

Why is an Elevator Speech Important?

Let's suppose that – completely by accident – you meet a potential employer in an elevator on the 25th floor. She asks you what you do. You have an opportunity to give it your best shot before getting to the ground floor where you both get off. If you have a polished elevator speech, then by the time you arrive at the lobby she will know everything of importance about you and your skills and why she and her organization should consider bringing you on board.

The elevator speech is a concise explanation of who you are and what you do that can be given quickly enough that you have made all key points in the time it would take an elevator to travel from the top floor to the bottom floor of your average Washington area high-rise.

You can also use your elevator speech as the basis for your next job interview, where you'll have much more than 30 seconds to tell your story, but still need to be organized, focused, compelling, impressive and memorable.

Important Topics for an Elevator Speech

What things do you need to cover in your personal elevator speech? Briefly, you need to introduce yourself in memorable fashion, emphasize the benefits you provide or the solutions you offer, showcase your uniqueness to set yourself apart from the competition and set the stage to build a new relationship.

Craig Harrison, a California corporate trainer specializing in communications skills and author of "Ride Your Elevator Speech to the Top," says your elevator speech can be just a few sentences long and change slightly every time you give it. "Script it, rehearse it and hone it over months of delivery among friends," he advises. "The goal is to stand out from the crowd, so be memorable."

The Three P's

So how do you make yourself stand out from the competition? Carole Martin, monster.com's Interview Coach, says your elevator speech should cover the "3 P's" of personal marketing: the skills you learned through previous experience and education; the skills you bring with you to any job (transferable or portable skills); and personal traits/passions, those things that make you who you are.

For example, if you are looking for a job in marketing, your elevator speech should touch on your previous experience: marketing knowledge, communications skills, vendor management, press and industry relations, web channel marketing, product development and computer skills.

You should also cover your portable skills: customer focus, communications, writing skills, very organized, good at coordinating, team leader, problem solving, project management, excellent follow through, good with budgets and numbers and time management.

Finally, don't neglect your strong personal traits: You're a self-starter, independent, friendly, well-organized, quick learner, have good judgment, a good attitude, are creative, analytical, flexible, have a good sense of humor, and are results-oriented.

Preparing for the Ups and Downs of a Job Search

As a job seeker, your personal elevator speech -- your 30-second sound bite -- can be a key tool in helping you land your next job. Thirty seconds is all the time you need to make a favorable first impression. Capitalizing on a chance encounter with a corporate executive, a hiring manager or recruiter can open the door to a new career.

And remember, you don't have to be in an elevator to use your elevator speech: standing in line for a movie or concert, traveling on METRO, attending a networking event, trade show or convention. These days, you have to make the most of every opportunity to tell the world about your career aspirations and unique qualifications.

Remember: The job search process is not about you, it's about what potential employers would want to know about you.

(Question: What's the most popular radio station in the US? Answer: WII-FM - WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME!!!)



Developing an Elevator Speech

You are searching for a new job. The person responsible for hiring at the company or organization you want to work for more than anywhere else— your dream job— suddenly steps into an elevator with you. Imagine that you are the only two people there, and you have less than 30 seconds to convince this person you are the one for the job. What do you say?

The “elevator pitch” is a crucial piece of your personal marketing, and should be used any time you meet someone who may be able to help with your job search.

*Use this worksheet as a framework to help develop your story.
Remember to cover the 3 Ps – Passion, Previous experience, and Portable/transferable skills.*

My career interest/dream is:

I am passionate about this area/industry because:

My related experiences, relevant education or credentials for this field include:

My portable/transferable skills and personal assets (gained through any of your life experiences) related to this field are:

End with what you would like to have happen as next steps (although the ideal would be to get the job offer, the goal is to be able to continue the conversation from here):

Write an outline or full script of what you would actually say, and practice saying it.