



A JOB SEEKER'S GUIDE TO ELEVATOR PITCHING

THE ORIGINAL ELEVATOR PITCH



by Megan Alyse Hanson - February 2015 - 2ND Edition



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THE ORIGINAL ELEVATOR PITCH

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THE ORIGINAL ELEVATOR PITCH

At its core, the elevator pitch is a way to seize opportunities. The ability to quickly, concisely, and clearly summarize your ideas is an indispensable skill for anyone hoping to communicate their value as an individual or the value of their idea, product, service, organization etc.

INCAE has composed blueprints to guide you through assembling your own elevator pitch.

With a winning message being one of the most effective methods available to reach potential recruiters, buyers or clients, we challenge you to expand your knowledge of the elevator pitch with this e-book, and start practicing yours today.



I. A BRIEF HISTORY

It is not clear where the term elevator pitch came from – some believe it was coined by Vanity Fair editors, Ilene Rosenzweig and Michael Caruso¹. Others maintain that it became standard practice at the start of the Hollywood motion picture industry when screenwriters eagerly sought opportunities to pitch their stories to executive producers on the way up to their offices².

Whatever the origins, it is based on a scenario in which a person steps onto an elevator occupied by a highly influential individual affording them a **small window of time (30 seconds to 2 minutes) to deliver a captivating summary** of their idea before the individual steps out onto their floor.



SUMMARY
OF AN IDEA



0.5 – 2
MINUTES



*The elevator pitch has many precedents, the most notable being Dale Carnegie's 1936 book *How to Win Friends & Influence People*. Carnegie, the grandfather of professional self-improvement strategies, offers some general tips on interpersonal and professional practices.*



¹Elevator Pitch," Wikipedia, last modified January 27, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Style_guide

²Chris Westfall - The Story of YOU: Secrets of a GREAT Elevator Pitch," YouTube video, 47:42, posted by "GriggsCenter." May 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7FYli5nOeg>

I. A BRIEF HISTORY

The basics are as follows, taken straight from *Dale Carnegie's book*:

Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

1. Don't criticize, condemn, or complain.
2. Give honest and sincere appreciation.
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want.



Dale Carnegie's guide



Fundamental
Techniques in
Handling People



Six Ways to Make
People Like You



Twelve Ways to
Win People to
Your Way of
Thinking

I. A BRIEF HISTORY

Six Ways to Make People Like You

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile
3. Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interest.



Dale Carnegie's guide



Fundamental
Techniques in
Handling People



Six Ways to Make
People Like You



Twelve Ways to
Win People to
Your Way of
Thinking

I. A BRIEF HISTORY

Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

1. The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it.
2. Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say "You're Wrong."
3. If you're wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.
4. Begin in a friendly way.
5. Start with questions to which the other person will answer yes.
6. Let the other person do a great deal of the talking.
7. Let the other person feel the idea is his or hers.
8. Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.
9. Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires.
10. Appeal to the nobler motives.
11. Dramatize your ideas.
12. Throw down a challenge.³



Dale Carnegie's guide



Fundamental
Techniques in
Handling People



Six Ways to Make
People Like You



Twelve Ways to
Win People to
Your Way of
Thinking



³ "How To Win Friends & Influence People," Wikipedia, last modified January 29, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_to_Win_Friends_and_Influence_People

I. A BRIEF HISTORY

Although Carnegie created this list almost a century ago, it has maintained its relevance over time, and professionals consider it a useful tool for guiding interactions even today.

Some of these guidelines can also be employed in pitching, while others are more relevant to the opportunities that might follow a successful pitch.



Dale Carnegie's guide



Fundamental
Techniques in
Handling People



Six Ways to Make
People Like You



Twelve Ways to
Win People to
Your Way of
Thinking

II. THE OBJECTIVE

Before we start let's consolidate our terms. We all know pitching is a vehicle for promoting ideas, products, services, organizations and companies etc., but moving forward we will limit our pitching examples to job seekers.

“

However, the ideas presented in this e-book can be applied to anything you wish to promote.

