Create an elevator pitch

Effective networking can make the difference between a good career and a great career. Many people shy away from networking or fumble around when meeting new people because they do not know what to say about themselves. They are missing an opportunity to connect with the very people who need them! The secret is in crafting a short and powerful "elevator pitch" - a short message that could be delivered in the time it takes to go from floor to floor in an elevator.

The most effective elevator pitches are succinct, carefully crafted messages that immediately tell someone why he or she might benefit from working with you. An elevator pitch should tell the listener:

1. What you do;

2. Who your target audience is;

3. What need you might fill for them; and

4. What result you would like from this encounter.

This type of elevator pitch focuses on your target audience: what they don't have, what they might benefit from, and why you are the best person to work with. This type of message is more likely to encourage your listener to talk to you, find out more about what you do, have another meeting, and eventually hire you or refer you to someone who will hire you.

Here is career coach Astrid Baumgardner's elevator pitch:

"As a professional life and career coach and lawyer, I help professional musicians and artists to achieve the career success, financial security, and life balance that they long to have."

Depending on whom I am meeting or where she is, Astrid will then add:

"How would you like to find out more about coaching?"

or,

"Let's set up a meeting so that we can see how coaching might help you."

Create your own elevator pitch

To create your elevator pitch, answer the following questions:

What do I do?

Consider what you do. Then think about how you distinguish yourself from the other people in your niche and what makes you unique and memorable. Ask a friend to help if you find this difficult.

Who is my target audience and what do they lack?

Visualise your ideal network contact. What is that person's occupation? What demographic does that person fall into? What does that person love to do? What might you be able to offer that would benefit that person's life or business? What challenges might he or she encounter?

What need do I fill for my target audience?

Now that you have some better insights into your target audience and what they are lacking, think about how you fill the need of that audience, and what skills or talents you have that they might need.

What would I like from this encounter?

The last part of the elevator pitch helps you to take this contact to the next level. What are you looking for? A meeting? A name of someone who can help you? An opportunity to help? A resource? ASK!

Put these elements together using the following template:

"As a _____(describe yourself), I help _____ (your target audience) to _____(describe the need that you fill for your target audience) so that they _____ _____ (the benefits that they derive)".

"It would be great if we could think about/consider _____".

Write your draft pitch here:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You can refine your elevator pitch in a few ways:

- Change any long words or jargon into the language that your target audience will understand.

- Cut out unnecessary words.

- Finalise your pitch by making sure it is no more than 90 words long (excluding the last sentence on your goal from this encounter).

- Practice your pitch in front of a mirror so that you are comfortable with the message and you feel authentic when saying it.

Now you are ready to connect with the people who need you most!

Digital literacy

One way of using your elevator pitch is to create a short video of your pitch to post to your online profiles, such as on LinkedIn. You can use your smartphone or tablet to create the video; ask a friend or family member to help you with this. There are free mp4 editing tools available online, so you can remove any stutters and mistakes.

Make it count!

Transform your pitch into a 100-word biography (using third person) and insert it into your CV. Then, create a capacity statement and add it your home page or e-portfolio.

This resource was developed by Astrid Baumgardner (Yale School of Music) and Dawn Bennett (Bond University).
The digital literacy components were developed by Jo Coldwell (Deakin University).