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Live Presentation vs Send-Ahead Deck: A Matched Slide Map

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Executive Summary

A live deck and a send-ahead deck serve two different reading situations, and the production decision turns on one question: will the reader hear the speaker explain each slide? ManyPixels, in a guide dated September 10, 2026, states that "investors meet your deck in two different situations" and recommends two versions (www.manypixels.co). Pitch's presentation checklist advises creating two versions when a deck will circulate as a preread (pitch.com), and the Hustle Fund Founder Playbook calls them "different decks with two different formats and two different purposes" (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc). Practitioners disagree on build order: one source says to design the send version first (www.manypixels.co), and another to build the presentation version first (medium.com).

The available attention data are platform samples, not outcome studies. Dropbox's DocSend research page says investors spend less than 3 minutes reviewing a deck (www.dropbox.com), and Papermark's report covers 24,541 decks and 358,672 investor views (www.papermark.com). The same report states that sixteen percent of views end within ten seconds (www.papermark.com). None of these sources shows that a particular deck design raised money. Learning research adds a caution against simply pasting the script onto the slide: in one experiment with 80 students (www.frontiersin.org), slides with redundant text were detrimental to learning (www.frontiersin.org). Yet that format received the highest ratings for perceived understanding (www.frontiersin.org).

This report contributes a matched production map built on one explicitly fictional six-slide startup deck. Six claims (C1 to C6) stay identical across both versions; only the carrier changes. Each change is classified as narration (words moved from voice to page), visual design (hierarchy, charts, type) or factual (a number or assertion), so a designer can quote the work without guessing whether it is six duplications, six redesigns or added content work. The map ends in a source register and a release checklist.

Production details matter as much as layout. WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) sets a 4.5:1 minimum contrast ratio for normal text (www.w3.org), though the standard covers web content and applies to slide files only by interpretation (www.w3.org). Fonts may not embed (support.microsoft.com), speaker notes can travel inside a shared file (support.microsoft.com), and a PDF export is not proof that an editable source survives. For commissioning, an isolated deck generally suits a per-project provider, while a subscription fits only when presentation work recurs. Tapflare is described as a design and development service; human narrative strategy, copywriting and investor outreach are not part of that description, and any copy tooling or presentation scope should be confirmed with the vendor. This report is production guidance, not fundraising advice.

Introduction and Background

"Send-ahead deck" and "live deck" are working labels, not standards. Sources use many names for the same split. SlideGenius defines a reading deck as "a comprehensive document designed for in-depth examination and understanding" and a presenting deck as one "crafted for live communication and engagement" (www.slidegenius.com). Hustle Fund calls the first an email deck and the second a presentation deck (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc). Nancy Duarte's firm uses the term Slidedoc for "visual documents that deliver information to help teams digest ideas at their own pace," positioned for pre-read material and presentation leave-behinds (www.duarte.com). This report uses four terms:

- **Live deck (presenter deck):** projected while a person speaks; the speaker supplies the explanation.
- **Send-ahead deck (reader deck, pre-read):** opened alone, before or without a conversation; the page must carry the explanation.
- **Leave-behind:** a reader deck handed over after a meeting. Its production needs match the send-ahead deck, but the reader has already heard the pitch.
- **Appendix:** reference slides that support a claim without being part of the main story.

The question of whether one file can serve both audiences is a production question. TechCrunch's Haje Jan Kamps puts the distinction bluntly: "The presentation deck is designed to have a voice-over" (techcrunch.com), while a send-ahead deck "can contain more words than you typically would include on a slide you use to present from" (techcrunch.com). DocSend's guidance on pre-meeting decks stresses that these decks work without the presenter being "in the room to offer context" (www.docsend.com).

Three scope limits apply. First, the report does not advise on the investor story, financial models or outreach; the content owner (usually the founder) approves the argument before design starts. Second, no original empirical research is reported here, and no conversion uplift is claimed. Third, the six-slide example is fictional teaching material. Readers who want inspectable real decks can consult curated collections; Superside's example page, which states that Superside was "formerly known as Konsus" (www.superside.com), is referenced by an open entrepreneurship textbook that uses CardLife as its worked example (openlibrary-repo.ecampusontario.ca) and by a venture fund's founder resource list (www.cottonwood.vc). The textbook states that the CardLife deck "established that this is a problem for businesses by keying in on one number: 93%" (openlibrary-repo.ecampusontario.ca); that is the textbook's description, from a 2017 to 2018 edition, and not an independently verified outcome. No third-party slide artwork is reproduced here.

