

# The 10 most important elements of a startup pitch deck, backed by VCs, angel investors, and other experts — with real examples from founders

Mary Kearl 1 hour ago



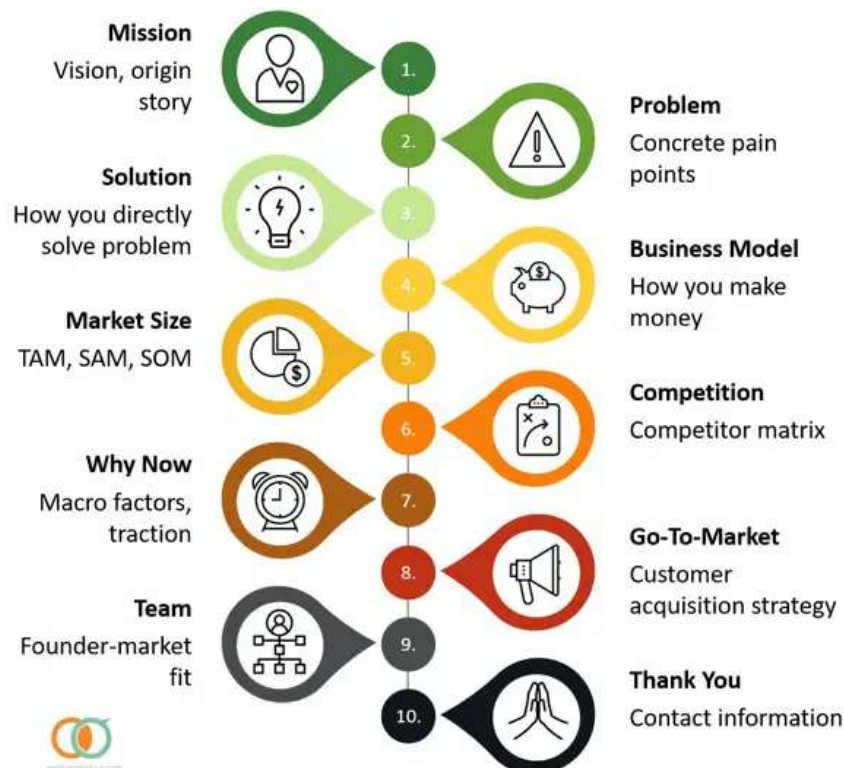
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- **Allison Byers, CEO of Scroobious, a new video-pitching platform for entrepreneurs, shared with Business Insider the 10 most important elements of a startup pitch deck.**
- **She collected these elements from hundreds of pitch deck iterations and presentations and ran them by a large network of investors to get their insights.**
- **A good pitch deck should start with a concise mission statement or origin story, outline a problem, and offer a clear solution.**
- **Back up your proposal with market sizing, competitive analysis, and go-to-market and customer acquisition strategies.**
- **Investors will want to know more about you, so make sure to insert slides that detail your background and your team's expertise and end with a thank you and your contact information.**
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What do investors want to see in startup pitch decks? For founders seeking funding for their companies, that's the million-dollar (or multimillion-dollar) question.

And it's one Allison Byers, CEO of [Scroobious](#), a [new video pitching-platform for entrepreneurs](#), has set out to answer — for herself and for her community of startup founders.

After years of gathering personal pitching experience — first as the copresident and director of startup medical device company [Digital Cognition Technologies \(DCT\)](#), where she successfully helped raise \$9.6 million for the company, and later by conducting market research on pitching and interviewing early-stage investors as groundwork for her current startup — Byers came up with 10 elements investors are looking to see covered in pitch decks.



**Byers' list of the 10 most important elements in a pitch deck.** Allison Byers

"This was the result of hundreds of pitch deck iterations and no less than 100 pitch presentations," Byers told Business Insider. She then put this list in front of dozens of investors, including angel, VC, private equity, and family office investors, asking if the slides covered what they wanted to see.

"The diverse set of investors I spoke with overwhelmingly supported this structure, and while no deck will make everyone happy, I believe these are the core elements to satisfy most," she said.

Here's a breakdown of the 10 key elements, with visual examples from real pitch decks.