”



II. THE OBJECTIVE

The **objective of the elevator pitch** is to make a positive connection with your listener. A successful pitch is one that leaves the listener interested in maintaining a future connection with you. You should not necessarily seek to prompt immediate action toward your cause, but to offer something so engaging that it invites a longer conversation⁴.

Forbes describes a job seeker's elevator pitch as a substantiation of your competence and a clarification of your job target⁵. It is essentially a short broadcast that does not go into too much depth, but still highlights a person's strengths and goals. Your elevator pitch should be crafted with this immediate goal in mind.



⁴ "The purpose of a pitch isn't necessarily to move others immediately to adopt your idea. The purpose is to offer something so compelling that it begins a conversation, brings the other person in as a participant and eventually arrives at an outcome that appeals to both of you." Daniel H. Pink "Pitch," in *To Sell Is Human*, (London: Penguin, 2012), 119-140.

⁵ Nancy Collamer, "The Perfect Elevator Pitch To Land A Job," *Forbes*(blog), February 4, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2013/02/04/the-perfect-elevator-pitch-to-land-a-job/>

III. YOUR PITCH BLUEPRINT

So how do you begin to draft your own elevator pitch? Every elevator pitch should address these five basic questions⁶:

- ✓ Who are you and what do you do?
- ✓ What are your professional or personal skills or strengths?
- ✓ What are you passionate about?
- ✓ What are your goals?
- ✓ What is your value proposition?



⁶ The elevator pitch is all about showing employers what you bring to the table – what you can do for them. In short, you want to explain: (1) who you are (2) what you are great at and passionate about, and (3) how your strengths will value a potential employer.” Amanda Augustine, “How to Pitch Your Value: Dissecting the Elevator Pitch,” The Ladders (blog), November 14, 2012, <http://info.theladders.com/blog/bid/164239/How-to-Pitch-Your-Value-Dissecting-the-Elevator-Pitch>





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1. WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

The answer to this question seems deceptively straightforward. It could be as simple as a name and job title, but a dry response will not make your listener want to know more. A study by Amy Wrzesniewski⁷, a professor at Yale University, identified three types of responses to this question, and we have crafted a few examples using her template. Which one sounds best to you?



1. WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

Job Answer: *I work in sales for an industrial safety equipment manufacturer.*

Career Answer: *In 5 years I have become a lead sales representative for an industrial safety equipment manufacturer.*

Calling Answer: *I have dedicated the last 5 years to improving people's safety as lead sales representative for an industrial safety equipment manufacturer.*

You are right if you thought the calling answer was the most compelling. The job answer is not engaging, and while the career answer is an improvement, it lacks a humanizing element (i.e. improving people's safety). The calling answer not only clarifies what you do, it addresses the bigger picture of your career and adds context to your work. Leading into an elevator pitch by connecting what you do to a greater calling peaks listener's interest. As Carnegie wrote, you have to "appeal to nobler motives."



⁷ "The Best Recruiter at Google | Talent Connect San Francisco 2014," YouTube video, 35:09, Posted by "LinkedIn Talent Solutions," October 23, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvebAGerh88>

WARNING: common pitfalls ⁸ when drafting lead-ins are statements that are too...

Unfocused. If you do many different things and have trouble fitting them into a cohesive statement, just focus on one or two.

Vague. Specificity is key. Note the difference between: “I help IT Consultants market themselves,” and “I help IT Consultants make their services sound attractive to customers through digital ads.”

