

The PERFECT PITCH



WITH JUST ONE
MINUTE, YOU
CAN TAKE YOUR
CAREER TO THE
NEXT LEVEL

BY MARIBETH GUNNER PULLIAM

HAVE A MINUTE? That's all you need to deliver an effective elevator speech, a personal branding statement that highlights your professional background, knowledge, and skills. Typically no more than 30–60 seconds, it quickly and clearly identifies who you are, why you are unique, and what benefits you can offer—in short, why you are the ideal candidate for a desired position. ►

A well-honed elevator speech can leave a memorable first impression and open the door to your next job or career.

The term “elevator speech” earned its moniker based upon the scenario of a chance meeting in an elevator in which you encounter a key individual who could be the conduit for your next job or career. How would you best promote your exceptional value to this captive audience while sharing a short elevator ride to the top floor?

Being prepared with a polished elevator speech is a perfect way to spotlight your experience, skills, and accomplishments anytime, anywhere—not just in an elevator. This persuasive pitch is a useful, versatile job search and networking tool that can be leveraged in a variety of settings. Professionally, it can be used when meeting with leadership in the workplace, conversing at networking events, or introducing yourself at a job interview. Personally, there are also ample opportunities to use your speech through casual conversations at the gym, kids’ sports events, or at a neighborhood gathering. Your personal infomercial can be used with virtually any individual who may have the ability to assist you in landing the perfect position.

Before you can soundly convince someone that you are the ideal candidate, you’ll need to prepare. Use these tips to help craft a successful, customized elevator speech:

▶ Know yourself. Draft an inventory of your best personal attributes, key strengths, and accomplishments. Define what contributions you can make, and what problems you can solve.

▶ Identify your unique selling proposition. Determine your competitive advantage in the workplace. What do you offer that others do not?

▶ Know your purpose. What is your goal? Are you seeking a new job, changing careers, or in search of advancement?

▶ Tailor your speech. Focus your message on the needs of the potential employer or targeted industry. Your audience will want to know what’s in it for them.

▶ Format your speech. Draft a written version, using these suggested guidelines:

- ▶ Introduce yourself. Identify your current field and/or position.
- ▶ Explain why you are interested in the company or industry.
- ▶ Illustrate your unique selling points, your strengths, experience, education, and proven accomplishments. Describe how these will benefit the employer.
- ▶ Wrap up your speech with a call to action. Express your purpose in relaying your information, be it a request for a referral, a future meeting, or a job interview.
- ▶ Provide your contact information and thank them for their time.

▶ Practice. Read your pitch aloud. Your delivery should be natural, conversational, and sincere. Try rehearsing in front of a mirror, or with a friend or family member. Ensure your speech is within the 30–60-second parameter.



A well-honed elevator speech can leave a memorable first impression and open the door to your next job or career. Be ready with your elevator speech when the opportunity presents itself. Remember, too, as your career progresses, you’ll want to update your speech to reflect your most current experience and credentials. ■

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