Hold That Door! 7 Rules for an Elevator Pitch.



Make the most of precious moments with a captive audience.

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I used to hate the expression “elevator pitch.” It just drove me crazy. But now that everybody’s using it all over the world, I officially give up and am going to go with it.

The metaphor developed out of the hypothetical that you are literally in an elevator with one minute or less to say who you are and what you do. What would you say? I want you to keep in mind that this is *not* a sales pitch; it is a creative and succinct way to generate interest in the listener.

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With that in mind, here are my seven rules for creating an engaging elevator pitch:

1. Don’t do your pitch in an actual elevator.

An unsolicited pitch in an elevator is basically face-to-face cold calling. I’ve been a victim. Don’t be a perpetrator. Unless someone asks what you do, just say “good day” to them. The elevator pitch is meant to be taken out of the elevator and into the right environment.

2. Make it tight.

It needs to be short. This is a quick pitch, not a reading from *War and Peace.* Your pitch should be more like a work of art than a science project. It should be succinct and expressive, something you practice carefully and present cohesively and professionally. You also need to be natural. You want to rehearse, but not sound rehearsed, and avoid sounding staged and canned.

3. K.I.S.S.

Keep it simple. Don’t try to explain everything you do in the short amount of time you have. It will either be too much information (breaking rule number two) or too vague to be of any value. By keeping your elevator pitch simple, you have more of a chance to catch the listener’s attention, engage them with your creativity and create interest in your product or service.

4. Don’t use jargon.

If at any point someone has to say, “What does that mean?” you have officially lost them. Push the button for the next floor and exit now. (I know, you’re not really on an elevator, but you have really lost them.)

5. Share your USP.

A USP is your Unique Selling Proposition. One example of how to craft a pithy USP is to alter a bland, general statement such as, “I’m a coach and consultant” to something like, “I help people work less, make more and create referrals for life” instead. This is short, powerful and informative, i.e. the perfect combination for part of an effective elevator pitch.

6. Consider starting out with precisely how your listener will benefit.

My friend, communications expert Andy Bounds, calls this “the afters.” For your elevator pitch, this could be something as simple as, “I help people increase their sales by 33 percent, improve their closing ratio to 80 percent or double the number of new clients they take on per month.” In other words, focus on the “after” effect of the product or service you provide.

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7. Pass the eyebrow test.

Another good friend, Sam Horn, author of *Someday is Not a Day of the Week*, writes about the "eyebrow test." If what you say in your elevator pitch causes the listener's eyebrows to go up, you've got 'em! You've left the listener wanting more, and that's precisely what you want to accomplish. On the other hand, if the listener's eyebrows scrunch down, you've just confused them. Find a new pitch.

Keeping these seven rules in mind when you create an elevator pitch will set you apart from the crowd. Now it's time to press "Open Door."

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