

114

Tips to Succeed: The elevator 'speech'

The "elevator pitch" is a short description about your company that you can convey in the time it takes to ride an elevator. And not an elevator in a skyscraper, either. Your elevator pitch must be clear and concise and show that you understand the core aspects of your business.

Because it must be short, you have to decide what facets of your company to leave out. Often, these can be the things you're most excited about – a new technology, a great location, outstanding customer service, etc.

But if they're not central to the core or success of your business, they don't belong in an elevator pitch.

You should touch – very briefly – on the products or services you sell, what market you serve, and your competitive advantage.

You must be brief and clear. Unless you're in a highly technical field, your neighbor or grandmother should be able to understand your business well enough to describe it to someone else. After all, you want grandma marketing for you too, don't you? People you meet need to quickly understand the nature of your business if you want them to send business your way.

Make sure your employees, investors, even vendors know your company's elevator pitch. Have your employees practice your company's elevator pitch so they're able to network for you as well.

It's often a good idea to use an analogy, especially if you're in a new or difficult-to-grasp field. "We're the Google for car buyers" is a good shorthand way to say that you're trying to create a search engine for people wanting to purchase an automobile.

Think in these terms (sort of like a mission statement):

- This is who we are;
- What we think about ourselves;
- What we want to do;
- Why we deserve your support

You'll find you use your elevator pitch often – in e-mails to prospective customers and investors, to introduce yourself at organizational meetings or when running into an old friend at a

ballgame. Who knows? You may even use it if you meet a potential customer in an elevator.

So go out and find a three-story building with an elevator, ride up and down and practice your pitch. That way, you'll be prepared the next time some one asks you, "What do you do?"

Rhonda Abrams - Gannett News Service
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA - Author - *The Public Relations Practitioner's Playbook*

homogeneous shopping goods – Shopping goods perceived by consumers to be essentially the same in quality and attributes. It turns out that price becomes the deciding factor. See *heterogeneous shopping goods; shopping goods*.

hook – The stylistic device used by a reporter to draw a reader into the story.

hook-ups – Much like *tie-ins*. Two products that complement each other, but sold as separates in retail stores – a dress shirts and tie; blouse and slacks.

horizontal channel conflict – Discord among members at the same level of a marketing channel, e.g. wholesaler-wholesaler discord or retailer-retailer discord. See *inter-type channel conflict; vertical channel conflict*.

horizontal cooperative advertising – Shared advertising by two or more members at the same level of a distribution channel, each paying part of the total cost – partnering or co-authoring. This is different from normal co-op advertising where retailers and manufacturers share the cost for advertising a particular brand.

horizontal discount – A discount on a media purchase resulting from a promise to advertise over an extended period of time.

horizontal diversification – A growth strategy where a company seeks to add new products (line extensions) to its existing lines that will appeal to existing customers.

horizontal integration – A strategy for growth where a company develops by seeking ownership of, or some measure of control over, some of its competitors. See *forward integration*.

elaboration probes – Questions raised by salespeople when positively encouraging prospects that help to provide additional information about their needs.

elasticity of demand – A measure of the degree to which any change in the price of a product or service will affect the demand for it. See *inelasticity of demand*.

electric spectacular – Outdoor signs or billboards composed largely of lighting or other electrical components. A criticism of electric spectacular is that, often, the production overwhelms the message causing *vampire creativity*.

electronic funds transfer at point of sale (EFTPOS) – A system commonly used in retailing in which a consumer pays for purchases by using a debit card – which electronically transfers funds from his or her bank account to the store's.

electronic point of sale (EPOS) system – A relatively new system whereby electronic tills are used to process customer transactions in a retail outlet. Local EPOS systems are usually connected to a central computer system, so that financial and inventory-related data can be exchanged between the store and head office, allowing automatic accounting and replenishment.

electronic programming guide (EPG) – An application that allows a viewer to interactively select his/her television programming.

electronic retailing – The use by customers of computer terminals in conveniently located shopping kiosks and elsewhere to call up product information and then to place orders using credit cards.

electronic shelf-talkers/shelf screamers – An electronic (video or audio) advertising message triggered to operate when a customer walks in the vicinity of a product usually in a retail store. It might be touting “on special” or “sale item” or just the product name itself. See *shelf-talkers*.

electronic transcription (ET) – A recorded program or message on a vinyl disc, tape or CD.

elevator speech – A strategic message (about 30 seconds) with two or three *key message points* – that can be delivered quickly – even during an elevator ride.

ellipse – In print, the use of three dots (periods) to signify some words

PR Play 13-5

Mayo Clinic

Public speaking is the number one fear for most people. But the Mayo Clinic HealthQuest newsletter offers simple steps to ease the jitters.