The Live Deck: What the Presenter Carries

Capabilities

A live deck is built to be accompanied. The ManyPixels guide says the present deck "is projected behind you while you talk, so it must be sparse" (www.manypixels.co), and eChai Ventures describes it as "sparse: big visuals, one idea per slide," with the speaker supplying the words (echai.ventures). Brett Munster of Road Less Ventured gives the attention rationale: minimize words on every slide "to keep the attention on you" (medium.com).

The older canonical rules are live-presentation rules. Guy Kawasaki's 10/20/30 post (dated March 5, 2015) says a pitch should last no more than twenty minutes (guykawasaki.com), and gives the reason for large type as a presenting problem: the audience "can read faster than you can speak" (guykawasaki.com). Y Combinator's seed-deck guide, written for the Winter 2018 batch, describes its template as "slightly longer decks to use in follow-up conversations with investors" (www.ycombinator.com) and tells founders to "strive for clarity and concision" (www.ycombinator.com).

Adoption and Guidance Patterns

No public source located for this report measures how many founders present live versus send first; what exists is guidance. Munster suggests keeping the main portion of the presented deck under 15 slides (medium.com), and Hustle Fund describes a presentation deck as "roughly ten-slide" (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc). These are individual practitioners' advice, not benchmarks, and this report does not recommend a universal slide count.

Strengths and Limitations

The strength of the live format is control of sequence and emphasis. The limitation is dependency. TechCrunch notes that once a deck is on screen in a meeting, the presenter can "lose control over the meeting" (techcrunch.com), and it advises that a deck that does not make sense without a voice-over should be remade as one that does (techcrunch.com). Duarte's team states the same trade-off from the document side: "When you have different uses for your deck, you need different decks" (www.duarte.com).

The Send-Ahead Deck: What the Page Must Carry

Capabilities

A send-ahead deck replaces the speaker with text, labels and structure. Pitch's guidance is direct: if a deck is read-only or a preread, "you'll need text to do the narration for you" (pitch.com). The ManyPixels guide describes the send deck as "read alone, on a screen, with no one to explain it" (www.manypixels.co). Munster says the deck sent ahead "needs to stand on its own" (medium.com), and eChai calls it "self-explanatory" (echai.ventures).

Self-explanatory slides share a pattern that can be checked without a presenter: a title that states the claim, one visual, a caption that carries the missing narration, and a source note. Chart guidance from the UK Government Analysis Function supports the same discipline: every chart needs a formal title stating what the

data is (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk), and sources should be hyperlinked to the original (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk). Nielsen Norman Group's web research reports that people "rarely read Web pages word by word; instead, they scan the page" (www.nngroup.com); that concerns web pages, not slides, but is consistent with building reader slides for scanning.

Adoption and Guidance Patterns

Sending ahead is common enough that DocSend states most investors want to see a deck before they agree to meet (www.docsend.com), and venture investor Mark Suster wrote in Inc. in 2018 that he still believed "passionately in sending materials in advance" (www.inc.com). Guidance on length varies. Hustle Fund describes an email deck as "a short, punchy, five-slide presentation" (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc), whose job is to raise questions rather than answer them (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc), and gives a simple rule: if no conversation has happened yet, send the email deck (thefounderplaybook.hustlefund.vc). The ManyPixels guide, by contrast, treats the send deck as the fuller document and recommends sending a PDF or a tracked link, never an editable file (www.manypixels.co).

Strengths and Limitations

A send-ahead deck reaches people the founder never meets: eChai advises assuming that every emailed deck "will be forwarded to people you never meet" (echai.ventures). The same property creates limits. Suster lists the loss of the ability to control the narrative as the main objection to sending in advance (www.inc.com), and Munster advises that a shortened send-ahead deck need not contain financials or anything confidential (medium.com). For production, that means the release checklist later in this report treats hidden data in the file as a first-class risk.

