

IE 101 | Innovation and Entrepreneurship 101

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CHAPTER 02 | STORY Developing a Better Story

CHAPTER PURPOSE: Develop the first clear story for the project. By the end of this chapter, the team should be able to communicate at least an NABC version of the project in a clear, credible manner.

Figure 9. Develop the story in layers.

Figure 10. NABC is the first complete project story.

Story development

A story is not decoration. It is the working explanation of the project. It tells the team, customers, mentors, partners, and instructors what problem is being solved, why the moment matters, what approach is proposed, and what value may be created. The first version should be simple enough to say out loud and strong enough to invite feedback.

High concept pitch

The high concept pitch explains an idea by joining a known model with a new domain, market, or capability. It is the A-intersects-B form: Uber for food delivery, Amazon for a new geography, or Jaws in space. A high concept pitch is useful because it is fast. It is not enough because it usually hides the customer, the need, the evidence, and the competition.

Example: A high concept phrase might be 'Duolingo for lab safety' or 'TurboTax for grant reporting.' The phrase is useful only if the next sentence names the real user and need.

Elevator pitch

The elevator pitch is a short spoken version of the story, usually two minutes or less. It should create attention and explain the problem, the proposed solution, and why the project matters. It may include a high concept phrase, but it should not stop there. A good elevator pitch should make the listener want to ask a useful next question.

The NABC model

NABC stands for Need, Approach, Benefits, and Competition. It is the first complete story model students should master. Need explains who has the problem and why it matters. Approach explains what the team will do. Benefits explain the value created. Competition explains the alternatives and why this approach should be chosen.

Example: Need: students miss meals during late studio sessions. Approach: coordinate nearby restaurant pickup by project teams. Benefits: save time and improve food options. Competition: delivery apps, campus dining, or doing nothing.

The customer story

The customer story shows how a user or customer experiences the product or service. It may look like a short commercial, product announcement, customer case, product demonstration, or mockup. It should make the use case memorable. The team should be able to say: this is the customer, this is the problem, this is what changes, and this is the result.

The future press release

A future press release is written as if the project has succeeded. It forces the team to describe the future outcome clearly. What would the headline say? Who would care? What problem would have been solved? What proof would make the result newsworthy? This format helps teams see whether their ambition is clear or vague.

The six-page plan

Amazon's six-page narrative memo is useful because full sentences expose unclear thinking. A six-page plan begins with context, explains the question or decision, compares approaches, states what is different, and ends with what matters for the

customer, the organization, and the innovation. Students do not need a full six-page plan early, but they should learn the discipline behind it: write clearly enough that the thinking can be tested.

The venture pitch and its variations

The venture pitch is the longer stakeholder presentation. It often includes problem, solution, value proposition, market, product, business model, technology advantage, competition, team, financials, timeline, and ask. The same structure can be adapted for corporate projects, public service projects, technical initiatives, and capstones. The slides are not the story. The slides support the story.

Which story type should you use?

Start with the simplest story that creates useful feedback. Early teams should usually begin with a high concept pitch, elevator pitch, or NABC. After feedback, the team can develop a customer story, future press release, six-page plan, or venture pitch. Use the story type that helps the next stakeholder understand and respond.

Revenue and non-revenue projects

Not every project generates revenue directly. A public service, internal tool, research prototype, or company capstone may be judged by mission, adoption, user satisfaction, speed, cost reduction, risk reduction, or learning. The story still matters. Replace the business model with a mission model when needed: how does this project serve the organization or the people it exists to help?

Perfecting the story

The first story will have gaps. It may have missing evidence, too much detail, unclear benefits, weak logic, or a poor solution. That is normal. The story only needs to be good enough to start. It improves when the team tells it to credible stakeholders, listens carefully, collects feedback, and realigns the project.

Judging the story

A simple early test is Excitement, Logic, and Social power. Excitement asks whether people care about the story. Logic asks whether the story makes practical sense. Social power asks whether the team can attract stakeholders, partners, customers, and supporters. A project with a strong story should create energy, withstand questions, and recruit help.

Case Use

Use Caviar as a reminder that a practical customer story can precede sophisticated technology. Use Oracle later as an example of a story that changes how an enterprise understands a process.

Story Forms at a Glance

Story form

Best use

Output

High concept

Create instant understanding

One sentence: A for B, or A intersects B

Elevator pitch

Start a conversation

Two-minute spoken story

NABC

Align the team and get feedback

Need, Approach, Benefits, Competition

Customer story

Explain the user experience

Problem, solution, result

Future press release

Clarify the desired future

One-page imagined announcement

Six-page plan

Force clearer thinking

Written narrative with context, approaches, and customer value

Venture pitch

Present to stakeholders

Slides supporting the full project story

NABC Working Draft

Element

Question to answer

Need

Who has the problem, how strong is it, and why does it matter now?

Approach

What will the team do, build, test, or change?

Benefits

What value is created, for whom, and how could it be measured?

Competition

What alternatives exist, and why should this approach be chosen?

The goal of this chapter is not a perfect pitch. The goal is a clear enough NABC to get useful feedback and choose the next validation step.

Judging the First Story

Criterion

Meaning

Score

Excitement

Do people care enough to lean in, ask questions, or offer help?

1-5

Logic

Does the story make practical sense?

Social power

Can the team attract customers, partners, advisors, and stakeholders?