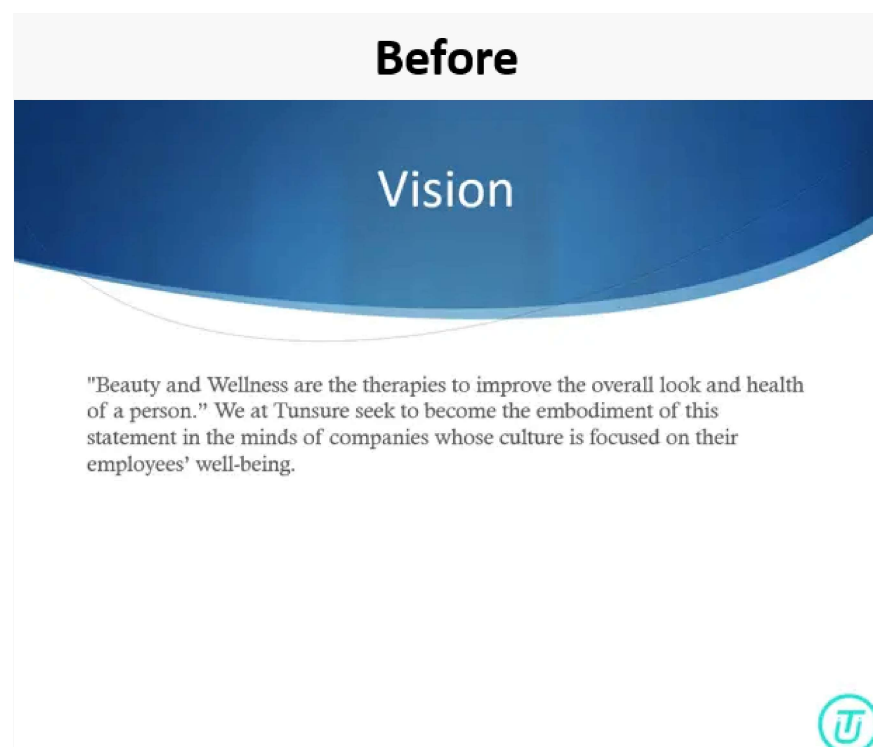
## 1. A mission, vision, or origin story

The best mission statements are straightforward and take the guesswork out of what it is exactly the startup does. These first few slides are also a great place to share the company's origin story — the reason for creating the company, a personal connection to a problem, and the founder's expertise.

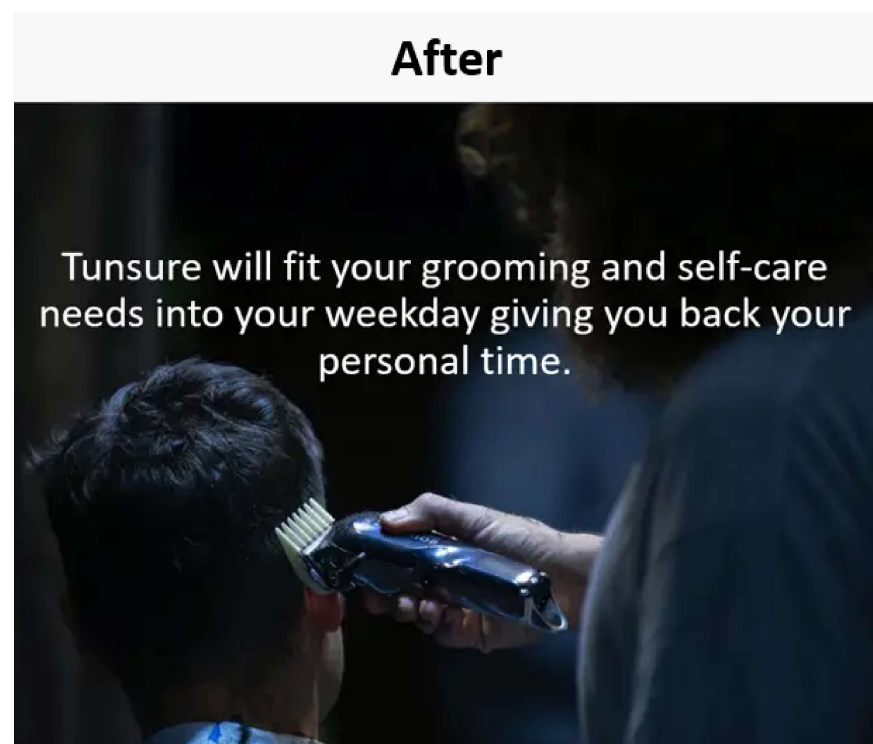
"How would you explain what your company does to a third grader?" Byers said. "Use that language on your slide and in your presentation."

