**The Elevator Pitch**

The elevator pitch is the most powerful and concise description you can devise of you, your organisation, or your products boiled down to 25 to 35 words. It is based on the idea that you have a chance meeting with an important person who you wish to influence and engage with, in a lift (an elevator). You have maybe five floors worth of 'elevator time' to make to make your pitch!

**What is the purpose of the elevator pitch?**

Elevator pitches are developed to relay just enough information to cause the person you are talking with to say "Tell me more." If you're lucky, this senior colleague will respond with "If you have a few minutes, I want to hear more." If you're even luckier, the prominent Professor will ask you to set up an appointment the next day to meet. All this from the development and rapid adaptation of a few simple yet powerful words.

Building an elevator pitch consists of three steps:

**Step 1: The five W's**

**Step 2: Iterating**

**Step 3: Adjusting to your audience**

**Step 1: The five W's**

The first step is to develop answers to the following questions:

1. What does your organisation do? (For example, begin your answer with "We provide..."))
2. Whom does your organisation do it for? (For example, begin your answer with "For small and medium sized healthcare providers..."))
3. Why do they care? What's in it for them? (For example, include in your answer "so that they can...") "who can no longer afford..." or "who are tired of...")
4. Why is your organisation different? (For example, begin your answer with "Uniquely...", "As opposed to...") or "Unlike...")
5. What is your organisation? (For example, begin your answer with "I work at a research intensive University, specialising in...")

**Optional W's**

In some cases, it may be important to develop answers to questions about other aspects of you, your organisation, or your products that can help lead to that all-important "tell me more" request:

- What environment is your organisation operating in? (For example, begin your answer with "my organisation is focussed on supporting Universities respond to changes in Government funding for Research.")
- What single thing does your organisation do better than anyone else? (Perhaps begin your answer with "My organisation is widely seen as ...")
Examples of Pitches

Proseware Ltd: "For companies requiring compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley, Proseware is a custom financial software developer providing consulting and software solutions in half the time so that you can sleep at night again." (31 words)

John Smith: "I graduated from Cambridge University with a First in Microbiology. I recently started my PhD researching the influence of algae on prolonging the life span and increasing the population of bottlenose dolphins." (32 words)

Step 2: Iterating

It looks simple, but the hard part is getting your elevator pitch to contain 35 words or less. Keep editing it; rehearsing it; practicing it by saying it to your partner, your friends, and people inside and outside your organisation.

Make sure that they get your elevator pitch. Smile when they ask, "What do you mean by...?" or "Does that mean you can help me to...?"

Keep improving your elevator pitch until it becomes routine for you to say and crystal clear for your audience to understand. Like a fine wine, it can only improve with age, and you will feel much more confident and relaxed when using it.

Examples of answers

Proseware Ltd: "With the spotlight on public companies and the severe penalties for noncompliance, Proseware's customised compliance solutions, delivered in less than half the usual time, let you get a good night's sleep." (31 words)

John Smith: "Bottlenose dolphins depend heavily on algae for survival. Having just graduated from Cambridge, I'll be one of three researchers worldwide helping to prolong the dolphins' life span and population through this important research." (32 words)

Step 3: Adjusting to your audience

Every audience is different. You wouldn't tell your daughter's 4th year class: "I design J2EE software applications to deliver SOA for FTSE100 companies." So make sure that your terminology and your acronyms fit your audience members. Keep your elevator pitch at their level.

Examples of answers to those with no more than a general knowledge of your specialism

Proseware Ltd: "In the aftermath of some of the recent accounting scandals, Proseware helps companies make sure that they are following the law. No one else can help them comply as fast as Proseware can." (33 words)

John Smith: "Bottlenose dolphins need a certain algae to survive. I'm going to follow up my Cambridge degree with research to find out how this algae helps dolphins live longer and increase their numbers." (32 words)

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