Where Sources Disagree

Sources do not agree on whether the reader deck is the short teaser or the full document. Hustle Fund's email deck is short and question-raising, while Pitch's preread is text-carrying narration (pitch.com). For a designer's quote, a short teaser is a new selection of slides, while a captioned full argument is the same slides with more words. The matched map below assumes the second case, because it keeps the claims identical.

Feature Comparison

Table 1 below compares the two deliverables on the dimensions a designer or content owner must decide. Citations point to the guidance behind each cell, and entries are guidance from individual sources, not measured norms.

Dimension	Live (presenter) deck	Send-ahead (reader) deck
Reader situation	An audience hears the explanation while viewing (techcrunch.com)	One person reads alone, possibly after forwarding (echai.ventures)
Where the words live	In the speaker's delivery; sparse slides (echai.ventures)	On the page; text carries the narration

Dimension	Live (presenter) deck	Send-ahead (reader) deck
Length guidance (advice, not benchmark)	Twenty minutes for the talk (guykawasaki.com); main portion under 15 slides (medium.com)	A shorter deck for a pre-conversation email (a rule of thumb, not a benchmark); or the full argument with captions
Chart treatment	One message per chart; speaker points	Title stating what the data is (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk), source given for each chart (brand.design-system.service.gov.uk), annotations next to the relevant part (brand.design-system.service.gov.uk)
Legends	Tolerable if the speaker explains them (editorial judgment)	Direct labels preferred; legends make readers look back and forth (data.europa.eu)
Confidential material	Controlled by the presenter in the room	Assume forwarding; confidentiality of financials is a content-owner decision (medium.com)
Accessibility risk	Audience sees the slide at distance	Reader may use a screen reader; alt text and reading order matter (support.microsoft.com)
Typical output	Native presentation file, projected	PDF or tracked link (www.manypixels.co)
Speaker notes	Present, private to the presenter	Must be reviewed for leakage (support.microsoft.com)

The largest differences are not decorative: they concern where information lives, how charts identify themselves, and what the file may unintentionally contain. Length guidance varies by source, so it belongs in the content owner's brief.

Build order is the one point the sources split on, and the choice has a cost consequence. If the send version is designed first, as ManyPixels recommends and eChai recommends (echai.ventures), the live version is a reduction. If the live version is designed first, as Munster recommends (medium.com), the send version is an expansion. A reduction mostly removes text and merges slides; an expansion adds captions, source notes and labels, which are narration and factual work that a designer should not be assumed to write.

The Matched Slide Map: One Fictional Pitch, Six Slides

(Hypothetical Example) LedgerLoop

Everything in this section is fictional. LedgerLoop is an invented startup that automates invoice reconciliation for small agencies. All figures, dates and sources below are made up for teaching, represent no real company or data, and report no results. The six claims stay identical in both versions. The map answers one design question per row: what must change so the same claim works without a speaker?

Table 2 below places the live slide, the explanation spoken aloud, the self-contained send-ahead treatment, the evidence reference and the content owner's approval side by side, with the revision consequence for the designer's quote. Change types are defined after the table.

