



Advisory Board Members: Elevator Pitch

Crafting an Elevator Pitch: Introducing Your Company Quickly and Compellingly

(Also known as an Elevator Speech or Elevator Statement)

Spark interest in what you do. You've just bumped into a former client at the airport. After exchanging pleasantries, he asks you what your new company does. You open your mouth, and then pause. Where on earth do you start? Then, as you try to organize your thoughts, his flight is called, and he's on his way. If you'd been better prepared, you're sure that he'd have stayed long enough to schedule a meeting.

This is one situation where it helps to have an "elevator pitch." This is a short, pre-prepared speech that explains what your organization does, clearly and succinctly. In this article, we'll explore situations where these are useful, and we'll look at how to craft an effective elevator pitch.

About the Technique

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech that you use to spark interest in what your organization does. You can also use elevator pitches to create interest in a project, idea, or product – or in yourself. A good elevator pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 30 seconds, hence the name. Elevator pitches should be interesting, memorable, and succinct. They also need to explain what makes you – or your organization, product, or idea – unique.

When to Use an Elevator Pitch

Some people think that elevator pitches are only useful for salespeople who need to pitch their products and services. But you can also use an elevator pitch in other situations.

For example, you can use one to introduce your organization to potential clients or customers. You could use them in your organization to sell a new idea to your CEO, or to tell people about the change initiative that you're leading. You can even craft one to tell people what you do for a living.

Creating an Elevator Pitch

It can take some time to get an elevator pitch right. You'll likely go through several versions before finding one that is compelling and that sounds natural in conversation. Follow these steps to create a great pitch, but bear in mind that you'll need to vary your approach depending on what your pitch is about.

1. *Identify Your Goal*

Start by thinking about the objective of your pitch. For instance, do you want to tell potential clients about your organization? Do you have a great new product idea that you want to pitch to an executive? Or do you want a simple and engaging speech to explain what you do for a living?

2. *Explain What You Do*

Start your pitch by describing what your organization does. Focus on the problems that you solve and how you help people. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value in what you do.



Ask yourself this question as you start writing: what do you want your audience to remember most about you?

Keep in mind that your elevator pitch should excite you first; after all, if you don't get excited about what you're saying, neither will your audience. Your pitch should bring a smile to your face and quicken your heartbeat. People may not remember everything that you say, but they will likely remember your enthusiasm.

Example: Imagine that you're creating an elevator pitch that describes what your company does. You plan to use it at networking events.

You could say, "My company writes mobile device applications for other businesses." But that's not very memorable! A better explanation would be, "My company develops mobile applications that businesses use to train their staff remotely. This results in a big increase in efficiency for an organization's managers." That's much more interesting, and shows the value that you provide to these organizations.

3. *Communicate Your USP*

Your elevator pitch also needs to communicate your [unique selling proposition](#), or USP. Identify what makes you, your organization, or your idea, unique. You'll want to communicate your USP after you've talked about what you do.

Example: To highlight what makes your company unique, you could say, "We use a novel approach because unlike most other developers, we visit each organization to find out exactly what people need. Although this takes a bit more time, it means that on average, 95 percent of our clients are happy with the first beta version of their app."

4. *Engage With a Question*

After you communicate your USP, you need to engage your audience. To do this, prepare open-ended questions (questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no" answer) to involve them in the conversation. Make sure that you're able to answer any questions that he or she may have.

Example: You might ask "So, how does your organization handle the training of new people?"

5. *Put it all Together*

When you've completed each section of your pitch, put it all together. Then, read it aloud and use a stopwatch to time how long it takes. Your elevator pitch should be no longer than 20 - 30 seconds. Otherwise you risk losing the person's interest, or monopolizing the conversation. Then, try to cut out anything that doesn't absolutely need to be there. Remember, your pitch needs to be snappy and compelling, so the shorter it is, the better!

Example: Here's how your elevator pitch could come together:

"My company develops mobile applications that businesses use to train their staff remotely. This means that senior managers can spend time on other important tasks. Unlike other similar companies, we visit each organization to find out exactly what people need. This means that, on average, 95 percent of our clients are happy with the



first version of their app. So, how does your organization handle the training of new people?"

6. *Practice*

Like anything else, practice makes perfect. Remember, how you say it is just as important as what you say. If you don't practice, it's likely that you'll talk too fast, sound unnatural, or forget important elements of your pitch.

Set a goal to practice your pitch regularly. The more you practice, the more natural your pitch becomes. You want it to sound like a smooth conversation, not an aggressive sales pitch.

Make sure that you're aware of your body language as you talk, which conveys just as much information to the listener as your words do. Practice in front of a mirror or, better yet, in front of colleagues until the pitch feels natural.

As you get used to delivering your pitch, it's fine to vary it a little – the idea is that it doesn't sound too formulaic or like it's pre-prepared, even though it is!

Tip 1: You may want to keep small take-away items with you, which you can give to people after you've delivered your pitch. For example, these could be business cards or brochures that talk about your product idea or business.

Tip 2: Remember to tailor your elevator pitch for different audiences, if appropriate.

Key Points

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech that you can use to spark interest in what your organization does. You can also use one to create interest in a project, idea, or product. An elevator pitch needs to be succinct, while conveying important information. To craft a great pitch, follow these steps.

- Identify your goal.
- Explain what you do.
- Communicate your USP.
- Engage with a question.
- Put it all together.
- Practice.

Try to keep a business card or other take-away item with you, which helps the other person remember you and your message. And cut out any information that doesn't absolutely need to be there.

This section is from a Mind Tools article titled “Essential Skills for an Excellent Career. Crafting an Elevator Pitch: Introducing Your Company Quickly and Compellingly” and is found at <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/elevator-pitch.htm>.



Here are sample pitches. Feel free to use/adapt or try creating your own!

BEST BUDDIES ELEVATOR PITCHES:

IDD affects all people regardless of socio-economic status, education, race, ethnicity, or nationality- which is why our work has no boundaries.

10 Second Pitch – NO STATS:

Best Buddies is an organization that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities establish one-to-one friendships, secure successful jobs and become advocates (and leaders) in the community.

15 Second Pitch - OPTION 1:

We are a global volunteer movement serving nearly 1M people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities worldwide. We create opportunities for people with IDD to form one-to-one friendships, secure successful jobs and become advocates (and leaders) in the community.

15 Second Pitch - OPTION 2:

Best Buddies is an organization that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities establish one-to-one friendships, find jobs and become advocates (and leaders) in the community. We are a global volunteer movement serving nearly 1M people with and without IDD worldwide.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

We offer 8 programs that fall under the 3 pillars of our mission: Middle and High Schools, Colleges, Promoters, Citizens, e-buddies, Jobs and Ambassadors.

STATS to add to the bottom of the elevator pitch for folks to know:

- Global volunteer movement (50 states / 52 Countries)
- In business 25 years
- Serve nearly 1M people with and without IDD worldwide
- 8 Programs: Middle and High Schools, Colleges, Promoters, Citizens, e-buddies, Jobs and Ambassadors.
- Over 95 offices worldwide
- Over 1800 School Chapters worldwide