- Determine your audience and the message you want to deliver so that it is received with clarity (exactly as you intend it to be interpreted).
- Research your topic and find out what people want to know about it.
- Outline what you want to say.
- Practice your presentation – in the room where you will be giving the speech, if possible. Tape the rehearsal and play it back.
- Shortly before your presentation, make sure the equipment and props are ready.
- Take a short, brisk walk before your presentation. Breathe deeply and slowly. Drink water.
- Have confidence you will do well.

side is embarrassed as occurred some years ago when a New Jersey state senator completely left her text, changed her KMPs and an incorrect story appeared in newspapers only to be corrected the next day – not with a small correction, but with entirely new stories explaining the mix up.

If reporters do cover the speech, offer to give them one-on-one interviews after the speech. (TV reporters appreciate it.) Remember, KMPs must be stated in sound bites that run no more than 20 seconds (see Chapter 10).

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a strategic message delivered quickly and simply (no more than 30 seconds – 75 words – about the duration of an elevator ride) that communicates a brand promise, mission or other main element about you or your organization. The elevator speech or “pitch” must be clear and concise and communicate the core aspects of your business – touch briefly on the products or services you sell, what market you serve, and your competitive advantage. It must be brief and clear. Employees and stakeholders should know their organization’s elevator speech.

If the elevator speech is about you, identify your personal attributes and quickly explain their benefits – benefits that might just get you a job or a promotion. The challenge: selling yourself in 30 seconds.

According to author and business coach, Rhonda Abrams, it takes quite a bit of thinking and practicing to decide what to mention in an elevator speech. Because it must be short, you have to decide what must be left out. “Often,” she says, “these can be the things you are most excited about.”

You’ll find you use your elevator speech more than just in elevators. Says Abrams, “You will turn that 30-second speech into emails to prospective customers and investors, to introduce yourself at organizational meetings or when running into an old friend at a ballgame. Who knows? You may even use it if you meet a potential customer in an elevator.

PR Play 13-6

Sample Elevator Speech

Rowan University is a dynamic Top Tier regional university serving high-achieving students through a combination of teaching, research and project-based learning. The school’s reputation for academic distinction is aided by its small class size, focus on interdisciplinary work and technologically-advanced facilities.

“So,” she advises, “go out and find a three-story building with an elevator, ride up and down and practice your pitch. That way, you’ll be prepared the next time someone asks you, ‘What do you do?’”

Political consultants James Carville and Mary Matalin are married to each other, although Carville advises Democrats and Matalin, Republicans. While their political philosophies differ, their approach is the same. As mentioned in Chapter 8 – You, Too, Can Conduct Successful Campaigns, they suggest, “Speakers must be optimistic and communicate a passion for their topic.”

Each issue should be approached in three segments:

- Set up
- Conflict
- Resolution

They suggest some points to keep in mind while delivering the speech (message):

- Simplicity

133

Tips to Succeed: Call it – 'An applicant statement'

Polish your resume by including a summary paragraph stating what you bring to the table, qualifications, experience and examples of a job well done. It should be succinct and contain buzzwords human resource managers look for – containing many of the same key message points you would include in an elevator speech.

Here is an example:

Applicant Statement: My supervisors describe me as “mature beyond her years, articulate, well tailored and polished, loyal, has a passion for the profession, outstanding writer, and a skilled organizer and strategic thinker.” It is my dream to bring those qualities, passion and dedication to ELLE’s readers – just as I do the residents of Cherry Hill. My zest for knowledge and new challenges is contagious and should appeal to ELLE magazine’s staff and target audience.

Nina Ebert - President - A Word's Worth - Plumsted, N.J.
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA - Author -
The Public Relations Practitioner's Playbook

jump page ad – Microsite (a computer page) reached by a click-through from a button advertisement or *banner ad* on a *home page* or original page. The jump page itself can list several topics, which are linked to either the advertiser’s site or the publisher’s site.

jumping the shark – A defining moment. It’s the instant that you know from then on – it’s all downhill – things will simply never be the same. Expression was first used during the television series “Happy Days” – when Fonzie actually jumps over a shark. The rest is history – and so was the show.

jury of executive opinion – A forecasting method based on the opinions of senior management.

134

Tips to Succeed: Choosing good restaurants

- Take a look inside.
- Study the menu.
- Keep it affordable.
- Ask someone leaving who just ate there.