Slide and claim ID	Live slide	Spoken aloud	Send-ahead treatment	Evidence reference	Owner approval	Revision consequence
1. Problem (C1): "Agencies spend 11 hours a month reconciling invoices."	Large "11 hours" plus a one-line title	A short story of one agency's month-end; how the survey was run; why it matters	Claim as the title; two-sentence caption on how the 11 hours is made up; method footnote (survey of 40 agencies, Q3 2026, fictional)	S1 (fictional survey)	Founder approves caption wording	**Narration** (caption written by content owner), **visual** (hierarchy). No factual change
2. Product (C2): "Matches bank lines to invoices automatically."	One screen shot, one callout	Walk through a matched invoice and an exception	Same screenshot with three numbered callouts and a caption stating what each does; test note (9 of 10 sample invoices matched, fictional)	S2 (fictional test log)	Founder and product lead confirm callout text	**Visual** (callout layout), **narration** (callout and caption text)
3. Traction (C3): "14 pilot agencies; 9 weekly active as of 2026-10-31."	One line chart, one highlighted point	The pilot story and what "active" means	Chart with a title stating the measure, labeled axes with units, direct labels, as-of date and a definition of "weekly active"	S3 (fictional product analytics export)	Founder approves definition of "active"	**Visual** (chart rebuild), **factual guard**: definition must match S3
4. Market assumptions (C4): "28,000 target agencies x $1,800 = $50.4M annual serviceable market."	One number and a label	Where 28,000 comes from; why the segment is narrow	Arithmetic shown in full, each input labeled as an assumption with its source and date, units on every figure	S4 (fictional segment count) and C5 (price)	Founder approves each assumption label	**Visual** (table build), **narration** (assumption wording). Any change to 28,000 is a **factual** change to both versions
5. Business model (C5): "$150 per workspace per month, billed annually ($1,800 per year)."	Price card	Why annual billing; what is included	Price card plus a short list of what the price includes and the billing term	S5 (fictional price sheet, 2026-10-15)	Founder approves inclusions list	**Visual** (card plus list), **narration** (inclusions list)
6. Next step (C6): "Raising a $1.2M seed round to reach 60 paying agencies in 12 months."	Ask and one milestone	The plan; what the conversation should cover next	Ask, three milestones with dates, how to read the appendix, contact line	S6 (fictional plan, 2026-10-20)	Founder approves; counsel review where the claim is a forward-looking statement	**Narration** (milestone text), **visual** (layout). Any change to the amount is **factual**

Arithmetic check: 28,000 agencies at $1,800 per year is $50,400,000, and $150 per month over twelve months is $1,800. The register can test whether the send-ahead page and the live slide agree.

Three change types

- **Narration change:** words that were spoken now appear on the page. The content owner writes or approves them; the designer places them. Narration is not design work and should be quoted separately if the designer is asked to draft it.
- **Visual design change:** hierarchy, type size, chart construction, callouts and layout. No claim changes.
- **Factual change:** a number, definition or assertion changes. It must be updated in the live slide, the send-ahead slide, the appendix and the register together.

Reading the map

Slides 1, 2, 5 and 6 are re-layouts of shared artwork with new text blocks: not duplications (the layout differs) and not redesigns (the brand system, icons and screenshot are reused). Slides 3 and 4 are rebuilds, because the live chart and number cannot be made self-explanatory by adding a caption alone. A fair quote therefore separates shared artwork, four re-layouts, two rebuilds, and the content owner's captions. If the captions are not supplied, the designer cannot be expected to invent them, and missing captions are a content gap rather than a design delay.

Several rows lean on published guidance. Market-size slides gain from stated units and sources; a Boston University entrepreneurship deck states that "units are obligatory when quoting market size" (bu.edu) and that "assumptions and sources are vital" (bu.edu). A City University of New York marketing handbook defines TAM (total addressable market) as total market demand (pressbooks.cuny.edu), SAM (serviceable available market) as the segment of TAM targeted by the product (pressbooks.cuny.edu), and SOM (serviceable obtainable market) as the portion of SAM that can be captured (pressbooks.cuny.edu). The map's C4 is a SAM-style claim with every input exposed. For uncertainty in any number, the Analysis Function advises telling readers about data sources and associated uncertainty in plain English (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk) and stating what can and cannot be concluded (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk).

Claim Ledger, Source Register and Release Checklist

The shared register

The register is the control document for both versions. It prevents the live deck and the send-ahead deck drifting apart when one number changes. For the fictional LedgerLoop example, each entry would hold the fields below.

- **Claim ID and frozen wording:** C1 to C6, exactly as approved.
- **Evidence reference:** S1 to S6, a dated source or internal log, not a search result or memory.
- **As-of date:** when the figure was true; printed on any send-ahead slide that quotes it.
- **Content owner:** the person who can approve a change.
- **Version fields:** live slide number, send-ahead slide number, appendix page, last-changed date.
- **Change type:** narration, visual or factual, using the definitions above.

