

Five model mistakes that *kill deals* before slide eight.

Investors spend under three minutes on your financial model before deciding if it's credible. These five mistakes are the most common reasons founders lose interest before the conversation reaches product or traction. Each one is fixable in a day.

5

MISTAKES

< 3 min

WHAT INVESTORS SPEND

1 day

TO FIX EACH ONE

Each one signals to an investor that you don't understand your own business.

01 The hockey stick with no engine.

THE MISTAKE

Revenue sits flat, flat, flat — then explodes in Year 2 or 3. No channel strategy, no conversion assumptions, no hiring plan tied to the growth curve.

WHAT THE INVESTOR READS

They drew the chart they wanted, not the one they can defend.

THE FIX

Build revenue bottom-up: salespeople × deals per month × average deal size. If you can't trace every dollar back to an activity, the projection isn't credible.

02 Missing unit economics entirely.

THE MISTAKE

No CAC. No LTV. No payback period. The model shows revenue and expenses but never answers: how much does it cost to acquire a customer, and how much is that customer worth?

WHAT THE INVESTOR READS

They haven't thought about whether the business actually works at scale.

THE FIX

Even pre-revenue, estimate acquisition cost (ads, sales, partnerships) and expected revenue per customer over 12–24 months. An LTV:CAC ratio of 3:1 or better is the benchmark most regional investors use.

03 No sensitivity analysis.

THE MISTAKE

One scenario — the optimistic one. No downside case. No "what if growth is 50 percent slower?" No "what if churn doubles?" A single set of numbers presented as certain.

WHAT THE INVESTOR READS

Nothing's been stress-tested. The first market surprise will catch them off guard.

THE FIX

Three scenarios — Conservative, Base, and Aggressive. Surface the variables that actually swing outcomes: conversion rate, churn, deal size. Investors respect founders who know where the risks live.

04 A "use of funds" slide that says nothing.

THE MISTAKE

"40% Product, 30% Marketing, 20% Operations, 10% G&A." Those are categories, not a plan. Every startup on earth could write the same slide.

WHAT THE INVESTOR READS

They haven't mapped investment to milestones. They'll burn through cash without clear targets.

THE FIX

Tie every dollar to a milestone. "AED 400K to hire two senior engineers to ship V2 by Q3." "AED 200K for paid acquisition targeting 500 qualified leads per month by Month 6." Specificity reads as confidence.

05

Burn rate without a runway story.

THE MISTAKE

The model shows monthly expenses but never answers: how many months of runway does this raise actually give you, and what do you achieve before you need to raise again?

WHAT THE INVESTOR READS

They'll be back in eight months asking for more money without hitting any milestones.

THE FIX

State it explicitly. "This raise gives us 18 months of runway. In that window, we hit [ARR target], [customer count], and [product milestone] — positioning us for Series A."

◆ THE PATTERN

Each of these five mistakes has the same root: a model built to *impress* rather than to *defend*.

Sophisticated investors — in the GCC especially — are tuned to the difference. A defensible model doesn't need to be complex. It needs to be honest, traceable, and stress-tested.

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