

6 Steps to Elevator Pitch Stardom

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Imagine stepping into an elevator and sharing a ride with someone who has the power to change your life. The key holder to the doors of success, sales, ... for you, your team, your company, is standing right there beside you. So close you get the whiff of their expensive cologne. The two of you are alone, this is your big chance, you have 1 minute before they step out and disappear, either forever or until next week's meeting and presentation which you have just secured in that short time in the lift.



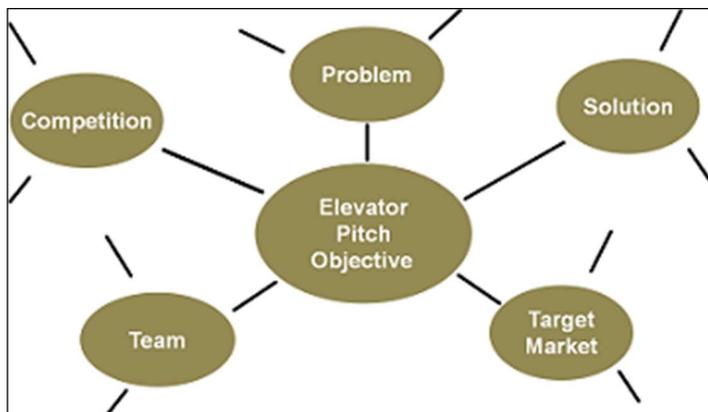
This scenario may seem far-fetched but the reality is that the key holders are the successful ones and the successful ones are busy. There will be times and places - it doesn't always happen in an elevator - in our lives when we are given an opportunity to sell ourselves, our product, service or idea in a very short time and often unexpectedly. What we say and how we deliver it is known as the elevator pitch and everyone who wants to get ahead should have one. Follow these 6 steps to create your own great elevator pitch:

1. Set an objective

Ask yourself what you want your VIP to do after you part. We don't become great presenters overnight, the 5 points that follow this one show that there is quite a bit of preparation needed, and to ensure you get off to a good start and you are headed in the right direction you need a clear, active, next step objective. It could be something like *I will interest them enough that they give me their business card, and motivate them to commit to holding a 30 minute meeting within 2 weeks*. Keep your objective challenging but achievable. Once it is in place you are ready for the second step.

2. Mind map your pitch

This is the creative bit so don't write. Draw! Not to mention the fact that most of us are visual learners, the mind map



also triggers our creativity and allows us to use different thinking patterns. The mind mapping process in its simplest form can be considered a linear or step by step process:

- i. Take a blank piece of paper
 - ii. Write your objective in the middle of the page and circle it
 - iii. Draw out the rest of your mind map
- Step iii. is a little more complicated than the first two; it requires and promotes more of a systemic thinking pattern. Whereas the linear orientation is an analytical

process, approaching problems by looking at individual components in a step by step way and mapping the cause and effect relationship between them, a systemic - sometimes called holistic - thinking pattern adopts a broader, big picture approach. Systemic thinking focuses on the relationships between components and the likely impact caused

by interrelated ideas. It is a thought process which is needed the higher you move up the career ladder, for those working in more complex roles. Mind mapping a process provides you with a systemic, bigger picture of all of your ideas/options and their interrelatedness. It is a great tool for helping you plan your elevator pitch content.

3. Write a persuasive and exciting script

With your mind map completed, you already have a visual plan of your elevator pitch. It is time to put your ideas on paper. Maybe you will have mapped out your elevator pitch to include some of the following:

- the problem that your product, service or idea is addressing
- your solution to this problem
- the market that your solution is targeting
- your team and what makes them stand out or, if it is only you, then your USP (Unique Selling Point)
- your competition and what makes you a better choice
- build credibility by highlighting any early successes or testimonials

Decide on a time, for example 1 minute (but consider also the possibility of having a shorter or longer time to pitch) and then start writing and see where it takes you. You can also try to be a little persuasive; read "Influence - The Psychology of Persuasion" by Cialdini for more tips or check out [this video](#) to discover "7 words that change minds". You can also incorporate things like lists, repetition, tripling and rhetorical questions. Persuasion means different things to different cultures - what works in the West may not work in the East and vice-versa, check out [this article](#) for more on that. Whatever techniques you use, remember to keep it personal and real.

4. Consider your visual delivery

The words that we use are important - the "what" we say, but our delivery - the "how" we say it, is even more important. One of Cialdini's 6 laws of persuasion is the law of liking, we can be more persuasive if people like us, and when meeting someone for the first time we can adopt a more likable manner through careful use of our body or voice. In many instances, you will want to start your pitch with positive facial expressions or a smile. But again be aware of different cultural expectations. One of the reasons cited for Walmark's entry failure into Germany was the smiling and overzealous greeting that the German workers were told to communicate to the arriving customers. It had worked in the USA but the Germans didn't like it, suggesting that a more serious tone may be required when pitching to Germans than Americans.

Whatever way you decide to use your body, you must consider the 4 different areas of visual communication: facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and what you do with your body. It is essential to start your pitch confidently and this means planning how you will use your body at the beginning. So practice and perfect those first 5 seconds of delivery and get used to using your body as a means of leveraging your pitch and making it more powerful.



Gesturing can be a great way to emphasise or strengthen your message. But again, become aware of cultural differences and expectations - you may need to shift your style in a country like Italy, where using your hands more will demonstrate your greater emotion or interest in whatever it is you are selling, but tone it down somewhere like Japan where lots of gesturing may indicate dishonesty and a lack of composure.

5. Consider your vocal delivery

There are lots of ways you can use your voice to be more likeable and persuasive. Pausing and stressing are two ways of adding emphasis to a particular word or combination of words. It is also a lot easier to stress a word when you use your hands at the same time. Try putting stress on the word “huge” in the sentence “It will make a **huge** difference” while moving your arms wide apart. Now try again but work on adding a short pause before and after “huge”.

Which vocal skill is absolutely essential for a successful elevator pitch? The one which if not done well will definitely lead to a failed pitch is volume. You need to be loud enough that the VIP can hear your pitch - but they shouldn't be straining so add a little bit more volume, this will also help you come across as being more assertive. Of course, in an elevator it shouldn't be too difficult to make yourself heard, but on the street, on the subway or in a noisy room it could be a different story, so make sure you have volume. And some other areas of vocal communication to consider: intonation, tone, speed, pronunciation and rhythm.

6. Rehearse, Record, Review

So now you've got to put it all together. The best thing you can do is practise, practise and practise some more, and while you are doing that record yourself. Then listen and watch it back, consider everything I have talked about in points 3, 4 and 5 and make some changes. Have friends or colleagues observe as you practice your delivery and ask them directed questions. “What do you think of the content? How about my delivery? Is the speed right or should I slow down? Should I add more emotion or use more gestures? At which point?” Have them give you some feedback. Practise, record and review until you have it perfected - the total time you should spend on this for a 1 minute pitch could be 2 to 3 hours or more.



Naturally, following these 6 steps will help you create a great elevator pitch but these skills can also be applied to much longer and more formal presentations. Of course, then you will need to prepare yourself for other challenges, such as question handling, but the foundation will have been laid.