Executive Storytelling



From Google To
Facebook

Amazon Success Story (~2000)

Customer Wait Time (2024)

Personal Stories

Proof in the Pudding Stories



99 PROBLEMS
[REDACTED] BUT A [REDACTED]
PITCH
AIN'T ONE

PROBLEM

SOLUTION

The Hook

Unifies Message

Foreshadows

Builds
Connection

Problem Statement

*"If I had an hour to
solve a problem, I'd
spend 55 minutes
thinking about the
problem and 5 minutes
thinking about
solutions."*

—Albert Einstein

THIS LITTLE PIGGY

...

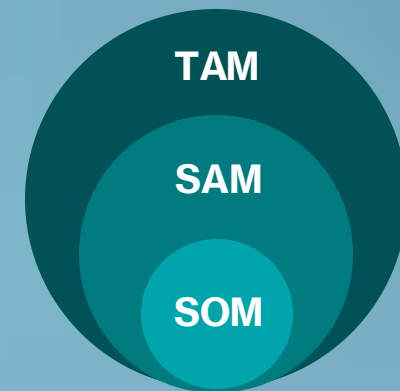


Define

Size

Segment

Value



The Market

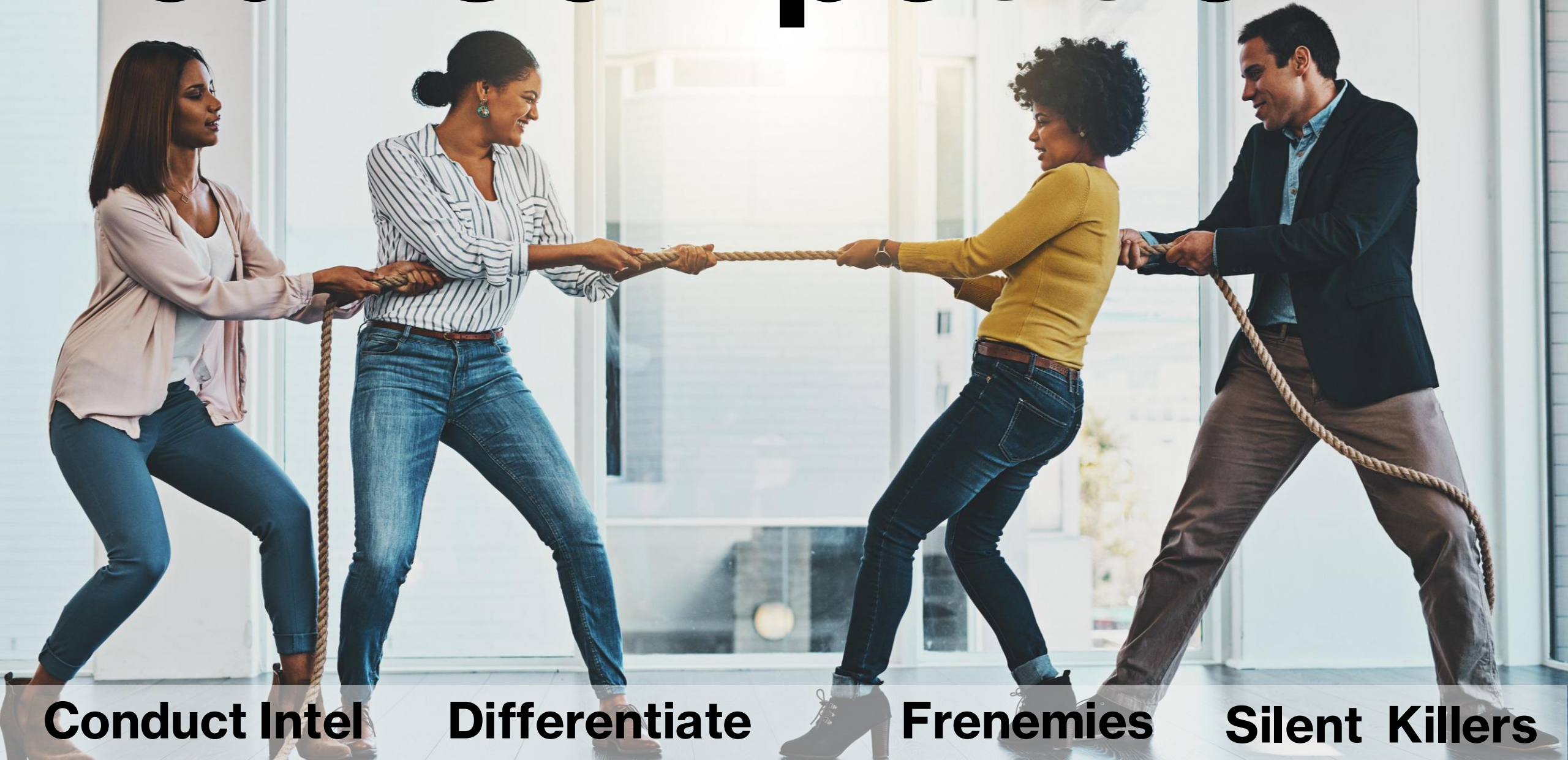
Hubspot: [Two Methods for Market Sizing Your Business](#)