Romanticized. Do not heroicize your job so much that the listener is confused about what you do. Does this seem straightforward to you? “I help busy professionals live pain-free lives so that they can get back to work,” –Physical Therapist. ⁹



⁸ Richard White, “The elevator pitch – how to avoid the 7 biggest mistakes,” The Accidental Salesman (blog), accessed January 24, 2015, <http://www.theaccidentalsalesman.com/generating-sales-leads/business-networking/the-elevator-pitch-how-to-avoid-the-7-biggest-mistakes#sthash.CDdsLvvd.dpuf>

⁹ Deborah Grayson Riegel, “The problem with your elevator pitch—and how to fix it,” The Fast Company (blog), January 7, 2013, <http://www.fastcompany.com/3004484/problem-your-elevator-pitch-and-how-fix-it>



2. WHAT ARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL SKILLS OR STRENGTHS?

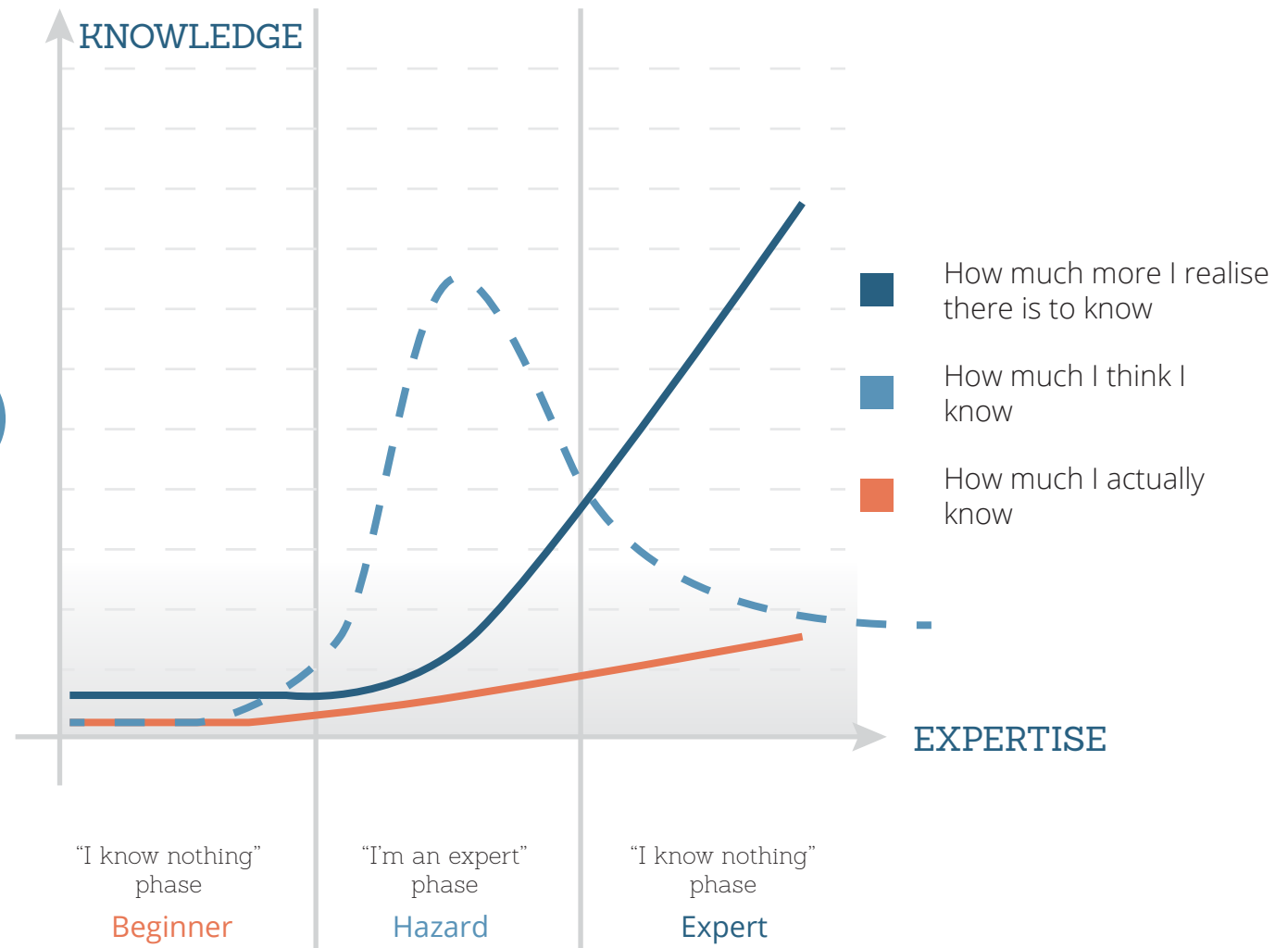
As Forbes cleverly puts it: pitch listeners will be tuned into **WIIFM (What's in It For Me?)**, so it is critical to use benefit-focused terms to convince them that you have the skills and abilities to get the job done. However, this topic requires tricky maneuvering between declaring your expertise and illustrating it in a meaningful way.

