

BLACKTECHSTARTUP EDUCATION

Startup Metrics Pack: Build One Source of Truth for Investors

Define the few metrics that actually drive the business, lock formulas and source systems, reconcile them to financials and produce trend/cohort views that never contradict the deck.

Metric inconsistency destroys trust faster than a weak number stated clearly. “ARR” in the deck cannot mean contracted value while “ARR” in finance means collected subscriptions and the CRM includes unpaid pilots. The solution is a metric contract: exact definition, formula, source, exclusions, period, owner and reconciliation rule for every material KPI.

Know what weak and strong look like

READINESS AREA	WEAK / DILIGENCE RISK	STRONG / INVESTOR-READY
Definitions	KPI names exist but formulas live in people's heads.	Dictionary includes formula, event/accounting basis, exclusions, owner and source.
Sources	CRM, product and finance each show different total.	Authoritative system declared; reconciliation bridges explain legitimate differences.
Periods	Monthly/quarterly/TTM mixed.	Every chart labels observation period and cohort/denominator consistently.
Restatements	Old decks silently keep stale numbers.	Metric restatement/version policy tracks material definition or data changes.
Scope	25 vanity KPIs reported.	5–10 decision-driving metrics plus business-model-specific diagnostics.

Choose metrics from the business model

SaaS: ARR/MRR, GRR/NRR, CAC/payback, gross margin. Marketplace: GMV, take rate, liquidity, repeat. Consumer: activation, retention, monetization. Deep tech: technical/adoption milestones, contracted pilots/offtake, cost-down. Do not force SaaS metrics on every company.

Write a metric dictionary

For each KPI capture business question, formula, numerator, denominator, source table/system, inclusion/exclusion, time zone/period, refresh cadence, owner and examples. Treat definition changes like accounting-policy changes.

Build reconciliation bridges

CRM bookings may legitimately differ from accounting revenue; product active users may differ from billed customers. Show how systems relate rather than forcing false equality.

Publish one canonical pack

The board deck, investor deck and data room should source the same metric table. Freeze period-end snapshots so historical charts do not change unpredictably when backfills occur.

Add trend and cohort context

A point value without history invites misinterpretation. Show 12–24 month trend where meaningful, plan vs actual, and cohorts when user/customer behavior is central.

Run the diligence stress test before investors do

Do not rehearse an answer. Rehearse the evidence. Give yourself a short diligence window and try to produce the underlying records without rebuilding the story from memory. A clean result is reproducible, tied to a source system or signed document, and consistent with the numbers elsewhere in the company.

→ **Definitions:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Dictionary includes formula, event/accounting basis, exclusions, owner and source. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—KPI names exist but formulas live in people's heads.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.

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- **Restatements:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: Metric restatement/version policy tracks material definition or data changes. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—Old decks silently keep stale numbers.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.

- **Scope:** Put the underlying records on screen and prove this standard: 5–10 decision-driving metrics plus business-model-specific diagnostics. If the evidence still looks like this weak state—25 vanity KPIs reported.—record the gap, name an owner and give it a due date instead of explaining it away.

Do the math investors will do

Metric lineage test: pick any investor-facing number and answer five questions in under two minutes: exact definition? source? period? owner? bridge to related financial/product data? If not, the metric is not diligence-ready even if the dashboard is attractive.

Build the evidence investors can verify

- ✓ Metric dictionary

- ✓ Canonical monthly KPI table

- ✓ Source-system/lineage map

- ✓ Financial/product/CRM reconciliation bridges

- ✓ 12–24 month trend charts

- ✓ Cohort views for retention/repeat where relevant

✓ Restatement/version log

✓ Deck/data-room export generated from same source

Questions an investor may ask

? What exactly counts as an active user/customer?

? Why does CRM ARR differ from finance?

? Has this metric definition changed in the last year?

? What source table produces this chart?

? Which KPI is the earliest warning that the plan is breaking?

30-day repair sprint

1 Days 1–3: choose 5–10 decision KPIs.

2 Days 4–8: write metric dictionary and source owner.

3 Days 9–15: reconcile systems and fix duplicate/missing identities.

4 Days 16–20: build canonical history/trends/cohorts.

5 Days 21–25: replace deck/board numbers with canonical outputs.

6 Days 26–30: run an independent metric-lineage audit.

Research behind this guide

Use the primary and authoritative sources below to verify current rules, market conditions and technical guidance. Terms and regulations can change.

SEC — Ready to Raise CAPITAL



Andreessen Horowitz — Insider's Guide to Data Rooms



Stripe — Essential SaaS Metrics



Andreessen Horowitz — 13 Metrics for Marketplace Companies



Important: This guide is educational information, not individualized legal, tax, investment, employment, security or compliance advice. For decisions with material legal or financial consequences, use a qualified professional who can review your facts.

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