

April, 2018



DEVELOPING THE PERFECT ELEVATOR PITCH

Imagine walking into an elevator on your average workday. As you enter, you look up and see the leader of the organization you have wanted to work in. You must make an impulsive decision to either take a risk and introduce yourself or remain silent and potentially lose your chance of making a positive impression. What will you do? If you answered you would take a risk and introduce yourself, then a well thought out and executed elevator pitch will be extremely influential in creating a favorable perception.

What is an elevator pitch?

An elevator pitch is a 20 to 30 second statement that captures your background and your passion that leaves your target audience wanting to learn more about you, your experiences, and the organization you work for or with.

Why Elevator Pitches are Important

There are many reasons why elevator pitches are important. The first reason is the potential to create strong networks and relationships quickly.¹ This can be both within and outside of your current organization. Think back to the above situation where you walk into an elevator and want to make a positive and lingering impression on a leader you haven't had much exposure to. This interaction

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was not planned but rather happened due to chance. In these circumstances, it is vital to have an elevator pitch that will enable you to be at your best when the time calls for quick thinking.

Another reason why an elevator pitch is crucial is because it is a modern form of marketing. 1 Even though the interaction may only last a minute or two, a strong pitch will leave a lasting impression making the other party want to learn more about you. The goal is to provide enough details to have the other party understand but also keep them wanting more. 2 Your preparedness combined with action may lead to future opportunities to collaborate, or build a mentoring relationship or obtain the next job all due to this single interaction.

How to Develop Your Pitch

After understanding the importance of elevator pitches, it is now time to develop your own. Here are a few guidelines to help ensure the success of your pitch.

1. Pinpoint Your Purpose

To begin developing your pitch, you must first identify your goal or objective. For example, is the purpose of your elevator pitch to land a meeting or will it be used to build or strengthen a relationship with this person? Your pitch will vary greatly based on the main goal or outcome you hope to achieve. It will also vary based on the timing of your career. 3

2. Describe What You Do

Begin your pitch by describing what you or your organization does for a living. To create a strong pitch, it is also important

strong pitch, it is important to ask yourself, "What do I want this person or group to remember about me?" The response to this question should be included within your pitch and should create excitement within you. Your passion and energy will need to shine through as you share your pitch to others.

3. Express What Makes You Unique

The purpose of an elevator pitch is to catch the other person's attention and to create a desire for future business interactions. In order to do so, you must demonstrate and emphasize what makes you or your business unique.

The more you are able to demonstrate that your personal background differs from the majority, the more attractive you will become.

One last consideration in developing your elevator pitch is to proactively answer the question: "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) For example, refer back to the first situation of walking into an elevator with the leader who you've been anxious to meet.

After deciding to introduce yourself, you begin your pitch. First explain what you do for a living, the key points of what makes you unique. You have approximately 1 minute. Now what? You must sell the leader on why this information is important and relevant to him or her (which in their mind is the answer to WIIFM).

If you are able to answer this question with a strong response, you will have a higher probability of doing business in the future or obtaining the next meeting.

4. Encourage Participation

At the very end of your pitch, you should ask an open-ended question that brings the other party into the conversation. The question should engage the other party and have them answer with an explanation rather than a yes or no. This will spark a conversation that may carry on to future interactions or even relationships. 3

Quick Tips

Put it on Paper:

Before starting your pitch, write down everything you'd want the other person to know about you or your organization.

Continually Make Changes: When practicing your pitch, narrow down

your 1-3 key points for your audience.

Practice to Perfect:

Time yourself to make sure your pitch is no longer than 60 seconds and ask for feedback from others. In addition, practicing will enable you to express yourself quite naturally in 1-2 statements, thus making it appear as if it was off the tip of your tongue.

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REFERENCES

1. Arline, Katherine. "What Is an Elevator Pitch?" *Business News Daily*. 26 Jan. 2015. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.
2. Peters, Dwight. "6 Tips for Perfecting Your Elevator Pitch." *Entrepreneur*. 27 Aug. 2013. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.
3. "Crafting an Elevator Pitch: Introducing Your Company Quickly and Compellingly." *Mind Tools*. Web. 01 Apr. 2016.
4. "Examples of a 30-Second Elevator Pitch." *ImprovAndy*. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

Sample

"Hello, my name is John and I'm an HR professional who implements innovative recruiting strategies. When I joined as an HR Manager, we were losing engineers left and right. The organization could not attract top engineers fast enough to keep the teams productive and fully staffed. I'm happy to report that I implemented a number of new recruitment strategies and hired the talent we needed to grow the business double digits."

Summary

In general, life offers many opportunities we can act upon. We don't always know what opportunities will surface or who we are going to meet that lead to excellent and challenging work or the next promotion. In order to be prepared for any unplanned circumstance, it pays off to have your distinct elevator pitch prepared in order to present your best self. To ensure your pitch is successful, you will want to pinpoint your purpose, describe what you do, express what makes you unique, and encourage participation and/or a clear next step. To enhance your pitch, practice is also key. The more your pitch sounds natural and free flowing, the more comfortable the conversation will be. Do not worry about saying the exact same thing every time, but rather focus on the main points you want to hit. The goal of this interaction is to spark a conversation or interest, not recite a script word for word.

Lastly, remember to tailor your pitch and the answer to WIIFM based on your audience. In order to leave a lasting impression, you will want to make adjustments accordingly.



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