The appendix of the send-ahead deck repeats the source register in reader-friendly form: S1 to S6 with titles, dates and, where public, links. Chart guidance supports this: GOV.UK's chart guidance asks designers to give the specific data source for each chart (brand.design-system.service.gov.uk).

Release checklist

The checklist separates the three change types so reviewers know what to look for. Run it on both outputs.

Narration checks (content owner)

- Every claim that was explained aloud has a sentence on the send-ahead page, or has been deliberately dropped by the owner.
- Captions state the same number as the live slide. No caption adds a claim that is not in the register.
- Terms such as "active" or "serviceable" are defined on the page.
- The reader can answer "what is this slide claiming?" from the title alone.

Visual design checks (designer and reviewer)

- Contrast for body text meets at least 4.5:1, with 3:1 for large-scale text, if the team adopts WCAG as its reference (www.w3.org). The standard states that text inside images is held to the same ratios (www.w3.org).
- Color is not the only way a chart series is distinguished (www.w3.org).
- Charts have titles, units, direct labels where possible (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk) and a source note (brand.design-system.service.gov.uk).
- Every slide has a unique title, because Microsoft recommends a unique, descriptive title on each slide (support.microsoft.com).
- Reading order is checked (support.microsoft.com).
- Alt text describes visuals that carry information; Google's guidance says to provide alt text for any visual data (support.google.com).

Factual checks (content owner and a second reader)

- Each figure matches the register and its as-of date.
- Arithmetic is recomputed (here, 28,000 x $1,800).
- Forward-looking statements are marked as plans or assumptions.
- A change to any number triggers a rebuild of both versions and a register update.

File and release checks (designer)

- Notes, comments and document properties are reviewed. Microsoft's Document Inspector can find text in the Notes section and document properties (support.microsoft.com), and content positioned outside the slide area (support.microsoft.com).
- Inspect a copy, since removed data may not be recoverable (support.microsoft.com).
- Fonts are confirmed after export (see the next section).
- Links work in the exported file and open to the intended page.
- The first-time reader test below is completed and logged.

First-time reader test

Ask someone who has not heard the pitch to read the send-ahead file alone and write down every question they have. Log those questions as observations, not as a benchmark: a handful of readers is a quality check on the page, not evidence of investor behavior. Questions about information already in the register mean the page is hiding it; questions seeking new information are content decisions for the owner.

Briefing the Designer: Files, Formats and Quoting

Deliverable inventory

For quoting, split the work into three buckets, each of which can be priced and scheduled separately.

- **Shared artwork:** logo, color and type system, icons, product screenshots, chart base styling. Built once and used by both versions.
- **New layouts:** the send-ahead layout for each slide, the appendix and register pages, chart and table rebuilds.
- **Content changes:** captions, definitions, assumption labels, milestone text. Owned by the content owner; if a provider is asked to write them, it is a different service from design.

A production effort worksheet takes buyer-entered hours: **total hours = original layout + second-version adaptation + review**, where review covers both versions and the register. Illustration only, with invented numbers: 14 + 6 + 3 = 23 hours. These values are not a market benchmark; real hours depend on the brief, the number of charts and the quality of supplied content.

Native files, aspect ratio and exports

Ask for the native source file, not just a PDF. PowerPoint's default for new presentations is 16:9 widescreen (support.microsoft.com), and a size change applies only to that presentation (support.microsoft.com), so agree the aspect ratio before layouts are built. Exports differ by application, and a PDF is not proof the editable source remains intact. Observed documented behaviors, as retrieved November 2026:

- **Keynote:** PDF export places each slide on its own page (support.apple.com), with an option to include presenter notes and skipped slides (support.apple.com).
- **PowerPoint:** the PDF options can include non-printing information such as document properties or structure tags (support.microsoft.com), and notes print through the Notes Pages layout (support.microsoft.com).
- **Figma Slides:** a PPTX export replaces a font missing in PowerPoint with the default font (help.figma.com) and changes gradient fills to solid fills (help.figma.com).
- **Canva:** PPTX files may look different when opened in PowerPoint (www.canva.com).

