

## 8 Tips for Giving a Great Elevator Pitch

An elevator speech is a sales call in a sentence. It either confirms or destroys your image -- not to mention how it affects your results.

If you find yourself stammering and stuttering when you should be selling yourself and your services, consider the following tips:

- 1. State what you do in terms of a benefit.** Example: "We help salespeople really engage their buyers when they deliver a sales presentation or a written proposal."
- 2. Make sure the benefit has a "hook."** The hook causes listeners to say to themselves: "Oh, yeah? We have problems with that, too. I wonder how he/she does that?" People don't really care what you do -- they care about what you may be able to do for THEM.
- 3. Add a credibility builder.** You may mention well-known clients to establish that others value your services. Consider key results achieved for clients, such as a certification process "just completed" to accomplish the same effect. Example: "Our clients -- such as IBM, ExxonMobil, and Frito-Lay -- tell us that they've been able to improve their closing ratio by up to 20 percent."
- 4. Deliver your "speech" as if off the cuff.** Never sound purposeful or canned. Work in some conversational glitches. Stumble on a word, use a colloquial phrase, or bridge from the conversation at hand with a spontaneous segue. Give careful attention to your phrasing, speaking rate, tone, and demeanor. They all provide context to make the message sound as if you're talking friend to friend.
- 5. Be quotable.** Make it memorable so the other person can pass it along to others interested in what you offer. Before you charge me with contradicting the previous point about a casual delivery, let me elaborate: There should be some phrase that sums up the essence of your offering succinctly.

You might deliver your memorable quote in a casual way like this: "I often tell clients that when they need to talk to the top brass, our presentation programs open the door. How well do your people do that in the C-suite -- routinely talk to the top brass with class?"

- 6. Prefer the vernacular to jargon.** Sound as though you're talking to your brother, not a prospective boss or client.
- 7. Keep it brief-not more than 15-30 seconds.** Remember that people have attention spans geared to 15-second, 30-second, and 60-second TV commercials. And those employ screen changes to hold attention. How often do you flip the channel or leave the room for a snack?

- 8. End with a question.** Your goal is to engage the other person in a dialogue. Example: "How difficult do your employees find it to do X around your office?"

If you just end the "speech," you'll typically get a pleasant nod or polite "Hmmm." And silence leaves both of you uncomfortable. But with a question, the person can either respond briefly and change the subject if uninterested, or continue about the challenges you can help him meet-ideal.



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