

30 Seconds to Introduce Your Business

You've just stepped into an elevator. As the door closes the other person in the elevator asks you what your organization does. You open your mouth, and then pause. As you try to organize your thoughts, the elevator stops, and he's on his way. This is one situation where an "elevator pitch", a short, pre-prepared, persuasive speech will clearly and succinctly spark interest in what your organization does or create interest in a project, idea, or product.

When to use an Elevator Pitch

Some people think that elevator pitches are only useful to pitch their products and services. But you can use one to introduce your organization to potential clients or customers, use it to sell a new idea to your CEO, or use it 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.

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. 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 solved, how you help people. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value in what you do.

What do you want your audience to remember most about you? Keep in mind that your elevator pitch should excite you first. 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, to use it at networking events. You could say, "My **company** writes mobile device applications for other businesses." 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."

3. Communicate Your USP

Your elevator pitch also needs to communicate your unique selling proposition (USP). Identify what makes you, your organization, or your idea, unique. **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 and read it aloud using a stopwatch. Then, try to cut out anything that doesn't absolutely need to be there. The shorter, the better! Your elevator pitch should be no longer than 20 - 30 seconds.

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; without practice, it's likely that you'll talk too fast, sound unnatural, or forget important elements of your pitch. You want it to sound like a smooth conversation, not an aggressive sales pitch. 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 is 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!