

How To Write a Killer Elevator Pitch (Examples Included)

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You're on the elevator, riding up from the lobby to the top floor to drop off your resume with Human Resources in response to a job posting for your dream career.

You're excited, but nervous, because you know your resume is going to be just one of hundreds that the hiring manager is going to look over before even thinking about inviting anyone in for an interview.

If only there were a way to make yourself stand out. If only...

DING.

The doors open and a woman in a sharp looking business suit steps in with you. She looks over and sees the top floor button is already lit. She smiles and in that instant a current of nervous energy rips through your body. This isn't just any generic passenger you're sharing the ride with...this is the hiring manager you're hoping to impress!

Your heart starts pounding, your palms are sweaty, you feel light headed...

This is your chance!

You have a 12 floor uninterrupted ride up with her and in those moments, in that tiny elevator, she's your captive audience.

You open your mouth and turn to her with a look of enthusiasm...and speak.

Let's hope that elevator pitch (or elevator speech) is ready!

What Is An Elevator Pitch?

So what exactly is an elevator pitch?

In a nutshell it's just what it sounds like: a short, 30-60 second well crafted business pitch telling someone who you are and why they should want to hire you.

It's called the elevator pitch because it's meant to represent the amount of time you'd have if you were stuck in an elevator with someone riding from the bottom of the building to the top.

"Well, this stinks. I live in a town of nothing but one floor buildings. How am I supposed to use an elevator pitch? Clearly this article means nothing to someone who doesn't live in the heart of a big city or surrounded by high rise buildings."

Wrong!

Elevator speeches are good for so much more than just catching someone in a small enclosed space. You never know who you might run into at a cocktail party, or the movie theater, or grocery store...or any other number of places.

A solid elevator pitch will allow you to distill down to the most pure form exactly who you are and what you offer, and that focus can help to set you apart from all the other candidates who are vying for the same job.

Think of it as a commercial and you're the product. You've got 30 seconds to market yourself and convince whoever is listening to not only NOT change the channel, but to buy what you're selling...you as the Perfect Candidate!!

"So where do I start? Should I lock myself in the bathroom with a stopwatch and pretend it's an elevator? Do I need a jingle?"

Hmmm...all we'll say is do whatever works for you...but let's all agree to skip the singing...for now. Instead, let's focus on answering a few basic questions by doing a little pretending.

How To Write An Elevator Pitch

Let's imagine you're in sales and you just got into an elevator with the CEO of a huge manufacturing company. The doors shut...it's just the two of you...and you have 60 seconds to convince him to not only listen to you, but to consider you as a potential employee, not just a fellow passenger on a short ride upstairs. So how do you do that!?

Let's watch...er, we mean, read:

What do you do? Can you tell someone what you do in such a way that it's interesting? Can you turn it into a quick little anecdote or story that will capture someone's attention?

"Let me tell you about the time I took our products all the way to the North Pole. I'm in sales. I started out selling refrigerators to moose in Canada."

Now that we've got your job title, can you tell us what you do when you're doing what you were hired to do?

"In four short years, I've helped lead my team to the number one spot in sales..."

Okay, great...but what's next?! What's your objective? What's your goal?

"...but I knew we could do better. That's why I took our refrigerators all the way up to the penguins in the North Pole."

What makes you the best at what you do? Okay, now's your chance to shine. Why are you the Perfect Candidate?

"Did you know that broken beaks from trying to eat frozen fish is the number one problem facing penguins today? Their issue isn't that it's not cold enough for them to keep their fish fresh, it's that it's too cold. I knew that by putting their fish in our double insulated hermetically sealed refrigerators instead of the traditional snow bank, the penguins would be able to keep fish fresh longer without having to freeze them, making it easier for the penguins to eat. As a result, we've more than quadrupling our current sales and are not only ranked number one regionally, but nationally as well."

What's your hook? You've just told a great story, but besides being entertained, why should your audience care?

"Now, just imagine what I can do for your products..."

Wait, who are you? D'oh! Nothing says missed opportunity quite like totally forgetting to tell someone your name.

"My name is Bob Mackrel,"

And most importantly...what do you want?

“...and I’m looking for my next big sales challenge. May I give you my business card?”

Boom. And there you have it: the perfect (if not a little outlandish) elevator pitch. In 30 seconds you’ve told your audience what you do, why what you do is important, hooked them in with what you plan to do next for their company, and who you are.

Easy, cheesy, right?

Penguins and refrigerators aside, this pitch was clearly perfect for the audience because our boy Bob knew the CEO, knew the company, and knew that his skills with sales would be a great match. Bob tailored his pitch.

“Again with the tailoring! That’s all you guys talk about...tailoring!”

That’s because it works! Again, think of our commercial analogy. When you’re watching TV, which ads do you skip over or tune out? The ones that don’t apply to you...right? And the ones you listen to and remember are the ones that DO apply to you.

