



How to Design and Deliver a Compelling Elevator Speech

Tips 1 through 10

Most people assume the elevator speech—your answer to “What do you do?”—is used only for networking, when a good elevator speech should serve as an organization’s core business story. Everything you say and write stems from these few words to reinforce the organization’s key value and message.

Here are some of the many examples of how your elevator speech influences your marketing and communication materials:

- *Presentation*: on the cover page
- *Press Releases*: in the about us section at the bottom
- *Sales*: cold call scripts
- *Web site*: on the home page
- *Conferences*: on the booth display and brochures
- *Networking*: all forms (e.g., at events, internal, and client-based)
- *LinkedIn*: professional headline and summary paragraph
- *Referrals*: what a person says/writes about you to a colleague

Key objectives of your core business story:

- ✓ Generate interest and engage your audience
- ✓ Reinforce your organization’s value
- ✓ Get people to take the right actions

Follow these 10 tips to achieve the results you want:

1. **Grabs ‘em Right Away**

Start your elevator speech with a compelling headline like broadcasters and journalists. After all, what catches your attention when reading or listening to the news? Elmer Wheeler, of the famed phrase, “Don’t sell the steak, sell the sizzle,” said it best: “Your first ten words are more important than your next ten thousand!”

2. **Just One**

Ensure that your organization has only one standard elevator speech. Whether you work for a small startup, a Federal agency, or a Fortune 500 company, your organization has only one core story. As your website greets every visitor with one message, so too should all of your marketing and communication materials.

3. Minimize the Jargon

Minimize the use of jargon in your elevator speech to make it more understandable to more people. A well-crafted elevator speech raises the level of communication to make your products and services desirable to your audience. You need to be understood to get people to say, “I need your products/services.”

4. Start with “We”

Begin with “we” rather than “I.” “We” immediately indicates there is an established organization behind you. “We” conveys a team and collaborative approach. “We” also breaks the habit of using “I” in our daily language.

5. No Names Please

Omit your name and your organization’s name. A compelling elevator speech whets the audience’s mental appetite. As you only have a very small window for your answer (30 seconds or less), names of any kind take up valuable time and space. Leave the names for the conversation that follows.

6. Easy to Listen to/Easy to Read

Use short sentences and short words. Your words will be clearer and more memorable. Microsoft® Word has a tool that measures “readability” called The Flesch Reading Ease index. The *Write for Readability* tip guide (see below) walks you through the easy setup.

7. Passes the Quiz

Write simply. Most magazines write below the 10th grade level—we suggest you do the same. Microsoft® Word has a tool that measures “understanding” called The Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level. The *Write for Readability* tip guide (see below) walks you through the easy setup.

8. Not Too Wordy

Limit your elevator speech to 100 words. Television and radio companies have figured out that 30 seconds is the maximum length for an advertisement. Spoken in a normal conversational voice, a 30 second elevator speech is 100 words long.

9. Excite Me

Infuse your message with passion. People make decisions based on emotion and justify with logic. People that are emotionally invested are more likely to continue the conversation, request more information, or ask to be contacted.

10. Pique My Interest

Use words that immediately resonate with your listeners and readers. The best litmus test to determine if your elevator speech has a high “Tell me more!” score is if people interrupt you with what we call “interest” questions. They are asked when you pique the listener’s curiosity. “Understanding” questions are asked when a person needs clarification. Ensure that your core story is written from the “it’s all about them” perspective.

Consider Adding these Tip Guides to Your Library

- *How to Design and Deliver a Compelling Elevator Speech: Tips 11 through 20* (Tip Guide 01-045)
- *Make a Great First Impression: Conversation Starters for New Networkers 1* (Tip Guide 02-002)
- *Chess Grand Master: Deliberately Develop a Target Relationship Plan (TRP)* (Tip Guide 02-012)
- *Write for Readability: Get Your Message Heard and Read by Writing to the 10th Grade Level* (Tip Guide 06-015)

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info@thechiefstoryteller.com or +1 (301) 718 - 8368



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