

9.6: Selling U - What's Your Elevator Pitch for Your Brand?

Learning Objectives

- Learn how to prepare an elevator pitch for your brand.

Now you know about an elevator pitch and how it can help you in your sales approach. But do you have an elevator pitch for your personal brand? If the answer is no, now is the time to craft it. Just as in selling, your personal elevator pitch should be less than a few minutes and should be a way for you to tell someone who you are, what you've done, and what you're looking for. Your elevator pitch will serve as the approach for your internship and job search in several different ways.

Elevator Pitch 101: Be Prepared

Your elevator pitch is critical because it tells a prospective employer or someone in your network what you have to offer, what makes you different, and what you want to do. You'll use your elevator pitch in many different situations; you may even use it in situations when you least expect it. Chris O'Leary, author of *Elevator Pitch Essentials*, suggests that many people are not prepared to take advantage of relationships and opportunities that come their way simply because they are not prepared with a compelling statement about who they are and what they are looking for. Chris O'Leary, "Elevator Pitch 101," *Elevator Pitch Essentials*, January 27, 2009, <http://www.elevatorpitchessentials.com/essays/ElevatorPitch.html> (accessed July 26, 2009).

Creating Your Personal Elevator Pitch



See how to craft your personal elevator pitch.

How to Create Your Elevator Pitch

Before you can deliver your elevator pitch, you have to write it first. Start by reviewing your brand positioning points that you identified in the *Selling U* section in Chapter 1. As you recall, your brand positioning points are the foundation of your résumé and cover letter and now your elevator pitch. You can see how you are building a consistent brand story by always focusing on the same key selling points about yourself.

To craft your elevator pitch, keep the following points in mind:

- Who are you?
- What experience and skills do you have?
- What makes you unique?
- What problem can you help your prospective employer solve?
- What are you looking for? Michelle Dumas, "How to Create a Compelling Branded Elevator Speech for Your Job Search," *EzineArticles*, April 23, 2008, ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Create-a-Compelling,-Branded-Elevator-Pitch-for-Your-Job-Search&id=1128958 (accessed July 26, 2009).

Here's an example of how an elevator pitch comes together from Jobstar.org:

Hello, my name is Melinda Stevens. I'm a graduating senior from Southton College. I got your name from the alumni office, where they said you were an alumna from 1983. I understand you're now a CPA and audit manager in Chicago. My minor was in business, and I'm interested in positions in accounting. I'd like to know how you got where you are today and what advice you'd have for a college graduate just coming into the job market today. Do you have a moment right now?

This is an example of a telephone approach. You can see that it is concise and to the point. If you are networking, at a job interview, or talking with someone, you might have the time for one or two more sentences, but not much more. The secret to an effective elevator pitch is to intrigue the listener so that he wants to hear more. If your elevator pitch is compelling and brief, the listener will respond by asking a question, and you will get the conversation started.

When to Use Your Elevator Pitch

One of the most common uses for an elevator pitch is networking. For example, if you attend a professional event you'll have the opportunity to meet many new people. And you'll want to tell each one a little bit about yourself. This is a perfect opportunity to use your elevator pitch; it's not too long and gives you the perfect way to start a conversation and give the person to whom you are speaking the chance to ask a question. You might even find something or someone in common as a result of the information in your elevator pitch: "You were an intern at Classic Architects? My brother used to work there. His name is Jeremy Slater. Do you know him?"

Another opportunity to use your elevator pitch is in an interview. Although you will need more preparation than simply your elevator pitch for an informational interview or a job interview, you will have a head start on your preparation with a strong elevator pitch. It's the perfect response to what is commonly the first question that is asked at almost every job interview: "So tell me about yourself." It's important to be ready with a clear, concise, and compelling statement. If you think you can wing it, you will probably start your interview off on the wrong foot. On the other hand, a good elevator pitch allows you to direct the conversation to the things you want to talk about (your brand positioning points).

✓ You've Got the Power: Tips for Your Job Search

Make Your Elevator Pitch Work for You

It might be challenging to think about communicating your brand story in only sixty seconds, but don't forget your objective: you want to get the internship or job. While there's a long way between your elevator pitch and an internship or job, keep your eye on the prize; always have a call to action as part of your elevator pitch. For example, ask for a business card from everyone with whom you speak or meet. That means that whether you are at a networking event or on a job interview, it's always appropriate to ask the person for their business card. (You might want to brush up and review the business card etiquette covered in Chapter 5.)

Then, follow-up is key. After you meet someone, follow up with an e-mail or phone call within twenty-four hours (or on the appropriate date after an interview). Tell the person how much you enjoyed meeting her and mention something specific about your conversation. It's a good idea to include a link to an interesting article or video in your e-mail; that will help you stand out in the person's mind.

Be Yourself

Your elevator pitch is a reflection of you, so when you are creating your elevator pitch, write it down, and then say it out loud in front of a mirror until you are comfortable with it. It's important to rehearse it so that you are comfortable with communicating this brand message in just a few minutes without rambling or stumbling. But you don't want to have your elevator pitch down cold; in other words, you want to deliver it with ease and with a natural tone and pacing, as if you were saying it for the first time. It's hard to get the balance between preparation and spontaneity, which is why it's a good idea to use your elevator pitch frequently. That way you will be able to feel natural saying it and make adjustments based on how it sounds and feels. And don't forget to smile!

Key Takeaways

- An **elevator pitch** is a concise description of a product or service that should take no longer than an average elevator ride and is designed to get conversation started.
- An **elevator pitch** requires preparation, and you should always be prepared because you never know when you might have an opportunity to use it.

- Your **elevator pitch** should be approximately sixty seconds long and should use your brand positioning points as the foundation to answer the following questions:
 - Who are you?
 - What experience and skills do you have?
 - What makes you unique?
 - What problem can you help your prospective employer solve?
 - What are you looking for?
- You can use your **elevator pitch** in many situations including networking and informational or job interviews.
- Write down your **elevator pitch** and rehearse it out loud in front of a mirror. But deliver it naturally, as if it were being said for the first time, and always with a smile.
- Don't forget to make your elevator pitch work for you by asking for a business card and following up with each person individually within twenty-four hours with a thank-you note or follow-up e-mail.

? Exercise 9.6.1

1. Write your elevator pitch. Give your pitch to the person next to you and then listen to hers. How long was each elevator pitch? What elements did she include that you didn't? What elements could you include if time permits? What is your call to action (what you want the person to do at the end of your elevator pitch)?
2. Name three situations in which you could use your elevator pitch.
3. Create a short video of your elevator pitch and post it to YouTube (keep in mind that it should not take longer than the average elevator ride).
4. Create your elevator pitch in two PowerPoint slides (use only two slides). Post the "pitch" to Slideshare.net and share it with your class.

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