“Ahh...I see what you’re saying. That does make sense!”

The nice thing about an elevator pitch is that it’s short and sweet and to the point, which means once you get the basics figured out, you should be able to use it on just about anyone in any situation...as long as you make sure to always tailor your hook to your specific audience.

Elevator Pitch Mistakes To Avoid

So now that you know what to do in your elevator pitch, let’s quickly talk about what NOT to do.

Speaking too fast.

Yes, you only have about 60 seconds, but try to avoid cramming 15 minutes of information into one minute.

Using highly technical terms, acronyms or slang.

You want your pitch to be easily understood by any audience and that means try to avoid using words that will confuse the average person. The last thing you want is for whoever is listening to you to feel dumb. Remember, think commercial!

Not being focused.

This isn’t a general conversation and you’re not discussing the weather (unless that’s your job, in which case, never mind). Keep your pitch clear and focused.

Not practicing what you’re going to say.

First, write down your pitch. Read it over. Have your friends and family read it. Does it make sense? Make sure it flows well and that there aren’t any spots that feel rough or awkward. Then practice it. Practice it again. Keep practicing it until it becomes so easy for you to pitch that you can do it at the drop of a hat.

Being robotic.

This is all about a face to face interaction with someone you want to impress. Having an easy, approachable, conversational style to your pitch will get you much further than an overly rehearsed monologue approach.

Not having a business card or other take-away with you.

Okay, you’ve sold them on you...now how are they going to get a hold of you when they decide it’s time to bring you in? Make sure you always have something on you to pass on that will allow people to not only remember you, but contact you later on.

Not saying anything.

It does absolutely nothing for you to have a killer elevator pitch if you never use it.

Now it's your turn! Here are three example elevator pitches to get you started. Remember, these are just examples! Make sure you do the work to craft one specific to you and your audience!

3 Great Examples To Use As Inspiration

GRAPHIC DESIGNER/LOGO BRANDING SPECIALIST

Hi, I'm Pam Tone and I'm a graphic designer. Did you know it takes the average person just two seconds to look at a company logo and decide if they like it? Did you know that a badly designed logo can do irreversible damage to a company brand and that most companies go through at least three to four versions in a single year before settling on their final design, costing both time and money? Having worked for over 10 years as a professional graphic designer specializing in brand identification means I've built my reputation on the longevity of my logo designs. I can say that not only are my clients happy with what I've done for them, but my designs have gone on to win national and international logo and branding awards. I have worked hand in hand with some of the biggest advertising agencies and companies and out of over 300 contracts, have had only one logo changed, and that was as a result of a merger, not poor design. I'd like to bring that award winning history to your company. Would you be willing to meet with me for 20 minutes to go over my portfolio and see how I can help make sure your logo properly reflects your brand?

TEACHER/EDUCATOR

Can I tell you about my toughest teaching experience? I was assigned to a school which was located in what can only be described as the middle of nowhere. There was one road into town and one road out and it took four hours to get to anywhere bigger. I was brought in to help teach a class that had consistently scored in the lowest percentile in state and national tests. As a result, the students had a reputation for being less than smart, and most were dropping out before they even got to their junior year. When I got there, I realized it wasn't that the students lacked intelligence, they lacked resources! Their textbooks were outdated, the library was almost bare and most students had never even been on the internet, much less owned a computer. Between petitioning local government and organizing several bake sales and charity fundraisers, I was able to raise enough money to get the school equipped with high speed internet as well as purchase several new computers for the library. Now those students are not only scoring in the top percentile, but the dropout rate has fallen to almost zero and they have record numbers of students graduating and going onto college. Hi, I'm Mary Marm and I want to bring that same enthusiasm and drive to my next teaching position. May I give you my resume?

MOBILE APP DEVELOPER

Hi, I'm Chip Ohm and I'm a developer. Did you know one of the biggest challenges facing companies these days is tracking employee work time? Of course, when you have a building where your employees are required to clock in and out it makes things easier, but what about employees who work from home or are on the road? I've come up with an easy way for both employees and employers to log and keep track of hours using just their cell phones and an app I've designed. The app allows employees to log in from wherever they are and input their start and stop times at the push of a button. You don't even need to be in an area with a signal. The program captures all the data and holds it in a file which is then automatically uploaded to the employer's servers as soon as the user is back in signal range. The system is not only simple, but it's tamper proof. Not only has this app helped streamline the timecard process for remote employees, but it's reduced timecard inconsistencies and paycheck errors by 90%, saving both time and money. So, how does your company handle logging in hours for your remote clients?

So there you have it! Now that you've read through this article and seen a few examples, it's time to craft your own elevator pitch. Remember, keep it simple, keep it short, and keep it tailored.

And as always...good luck!

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