

Crafting an Elevator Pitch

Introducing Your Company Quickly and Compellingly



Stand out with an effective elevator pitch.

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 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 them 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.

They 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 this kind of thing is only useful for salespeople who need to pitch their products and services. But you can also use them 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 your 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 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. It 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 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 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 will become. 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 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.

It 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.