**ALL I DO IS
WIN**



Your Competition

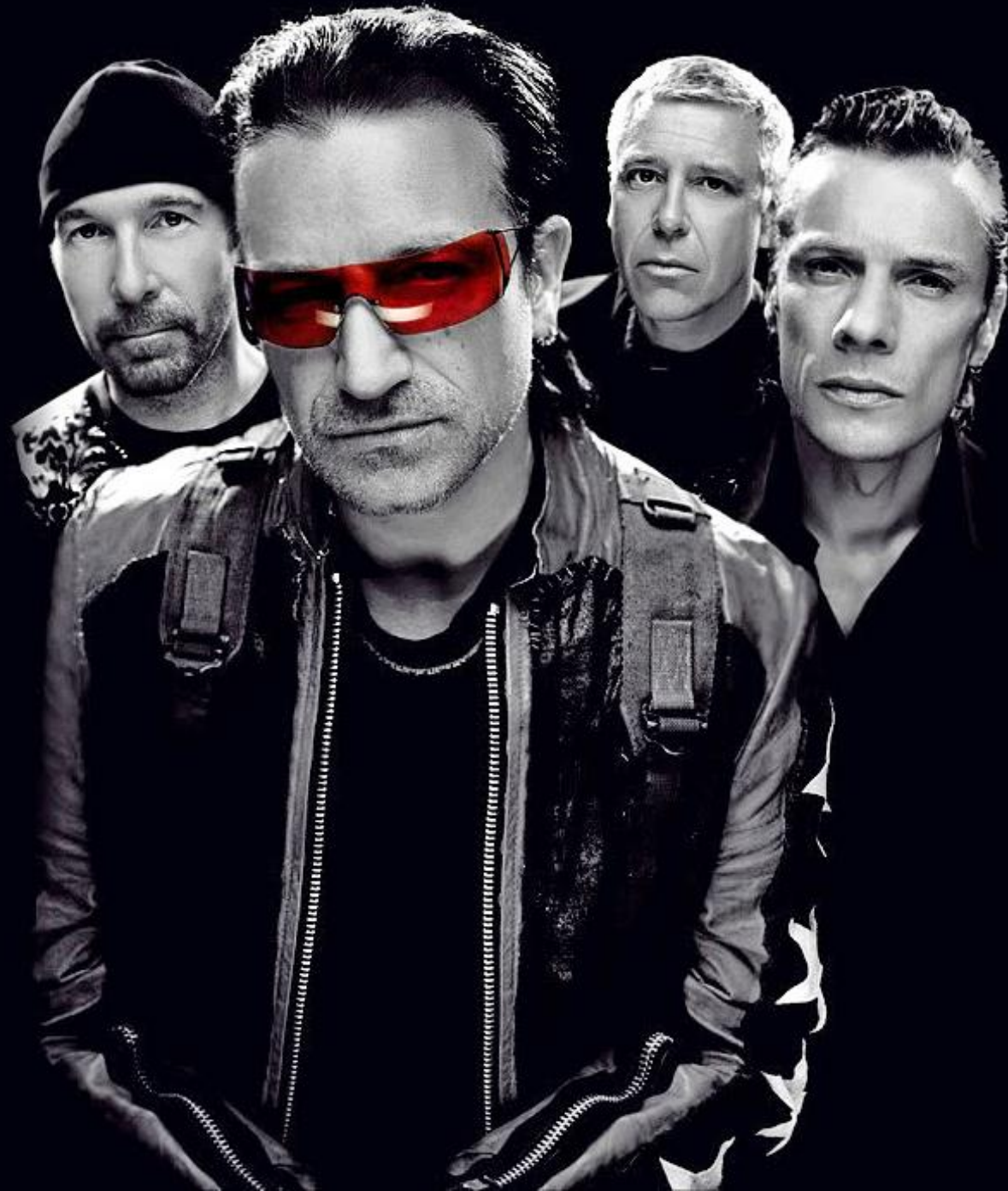


Conduct Intel

Differentiate

Frenemies

Silent Killers



**ALL I
WANT IS
YOU**



Your Customers

Demographics

Psychographics

Behaviors

**I WILL TRY
TO
FIX
YOU**



Demonstrate

Value Prop

Differentiation



~~Problem~~
Solution

The Solution

**THIS
IS HOW
WE
DO
IT**



Revenue

Pricing

Channels

Go To Market



**HI
MY
NAME
IS**

Core Leadership

Key Advisors/Partners

Primary PoC



The Team



**IF I HAD A
MILLION
DOLLARS**

Financials & Traction

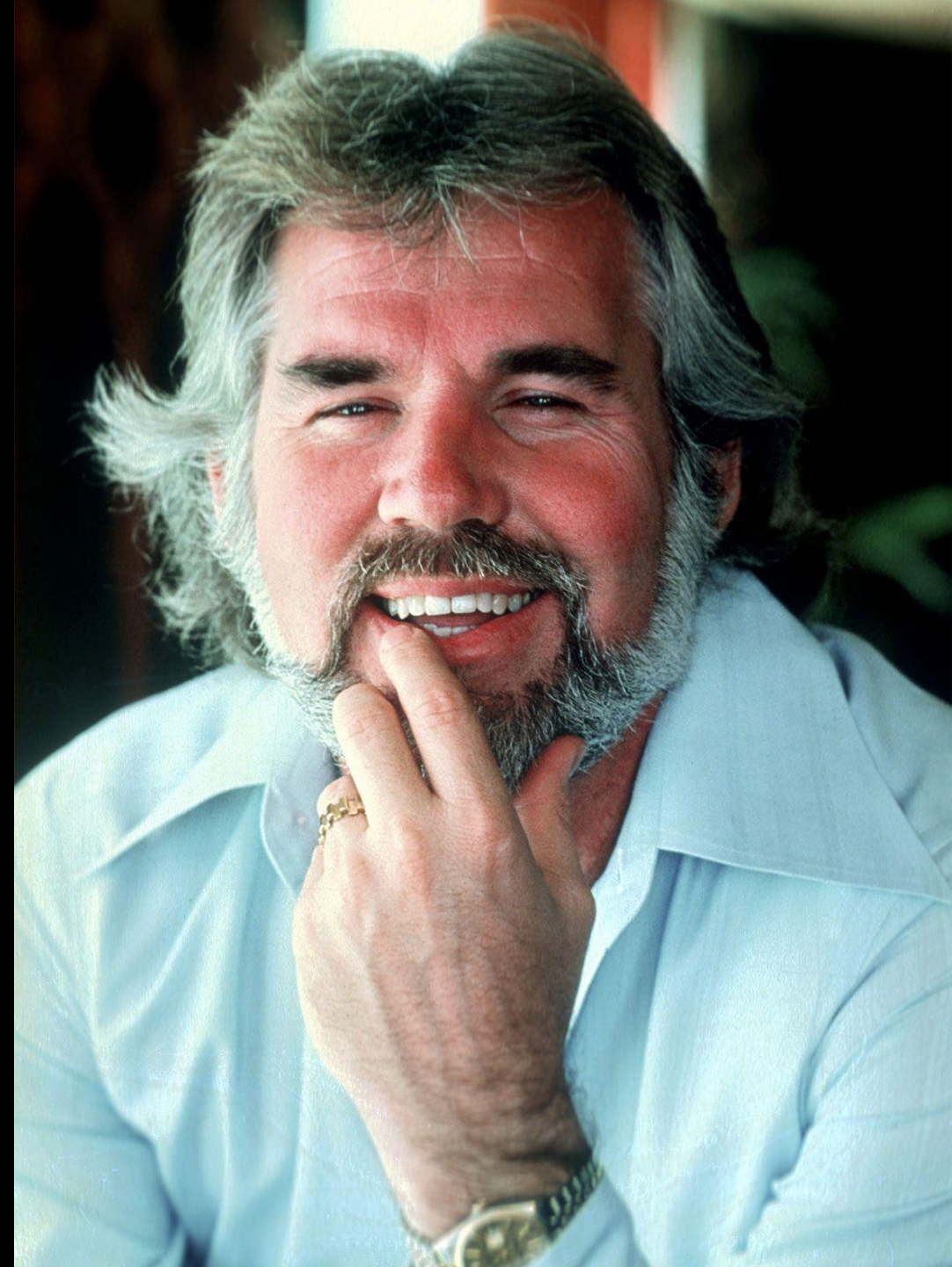
Financial Statements