Testing out a potential mission statement on friends and family and asking them to describe what your company does can also help. Most likely, they'll restate your mission in even simpler terms. If they don't, they were likely so confused by what you said they tuned out when you were talking.

A great example of a strong mission statement comes from participating [Scroobious beta founder Demetri Harrison](#), founder and CEO of on-demand haircut and styling company [Tunsure](#).



**An earlier version of Tunsure's mission statement.** Demetri Harrison



**Tunsure's current mission statement.** Demetri Harrison

"He had crafted a vision statement in a format he thought investors wanted to see, but it was generalized and didn't convey the root of his vision for his company," Byers said. "We got to the heart of his origin story and put his mission in language anyone can understand and relate to."

## 2. The problem

Founders have the unenviable job of convincing investors the problem they're looking to solve is real and needs to be addressed ASAP.

To do that, Byers suggested quantifying the problem in terms of dollars or other figures.

As with the mission statement, these pain points need to be addressed in plain language that's accessible to the average individual.

"It can also be good to phrase the problem in terms of the opportunity it presents," Byers said.

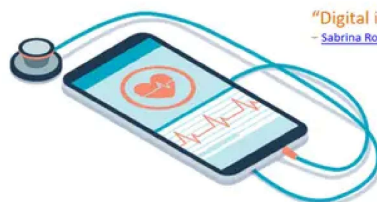
Take the following example from another beta member, [Malinda Coler](#), founder and CEO of online learning and coaching platform [LessonsUp](#).


### Before

**PROBLEM** *Disrupting \$350B Tech Support Industry*

- Seniors are **left behind** as access to services goes digital.
- The COVID-19 world is trending towards an even **bigger move to digital**.


*"Digital inclusion is a **public health issue**"*  
- [Sabrina Roach](#), Program Director, National Digital Inclusion Alliance






**An earlier version of LessonsUp's problem statement.** Malinda Coler

### After



**Problem**  
Life is online and older adults are left behind.

75% of users 65+ do NOT feel confident on their devices.		Modern tech is designed without input of older adult needs
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[View Original](#)

**LessonsUp's current problem statement.** Malinda Coler

"We modified the text to simple sentences that many people will personally relate to and added a statistic that calls out the problem in an acute way," Byers said.

She cautioned that too much data can be overwhelming to potential investors, so striking a balance is key.

**Before**

Opportunity for outsized returns from diverse founders

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Women & multicultural entrepreneurs are an emerging market<sup>[3]</sup>

- 3.3x median realized multiples.**<sup>[1]</sup>
- More likely to exit and have 122% IRR.**<sup>[2]</sup>
- Raise less than 1/2 as much but return 2.5x more per dollar invested.**<sup>[3]</sup>

[1] Deconstructing the Pipeline Myth, Kauffman Fellows; [2] Forbes, More VC to Female Founders; [3] Morgan Stanley, Beyond the VC Funding Gap

**An earlier version of Scroobious' problem statement.** Allison Byers

"I struggled with this myself," Byers said. "There is a mountain of data highlighting both the funding gap for diverse founders and also the opportunity that exists for investors to fund an undervalued asset class."

"I was presenting so much data that it dampened the impact," she added.

**After**

Investing in diverse founders is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do

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**Women raise less than 1/2 as much but return 2.5x more per dollar invested.**<sup>[3]</sup>

[3] Morgan Stanley, Beyond the VC Funding Gap

**Scroobious' current problem statement.** Allison Byers

"Pairing a powerful statement with a single supporting data point draws more attention," she said.

### 3. The solution you offer

Once founders nail describing the problem, the solution they offer has to tie back to the pain points presented. This slide is a good place to include screenshots or illustrations that visually explain what your company offers.