Fonts

Font substitution can change line breaks and clip text. Microsoft states that not all TrueType fonts can be embedded (support.microsoft.com) and that font creators set the embedding options (support.microsoft.com). Adobe states that a font can be embedded in a PDF only if the vendor's setting permits it (helpx.adobe.com);

embedding prevents substitution (helpx.adobe.com), while substituted fonts cannot always match the original shapes (helpx.adobe.com). Confirm font licensing and embedding with the designer before the build, and open the final PDF on a second device.

Notes, hidden content and sharing

Speaker notes are the most common leak path for a deck intended to be read alone. Canva's PDF download can include notes when the setting is toggled (www.canva.com), and Canva warns that a cropped image in a PDF still includes the original image (www.canva.com). For link sharing, Google Drive's "anyone with the link" setting lets people open a file without signing in (support.google.com), while a restricted file opens only for people who were given access (support.google.com).

Accessibility of the reader file

WCAG is written for web content (www.w3.org), and the companion guidance on applying it to non-web documents is informative, not normative (www.w3.org), requiring some interpretation (www.w3.org). A deck owner can therefore adopt WCAG measures as a team reference, not claim legal conformance by default. Useful measures include text alternatives that serve the equivalent purpose (www.w3.org), a two-part short and long description for complex images such as charts (www.w3.org), and structure that survives a change of format (www.w3.org). Microsoft's PowerPoint guidance recommends a font size of 18pt or larger (support.microsoft.com), advises against putting important information only in text inside images (support.microsoft.com), and offers an Accessibility Checker (support.microsoft.com) to run before generating a PDF (support.microsoft.com). Adobe recommends tagging a document when converting it to PDF (helpx.adobe.com), and warns that automatic tagging cannot always interpret complex structure (helpx.adobe.com).

Data Analysis and Evidence

What investors' attention data do and do not show

Three public data sets bear on the reader deck, and each has limits.

- **DocSend (now part of Dropbox):** the research page says investors spend less than 3 minutes reviewing decks (www.dropbox.com), and reports that in 2020 decks that raised money received over four minutes of investor time (www.dropbox.com). The page is dated April 2025, but its figures are mostly from 2019 to 2020 and it states no sample size for the headline.
- **Time series:** DocSend's March 2020 pre-seed report put average review time at 3 minutes 21 seconds (prnewswire.com); its Q3 2021 release reported 2 minutes 44 seconds (www.nasdaq.com) and a 25% year-over-year rise in deck interactions (www.nasdaq.com); TechCrunch reported that the 2022 DocSend study found investors spending 24% less time than in 2021 (techcrunch.com) on a sample of 320 decks for slide presence (techcrunch.com).
- **Papermark:** its report covers 24,541 decks and 358,672 investor views; sixteen percent of views end inside ten seconds, and fewer than half the investors who open a deck reach the final slide (www.papermark.com).

These numbers are measurements of viewing time on specific platforms by users who chose those platforms, and they differ by period and population. Some guides state viewing times without naming a data source, and those figures are not used here. For a designer's brief the defensible reading is narrow: send-ahead decks are often scanned quickly, so the title and first caption must carry the claim. DocSend's pre-meeting deck analysis adds a slide-level point: investors were likely to spend less than 10 seconds reading a problem slide (www.docsend.com), and only 88 percent of the startups analyzed included a problem slide in their send-ahead decks (www.docsend.com). That analysis is from 2019 and should be read as dated.

What learning research suggests about text and narration

Educational research bears on the live deck more directly. In an experiment with 80 undergraduates, authors Fenesi and Kim found complementary and sparse presentations produced the highest overall comprehension scores, with the advantage coming mainly from applied questions (www.frontiersin.org), while the redundant presentation received the highest perceived understanding and engagement ratings (www.frontiersin.org). Another experiment on a narrated slide lesson found text worded slightly differently from narration was better for learning than identical text, even though learners preferred identical text (sites.lifesci.ucla.edu); its first experiment analyzed 105 participants (sites.lifesci.ucla.edu). Mayer's redundancy principle, summarized in the Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning, holds that people learn more deeply from graphics and narration than from graphics, narration and on-screen text (www.cambridge.org), alongside a coherence principle that extraneous material should be excluded (www.cambridge.org).