Ratio Analysis

Spend Justifiers

Customer References

**KNOW
WHEN
TO HOLD
'EM**



Addressing Risks

Credibility

Preparedness

Proactivity

RISK

Brief +
Specific

Paired with
Mitigation

Proportional

HIGH

MEDIUM

LOW



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CLOSING TIME



Next Steps

The Amount

Use of Funds

Negotiations



**THE
ASK**



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Problem

Market

Rivals

Customers

Solution

Storytelling Building Blocks

GTM

Team

Financials

Risks

Close



Companies



vs

Consumers



Goods



vs



Services



You

vs

The Idea

"A great founder can pivot, overcome obstacles, and build a successful company even if the original idea changes."

— Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn

Authenticity



Beats Charisma

Simple

≠

Easy

The Wash Cycle

Rinse & Repeat

**Like laundry, the work
is never done**

Full of Iron(y)



The BIG Meeting

Is Theater

A Note on AI

Hallucinations

Shallowness

Overconfidence

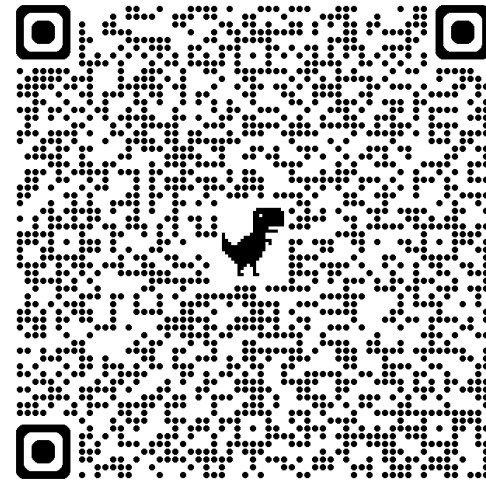
Privacy & Security

**Mimicry &
Sychophancy**

Get in Touch



Use Code Duke30



1:1

Free consultation

Get resources, vet your idea

1-2

Day immersion class

Accelerate learning in-person