"Don't make the investor do the work of tying your narrative together," Byers said.

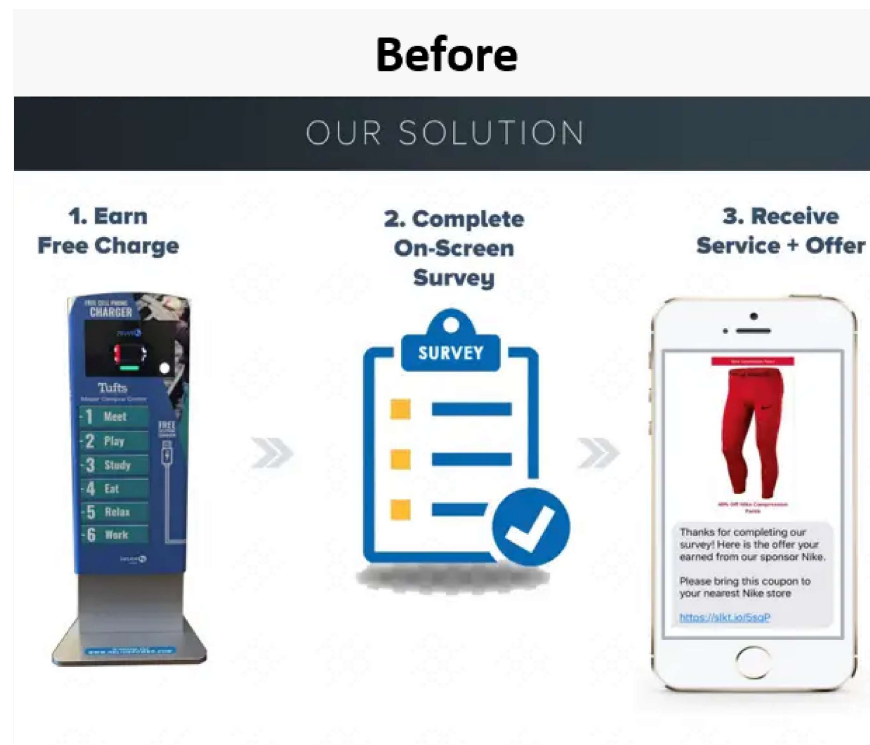
"Most people, investors included, aren't familiar with your industry or terminology and often won't ask if it's assumed they should already know what something means," she added. "Write out acronyms and simplify your language, even if you're dealing with complicated science or technology."



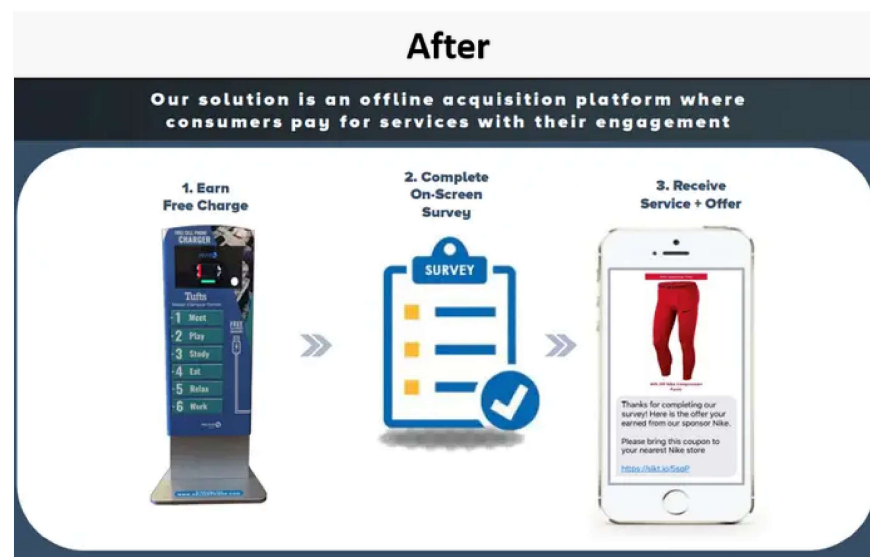
While the examples of the before and after Byers shared from beta member [Joel Francois](#), cofounder and CEO of offline marketing engagement platform [Helius Power](#), look similar, there's one key difference.

