Your Elevator Pitch: The Foundation of Your Personal Brand

What is an elevator pitch?

Imagine stepping into an elevator in a downtown office building. As the doors close, the person standing next to you says, “Hi, I’m a recruiter at your dream company. Tell me about yourself.” Are you prepared for an opportunity like this? Could you concisely introduce yourself, your background and your career aspirations in the time of a quick elevator ride – 30 seconds or less?

“Elevator pitch” is a popular term for the basic introduction of who you are and what you’re looking for. It can be used in a variety of professional situations such as networking events, job fairs, cover letters and formal interviews. (The elevator, of course, is optional.)

Why is an elevator pitch important?

In most situations, you won’t have time to tell someone your life story or to list every accomplishment on your resume. The best elevator pitches provide enough background information and enthusiasm so the other person wants to continue a conversation with you.

Here is a simple 4 step process for developing a strong and effective elevator pitch.

1. Know yourself.
   The first step to introducing yourself effectively is knowing who you are and what makes you unique. Ask yourself the following and jot down your answers: Which of your previous jobs, even if they were part-time jobs, internships or volunteer positions, provided you with experience relevant to what you hope to do now? If none, what about your college major or extracurricular activities?

   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________

   What are your strongest skills?
   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________

   What are your strengths and passions, career-wise?
   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________

   What kinds of jobs, companies or industries are your pursuing now?
   ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________
What can you say about yourself that will set you apart from other job candidates? What makes you memorable and special?
___________________________________________________________________________________________
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2. Craft your pitch.

Think of your pitch in three parts:

1. Who are you? Remember that your primary goal is simply to introduce yourself. Share your name and place yourself in context by explaining what school you attend, what you’re studying or where you currently work.

2. What are your major accomplishments/passions/unique skills? Leverage the skills you listed earlier and frame them in a way that is meaningful to a potential employer or networking contact. What can you say that will make a recruiter remember you or a networking contact want to know more about you?

3. What do you want/Where are you going? This is the part of your pitch that lets the other person know what you’re looking for and the topic you’re interested in talking about. Don’t be pushy or aggressive, but do be forthright about the fact that you’re looking for a job.

Finally be sure to tailor your delivery to the interpersonal circumstances of the moment: the goal is to maintain a conversational tone and not sound rehearsed. Think of the above elements as “sound bites” that you can mix, match and cater to each unique interaction.

Examples:

“Hi, I’m Natasha Brown. I’ll be receiving my BBA in Accounting in May from UT-Austin and I interned last summer at PricewaterhouseCoopers in the Assurance practice. I also participated in the firm’s community service project in New Orleans, which was an incredible experience. I’m also the vice president of UT’s business fraternity. I’m currently seeking an auditor position in the Chicago area, which is why I’m here at this conference.”

“Hi, my name is Rob Smith. I’m currently a junior at Boston College majoring in business with a minor in Chinese language. I spent last semester in Beijing, where I studied and had a really exciting internship with a small American marketing firm working with Beijing’s tourism agency. I saw that your agency has added some Chinese clients lately, which is why I’m eager to apply for one of your internships.”

“Hi, my name is Marcos Sanchez. I’m a registered nurse with over 10 years experience in ER and OR settings. I love providing medical and emotional support to children and their families who are faced with difficult situations. I’m looking for a new opportunity in a family focused setting where I can use my medical knowledge and compassion for family care. I saw that your hospital recently opened a new wing focusing on providing services to children with cancer and their families in a collaborative environment, and I think I could be an excellent asset for your department.”