

The basics of an elevator pitch



What is an elevator pitch?

An elevator pitch is a short summary that provides a concise overview of who you are, your unique qualities and the value you can provide to a role or organization. Think of your elevator pitch as a short, pre-scripted speech in which you “sell” yourself to others.

You might be wondering “Why is it called an elevator pitch?” Think of it this way – imagine you work in a tall office building and happen to get into the elevator on the first floor with the CEO. You have her attention the moment the doors close until they open again on the CEO’s floor and she gets out. This is a valuable opportunity that may only come once in a lifetime! What are the things you want to communicate about yourself or your unique ideas in that time? That would be your elevator pitch. (And if it’s a good one, perhaps the CEO will invite you off the elevator to continue the conversation in her office!)

Any elevator pitch, regardless of position or industry should answer four key questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What are you good at (or what do you do)?
3. What is your specific value contribution (or proposal)?
4. What are you looking for?

Example: My name is Jane Doe and I have 10 years’ experience working as a project manager, the most recent five years at XYZ Company. I have a knack for

organization and utilizing innovative technology, resulting in significant financial savings. I recently graduated from Brandman University with an MBA and am now looking to expand my scope of influence and take on more strategic type roles.

Be prepared with “Part 2” of your pitch if you are asked probing questions following your pitch. Using the above example, Jane should be prepared to provide examples of innovative technology she has leveraged as well as more details around what kind of strategic roles she is pursuing and what specific skills she has that make her qualified.

How to draft an elevator pitch

- Put together a list of 5-10 key professional accomplishments (including recognitions, certificates, etc.). You will want to focus on the most relevant and attention-grabbing accomplishment for your pitch.
- Write out how your core skills, abilities or ideas can bring value to your desired audience. This is the core of your message. Think about it as the reason why your intended audience should be paying attention to you, and what they might get out of it. Consider utilizing an example or telling the story illustrating how your unique approach made the difference in a situation.
- Be clear on what you are looking for. Is it a position you want to be considered for? Are you looking for a mentor? The more clarity you have about your ultimate goal is the higher probability you will be successful hitting your target.
- Now that you have all the key components down on paper, it's time to cut it down to the most pertinent pieces. Your pitch should be delivered with attention spans in mind! Make sure you are saying what you need to in a way that is compelling as well as concise in order to ensure the greatest impact.

Practice, practice, practice

Write your pitch down and memorize it. Practice it in front of a mirror and in front of other people. Repeat it over and over until it rolls naturally off your tongue and sounds like you are saying it in an impromptu manner.

When do I use my elevator pitch?

Of course, you can use your elevator pitch in an elevator, but you can also use it in many situations you will encounter over the course of your career. The key is to be

prepared to share it with someone at any time that opportunity may strike. Here are a few examples of opportunities you can use your new elevator pitch:

- Networking events
- Career or job fairs
- Cold calls or voicemails to employers
- Job interviews (“Tell me about yourself”)
- Social occasions (kid sporting events, plane rides, birthday parties, etc.)