"We added powerful header statements throughout his deck for a strong narrative that creates a continuous flow among his sections,"

she said. "This headline statement directly follows the previous slide that outlines the problem."



An earlier version of Helius Power's solution slide. Joel Francois



Helius Power's current solution slide. Joel Francois

## 4. The business model and how you'll make money

Here, founders have to explain who their customers are and how they plan to monetize their business. If there are multiple customer types, executives will need to plan what each group will be charged.

"Investors want to know that you understand your primary revenue sources and the cash-flow implications of your business model," Byers said. She recommended that founders arrange their business model slides before their market size slides.

"Investors need the context of how you make money and what your

average revenue per customer is to understand where your market size numbers come from," she said.

## 5. The market size

This is a slide many founders often overlook — and if they do put something together, it often misses the mark.

Byers said that many take a "top-down approach," such as, "The cosmetics market is \$X billions. If we capture just X%, it's a \$X billion opportunity."

"This isn't convincing to investors and it isn't particular to your business," she said.

Instead, startups should focus on a "bottom-up" approach to market sizing. This means doing the following:

- Define what the total addressable market is in a way that's relevant and concludes there's a big enough audience for a return on investment.
- Provide an estimate of the sizes of the "serviceable" market — that is, people who can be reached — and "obtainable" market — that is, people who can be convinced to become customers — which should guide the company's focus for the next 12 to 18 months.

### Market size terminology



SCROOBIOUS

These are the three market size calculations investors are looking for, per Scroobious.

Allison Byers

## 6. The competition

How your company's offering stands out compared to options already available in the marketplace — that's what a competition slide should be able to convey, at a glance.








Per Scroobious, a competitor "matrix" should:

- Include information about the founder's startup in the first column, followed by four to five of the most relevant competitors in the next columns
- List the tangible benefits of each company for the customer so they're clear to non-industry audiences

Byers shared the following competitor slide from [Anna Western](#), founder and CEO of the visual bookmarking tool [Prism](#).

**THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE**

**Prism is the only bookmarking tool centered on using screenshots.**

	 Prism	 Pinterest	 Raindrop	 Evernote	 Pocket	 Dropmark	 Mix
Free	✓	✓					✓
Primarily uses screenshots	✓						
Browse many sites at once	✓						
Purely visual	✓	✓	✓				
Social	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Simple, clean design	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

**Prism's competitor matrix.** Anna Western

"Her competitor choices communicate where she sees her product in the existing landscape and her customer benefits are distinct and easy to understand," Byers said.

## 7. An explanation of why your company is needed now

Investors want to know how founders can directly address the needs and realities that exist due to COVID-19 and the related economic and social circumstances that have resulted, Byers said.

"Emphasize how your solution is accelerated by the world today, but not defined or dependent on it," she said. "We are living through surreal times, but today's restrictions aren't permanent."

Byers shared a slide from a Scroobious beta member, [Quinn Wang](#), founder and CEO of [Quadrant Eye](#), a company that offers remote eye exams, that communicates how her company is addressing a problem caused by the pandemic while also demonstrating how it can stay relevant in the long term.

**The time is NOW because telemedicine is the new normal.**

Patients want to avoid in-person visits more than ever.

18,000,000 yearly in-office and ER visits are for low-acuity problems (e.g. pink eye and styes) that can be managed remotely.

Quadrant Eye will do for eye care what Maven Clinic did for women's and family healthcare.

**Quadrant Eye's "Why now?" slide.** Quinn Wang

This portion of the deck is also a great place to share any proof of concept or momentum, Byers said.



## 8. The go-to-market and customer acquisition strategy

Founders don't benefit from listing generic marketing tactics, such as social media ads, partnerships, or word-of-mouth marketing — but there's also no need to go too deep into the weeds and illustrate what your marketing spend will be per channel, Byers said.

The goal instead should be to present the specific, relevant channels that are unique to your business.

As an example of this, Byers pointed to financial modeling platform [MRGN](#)'s go-to-market slides from their pitch deck.



Go-to-market example from MRGN. MRGN



Go-to-market example from MRGN. MRGN

"Keep in mind that your selling strategy should align with the lifetime value of your customer," she said. "If your customers have a high average revenue potential, higher cost channels like strategic partnerships make sense. If your customers have a low average revenue, your acquisition costs also need to be low."