The boundary matters. A meta-analysis of verbal redundancy found that spoken-plus-written and written-only presentations did not differ overall (rex.libraries.wsu.edu), with effects dependent on factors such as pacing and inclusion of diagrams (rex.libraries.wsu.edu). These studies used students and short lessons, not investors reading pitches, so they support a design preference, not a prediction. The practical implication is modest: do not read the live slide aloud verbatim, and do not assume that a text-heavy reader slide is a live slide.

Evidence gaps

No public study located for this report compares investor outcomes for a single dual-use deck against separate live and send-ahead decks. The disagreement about build order cannot be settled with data. Production choices should therefore be justified by reader tasks and file behavior, which can be inspected, not by claimed uplift.

Commissioning the Work: Project, Subscription or In-House

An isolated deck generally needs a project provider with a defined scope and delivery date. A monthly design subscription belongs in the discussion only when presentation and other creative work recurs, such as quarterly investor updates, sales decks and event material. *Table 3* below compares documented engagement models from each provider's own public pages, retrieved November 7, 2026; no prices are quoted, and the Tapflare row is the publisher's own description.

Route	Documented scope and model	Fit for the two-version job
Per-project pitch deck studio (for example Slidebean, SlideGenius)	Slidebean lists packages, including one where it writes the deck (slidebean.com), delivers an editable format (slidebean.com) and includes two rounds of design revisions (slidebean.com). SlideGenius describes a project timeline of 2 to 4 weeks (www.slidegenius.com), revisions as part of service (www.slidegenius.com) and copywriters (www.slidegenius.com).	Suits one deck with a defined end date. Where the studio writes copy, narrative work is bundled; confirm what the quote includes.
Design subscription services (for example Superside, Design Pickle, Penji, ManyPixels, Kimp, Flocksy)	Superside says presentation design is included in all subscriptions (help.superside.com) and covers one-off presentations and branded systems (help.superside.com) across Keynote, PowerPoint, Google Slides and Figma (help.superside.com). Design Pickle describes flat-rate plans (www.designpickle.com) on quarterly or annual billing (www.designpickle.com), with formats chosen by the client (www.designpickle.com). Penji lists presentation and pitch deck designs (penji.co) with unlimited revisions (penji.co). ManyPixels includes source files (www.manypixels.co) and states 2 to 5 business days for multi-page materials (www.manypixels.co). Kimp describes flat monthly subscription rates (www.kimp.io). Flocksy describes a design subscription with a dedicated creative team (flocksy.com) and copy support (flocksy.com).	Suits recurring presentation, web and brand work. Check each plan's scope, turnaround and whether written content is included.
Tapflare (publisher of this report; the capabilities below are the publisher's own description and are not independently verified)	Flat-rate monthly subscription for graphic design and website development, run through a dedicated project manager; any design request, including presentations, may be submitted, but presentation scope should be confirmed with the vendor; the client keeps export and source files. Human narrative strategy, copywriting and investor outreach are not part of this description; confirm any copy tooling and the presentation scope with the vendor. Plan pricing is on its current pricing page and is not quoted here.	Fits when presentation work recurs alongside other design or web work. For a single one-off deck, a project provider is generally the better match. The content owner supplies the approved story and captions.
In-house with a design tool (Canva, Pitch, Figma Slides)	Export behavior is documented per tool, for example PPTX differences in Canva (www.canva.com) and Figma (help.figma.com).	Suits a team with design skill and time; the register and checklist above still apply.

The table indicates that "unlimited" or "subscription" language on vendor pages describes the engagement model, not the amount of narrative or copy support. Providers differ on whether they write content, and a quote that lumps captions with layout hides the narration work. Matching the engagement model to the work's frequency is the central decision, and the brief should state which of the three change types are in scope. Readers who need narrative strategy, copywriting or investor outreach will need a provider that explicitly offers them; those are outside what a design subscription supplies.