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The ABCs of Strategic Communication

214

Tips to Succeed: Crafting your resume

Recruiters usually spend less than 20 seconds looking at your resume. Monster.com says most resumes don't get a second look. Only about three percent of candidates are called for an interview.

No one seems to be immune to a pathetic resume. Even seasoned professionals can improve their image on paper.

The most common offenses: being too generic and not convincing enough about your accomplishments.

For instance, if you say you doubled sales in a short amount of time, say so. But be specific. Which sounds better? "Worked diligently to surpass sales quota on an ongoing basis" or "exceeded \$1 million quarterly sales quota by at least 25 percent for six consecutive quarters"?

Eleanor Farmer, resume writer and business coach from Merchantville, N.J. says, "Do not use a generic resume. Customize your resume to the company and job to which you are applying."

Let them know why they should hire you. Use an *applicant statement* on the top of page one just under your personal information. That statement should tell something about the value you would bring to the company. For example:

Applicant Statement: Rowan University Professor Anthony J. Fulginiti, APR, Fellow PRSA, describes me as: "Mature beyond her years, articulate, well tailored and polished, loyal, has a passion for the profession, outstanding writer, and a skilled organizer and strategic thinker." I promise to bring those features to Burwyn Associates to increase the firm's double bottom line.

If your resume is more than one page, use footer on right hand side. For example:

Alana Kramer
Resume, page 2
kramer@njtown.net

For Resume Writing Suggestions, contact:
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA - larry@larrylitwin.com

12

Tips To Succeed: Mind your Manners
for a good first impression

It takes only three to five seconds to make a first impression, but it can take a whole career to undo it. Here's what you should keep in mind during those first fateful moments to make a positive impression at an interview, conference, party or any other time you meet new faces.

The tardiness taboo

The most important guideline is the most fundamental: Don't be late. Ever.

Figure out how long it takes to get to your meeting point and allow extra time. It's better to arrive early than risk tardiness. For interviews and other important events, do a practice run in advance to clock the drive and make sure you know the route.

If you arrive more than 10 minutes ahead of schedule, take a short walk before going inside. Arriving too early can rattle the person you're meeting.

Appearances

It's an unfortunate fact of human nature that before you even say hello, people form an opinion of you based on how you look.

In business settings, look sharp by dressing slightly more formally than the people you're meeting with. Avoid distracting accents, like excessive jewelry or a goofy tie.

Your clothes should not draw attention to you. And don't leave a bad impression by forgetting the rear view.

Check the back of your clothes in the mirror for rips and stains. Make sure you're tucked in where you should be. Also examine the back of your shoes for mud splashes or worn-down heels.

Presenting yourself

At events where you have a chance to make new contacts, take a proactive approach. Peter Post (Emily's grandson) says, "Go in with an attitude that says you're going to participate, you're going to be willing to go up and introduce yourself to people and start conversations."

It takes guts to approach strangers, but if you do it with charm, those you meet will be impressed by your sociability.

Post recommends four actions to ensure a positive first impression:

- Stand up to get on eye level with the person.
- Look them in the eye.
- Give a firm handshake, but don't "bone crush" them. Keep your shoulders and feet oriented toward the person.
- Repeat the person's name and say you're pleased to meet them.

Fine-tune and rehearse your self-introduction, a 10-second or less sound-bite (elevator speech) that includes your first and last name and a snippet of background information to kindle conversation. Example: Hello, I'm Denise Kersten, a careers columnist for *USATO-DAY.com*.

Making connections

Introducing others will make you seem gracious and well connected, but be sure to follow the proper protocol.

In social situations the order in which you introduce two people is based on gender and age (women and older people first).

In business settings the order is determined by rank.

Introduce the lower-ranking person to the higher-ranking person, then reverse the order, so you say each person's name two times. Try to add an interesting tidbit to start the conversation. If you were introducing Mrs. Smith, a vice president of the company, to Mr. Jones, a junior associate, for example, you might say:

If you are unsure who the more important person is, default to the gender and age guideline.

Don't panic if you forget a name. Most people will be happy to remind you and appreciate the introduction.

Chit chat

Conversation is more like a tennis match than a golf game. Hitting the ball too many times in a row is a serious faux pas. Instead, try to establish a back-and-forth volley.

Asking questions about the other person's background and mentioning that interesting item you read in the newspaper are tried-and-true chat starters or icebreakers. Stay away from politically charged or sensitive topics with people you've just met.

Also avoid alienating individuals with different professional backgrounds.

Stay away from industry language and acronyms. It may make you feel plugged in, but it can turn-off uninitiated listeners.