## 9. Team and founder fit

The earlier stage the startup is in, the bigger the bet investors are taking on the founding leadership team to take the financial backing and deliver on the stated mission with a return on investment.

"You need to convince an investor that they should trust you with their money," Byers said. "You may have described your origin story at the start of your presentation, but this is your chance to state why you and your team are the right people to be building your solution to the problem."

The CEO recommended making use of bullets that get straight to the point and highlight key experience. She suggested addressing the following questions:

- What knowledge and skills have you developed that make you a fit for the task?
- How are you supplementing what you have to offer with other team members or advisors?



A slide for Allison Byers, Founder & CEO. It features a circular portrait of her on the left. To the right of the portrait, her name and title are listed. Below this, four bullet points describe her experience: 15+ years building start-ups, an MBA with start-up ops, finance, management, and board experience, having previously raised \$9.6M, and a deep understanding of founder experience and fundraising inefficiencies. On the right side of the slide, there are logos for DCT (Digital Cognition Technologies), compete, BROOKESIDE (Be the Best in B2B), Hasbro, FIRST ACT, and BU (Boston University Questrom School of Business).

**Scroobious' team fit.** Allison Byers

"Be sure to communicate your knowledge or connection to the users of your solution as well as your skill set," Byers said. "This is particularly important for underrepresented founders, whose solutions might serve segments where investors don't have the first-hand experience."

## 10. A thank you with your contact information

You've made it to the end of your pitch deck. Now what? Simple: Include a thank you note, contact information, and any appropriate social media handles.



A closing slide for Scroobious. On the left, there is a grid of 40 small, colorful icons of eyes. On the right, the Scroobious logo is displayed in orange and green. Below the logo, the text "Thank You!" is written in orange. Underneath, there are four lines of contact information, each preceded by a small icon: a globe for the website [www.scroobious.com](http://www.scroobious.com), an envelope for the email [abyers@scroobious.com](mailto:abyers@scroobious.com), a Twitter bird for the handle [@apbyers](https://twitter.com/apbyers), and a LinkedIn 'in' icon for the profile [linkedin.com/in/allison-byers/](https://linkedin.com/in/allison-byers/).

**Scroobious' closing slide.** Allison Byers

"When you are presenting, be sincere when you thank the investors," Byers said. "The importance of your passion and authenticity can't be overstated."

Ultimately, founders are the experts of their own businesses, not investors. And a winning deck comes down to not just simply

addressing what the investor wants to hear, but delivering a "key value proposition," she said.

"Telling your story in a way that is authentic and meaningful to you will always win over trying to tell the story you think someone else wants to hear," Byers added.

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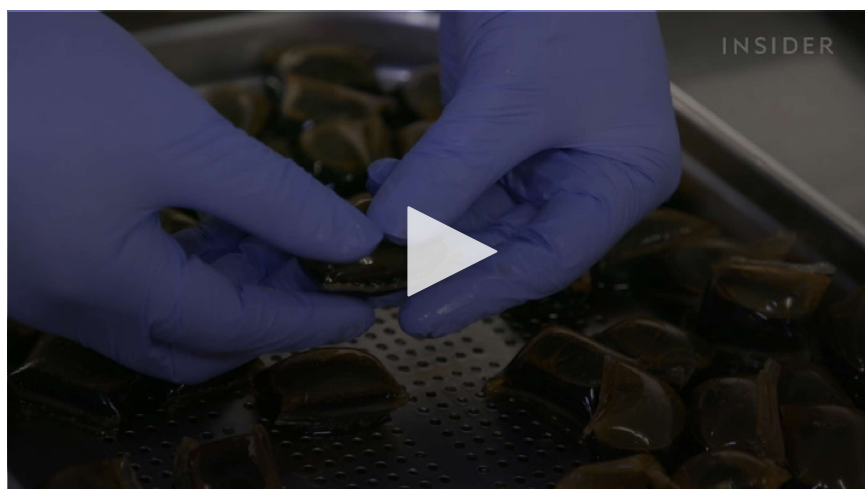
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