

How Your Elevator Pitch Can Boost Your Networking Skills

Networking is all about making it easier for people to recommend one another. It is not about selling directly to the person you've just met—few people go to a networking event to buy. Most, in fact, go to sell themselves.

Your objective has to be to encourage those you meet to believe in you as a professional and refer you to others. This enables you to gain something from meeting people not in a position to buy from you, improves your success rate tenfold if they recommend you to ten people and builds your network of weak ties, if you then use social media to keep in touch with them.

Your elevator pitch is your verbal business card. It's the way you introduce yourself to others and sell yourself effectively at a networking event. The elevator pitch is so called because it has to be very concise, short enough in fact to be delivered in a lift before the person you've bumped into gets out on the tenth floor.

As with so much of selling, your elevator pitch has to quickly and effectively communicate what you want the person you've just met to know about you and what you do, think how this might be useful to them or others in the future, and do as a result of meeting you.

More often than not, you deliver your elevator pitch by way of introduction and setting the scene for the conversation that follows.

Start with your name—and repeat it again at the end of your pitch

If someone's listening carefully to what you say, they may well forget your name before you finish. Saying it at both the start and finish makes it easy for them to pick up the conversation with a question.

Say what you do

For many people, this is still surprisingly difficult to do. That's because they describe their role in too much detail. Just say what you do and keep it simple.

Describe why you're different

This is really important because it's where you differentiate yourself from others who do similar things. For example, if you work at a real estate company, you might specialise in luxury apartments. If you are a manager in a large organisation, you might also have an MBA or be a chartered manager.

Say what you are looking for or offering

Always end with a request for help (or how you can help) that is realistic and not a direct

sales pitch to the person you're talking to. The real estate agent might say, "I'm looking for more groups to talk to about how I can help them get the best exclusive real estate investment, and I don't mind speaking at a short notice."

Remember to also contain a benefit in your pitch. The real estate agent is willing to talk at short notice. This means that, when people hear of a speaker having to cancel somewhere, they will be more likely to recommend them.

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