Implications and Future Directions

The synthesis offered here, as a design heuristic rather than a tested finding (no study compares single and dual decks), is that "one file for both audiences" works only when the file is designed for the reader and the speaker adds to it, which is the reverse of how many live decks are built. The guidance on build order shows no consensus, so teams should choose the order that matches their first use. A founder who will email first benefits from starting with the reader version, as eChai advises. A team that will present first can begin with the presenter version and expand, as Munster advises (medium.com).

Three practices improve the odds of a clean release:

- Keep one register and update it whenever any claim changes.
- Quote the work in buckets (shared artwork, layouts, content) so a revision to wording is not charged as a redesign.
- Review the exported file, not only the source, because fonts, notes and links behave differently on export.

Teams with recurring creative work can explore a subscription model such as Tapflare (the publisher of this report); for a single deck, a project quote with the three-bucket structure above is a better starting point.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the difference between a live presentation deck and a send-ahead deck?

A live deck is built to be accompanied by a speaker and is typically sparse. A send-ahead deck is read alone and must carry its own explanation.

What is the difference between a presentation deck and a reading deck?

SlideGenius defines a reading deck as a comprehensive document designed for in-depth examination and a presenting deck as one built for live communication. The terms describe the same split as presenter deck versus reader deck.

How do I turn a live presentation into a send-ahead deck?

Use the matched map: keep the claims unchanged, move the spoken explanation into titles, captions and labels, rebuild charts so they identify themselves, add source notes and an appendix, then run the release checklist.

How is a leave-behind deck different from a presentation deck?

A leave-behind is a reader document handed over after a meeting. Duarte's team states that different uses require different decks (www.duarte.com).

How does a pitch deck for email differ from one for a live presentation?

Hustle Fund describes the email deck as a short, five-slide deck for a first approach and the presentation deck as longer, roughly ten slides. Other sources treat the send version as the fuller document; slide counts are advice, not standards.

How do I adapt a pitch deck for a pre-read?

Make a second version in which text carries the narration (pitch.com), and review hidden content before sending (support.microsoft.com).

What are best practices for a send-ahead pitch deck?

Make titles state the claim, label charts directly, cite sources, check contrast and reading order (www.w3.org) (support.microsoft.com), send a PDF or a tracked link, and assume the deck will be forwarded.

What makes a slide self-explanatory without a presenter?

A claim title, one visual, a caption carrying the narration, defined terms, units and a source note, as the checklist describes. Chart guidance says every chart should have a title stating what the data is (analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk).

Conclusion

The decision about one file or two reduces to the reader's situation. When the audience hears the explanation, the slide can be sparse; when the reader is alone, the page must carry the explanation, the definitions and the source. Current guidance from presentation vendors and practitioners agrees on that split and disagrees on build order and length, and public data cannot settle the disagreement.

The practical contribution of the matched map is accounting. With claims frozen in a register, each difference between the two versions is one of three kinds: narration, visual design or factual. That classification turns an ambiguous request into a quote with named buckets: shared artwork, a defined number of re-layouts and rebuilds, and captions owned by the content owner. It also gives reviewers a way to check that a changed number reaches both files.

Three limits remain. The six-slide example is fictional and shows a method, not a result. The attention statistics are platform samples with differing dates and populations. And accessibility standards for web content apply to slide files by interpretation. Teams should treat the checklist as a production control and obtain professional advice for any legal or financial-claims question that arises in the deck's content.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

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THE PUBLISHER

About Tapflare

Tapflare gives companies an on-demand design and web team for a flat monthly fee.

How it works

Each subscriber has a dedicated project manager who learns the brand, assigns every request to a senior specialist in that kind of work, and reviews the result before it is delivered. Requests are submitted and discussed in the Tapflare portal, each plan includes a daily allotment of design or development time, and the client keeps full ownership of the export and source files.

What it covers

Graphic design, custom illustration, presentation design, logos and brand guides, video editing and motion graphics, website and mobile-app mockups, and website development, from design mockups to HTML, to drag-and-drop builders or custom code.

What it is not

Tapflare is not a marketing agency, a media-buying, SEO or copywriting service, a software product or a freelance marketplace. Where a reader needs one of those, the honest answer is to say so.

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