Five things to know before you submit

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1. Not understanding the problem

- Are you solving the whole problem, or only a piece?
- Do you have justification that your solution can help solve the problem?
- Relying on superficial or insufficient data, or small or inaccurate samples.
- Not looking for holes in your argument, or confounding data.
- Assuming too much (about people, potential partners…)
You think high school dropouts have a high rate of not voting.

Is this true?

Why might they not be voting? What can you find out about the problem? How do you investigate it?

Once you understand the problem, it should help you think of an innovative solution.

What evidence can you find that someone else has tried your solution or a similar solution? Did it work?

If you want to partner, is that realistic?
2. Proposing a non-innovative solution

- Problems have many potential solutions. How is yours innovative?
- If it is an incremental innovation, is there a new twist to what you are doing?
- How does it rely on new technologies?
  - Hint: In today’s world, just creating an app is not a new technology.
- Not finding out that it’s been done before.
3. Insufficient Cost and Revenue

- What will it cost to build your solution?
- What will it cost to market your solution?
- What will it cost to maintain your solution?
- Even volunteers have a price.
- “Paid by advertising” is not an answer.
- How will the upfront costs be paid?
- How will the continuing costs be paid?
4. Not addressing diversity

- Although the most important part of your entry has to do with innovation, diversity is a component also.

- Have you thought about how your solution can include diverse groups?
- Have you backed up your diversity component with research?
5. Not getting your main points across

- You understand the problem and the solution. It’s innovative and will pay for itself. Fantastic!

- But the judges haven’t been looking over your shoulder and they can’t read your mind.

- “One of the biggest challenges for all competitors is telling your story succinctly in a way that grabs a judge and makes crystal clear what your solution is about and why it’s innovative.”
Your explanation

- If you don’t explain your solution clearly, the judges may feel your solution is incomplete.

- State the problem clearly
- Summarize your evidence and your conclusions about the evidence – don’t assume the judges have your background info
- State the solution
- Specifically say why your solution is innovative – don’t let the judges guess
The roommate test

- Ask a friend, roommate (or even your mother) to read the entry and listen to the video.
- Listen closely to the questions they have.
- Incorporate the answers to those questions into your entry.
- Note: this goes better if you start early!
Get their attention early

- Use your video to catch the judges’ attention.

- Your video, summary, and executive brief should read like a newspaper story. Get their attention early with key information, then fill in the details.

- Be a storyteller. Can you explain your solution in the context of a “typical” person who you are going to reach?
Sometimes more is less

- You can create an effective presentation with only slides and a voice-over.

- Don’t obsess over “bells and whistles” or special effects. The judges just want to hear your story.

- Tip: look at some popular Kickstarter videos. What do they do to capture your attention?
Bonus: Don’t procrastinate

- Each entry we’ve reviewed so far has the potential to be a finalist.
- Each has at least one innovative aspect.
- Continue to refine and review. That’s what the winning teams tell us they did to win.