2. WHAT ARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL SKILLS OR STRENGTHS?

Lazlo Bock, Senior Vice President of People Operations at Google, has stated that their main criteria for potential hires is that they demonstrate intellectual humility; candidates that illustrate, rather than declare.¹⁰



An interesting visualization of this concept is a chart from author and CMO of Extreme Networks, Vala Afshar:



¹⁰ "The Best Recruiter at Google | Talent Connect San Francisco 2014," YouTube video, 35:09, Posted by "LinkedIn Talent Solutions," October 23, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvebAGerh88>



2. WHAT ARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL SKILLS OR STRENGTHS?

The chart depicts the progression to developing intellectual humility. In the Beginner Phase a person may lack confidence due to lack of experience; they can not deliver a compelling pitch. In the Hazard Phase a person over-compensates with so much confidence they are likely perceived as arrogant. But notice how the Expert Phase is confident in what they know, but

aware of the knowledge and work experience that they lack. This balance will translate as humility if the pitcher shows the listener what they know, rather than resorting to telling them.

One way to tackle the question, what are your skills/strengths? is the PAR strategy:

Problem, Action, Result ¹¹.



¹¹ Bo Burch, "Job Seekers: Articulate Your Value Proposition With Par's (Problem, Action, Results)," Evan Carmichael (blog), Accessed on: February 6, 2014, <http://www.evancarmichael.com/Human-Resources/2869/Job-Seekers-Articulate-Your-Value-Proposition-with-PARs-Problem-Action-Results.html>



2. WHAT ARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL SKILLS OR STRENGTHS?

Problem, Action, Result

This template will help you illustrate the abilities you're proud of and avoid a list of assertions. The following is a PAR, situational example from a job seeker in Customer Service:

WARNING: Avoid technical jargon, it can confuse your listener and muddle your message¹². Convey your PAR example and additional explanations regarding your abilities in terms that any listener could understand.



- **Problem:** *There were several communication breakdowns between customer service and production when the customer service department moved to the corporate offices.*
- **Action:** *I initiated a plan for weekly plant visits with the Director of customer service to discuss service issues, repairs, and returns.*
- **Result:** *Communication was restored and information lines were set-up that eliminated our offsite issues and reduced warranty use rates from 15.3% to 5%.*



¹² Nancy Collamer, "The Perfect Elevator Pitch To Land A Job," Forbes(blog), February 4, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2013/02/04/the-perfect-elevator-pitch-to-land-a-job/>



3. WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

Don't forget that you introduced your passion or nobler motive at the beginning of your pitch. As you go into the details of what you are innately passionate about, make sure that it correlates with what you mentioned in your lead-in. For example:



3. WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

As a Job Search Specialist and Career Coach I help people get the jobs that they want. For more than ten years, I've worked with a web-based, career matching service to educate and prepare millions of professionals for the job-search process through the development of coaching programs, live recruiting events and online advice in my weekly column. I've dedicated almost 3 years to testing various techniques to identify the best ways to navigate the job search landscape in today's marketplace. My passion is empowering job seekers to find the right job, sooner. ¹³



¹³ Amanda Augustine, "How to Pitch Your Value: Dissecting the Elevator Pitch," The Ladders (blog), November 14, 2012, <http://info.theladders.com/blog/bid/164239/How-to-Pitch-Your-Value-Dissecting-the-Elevator-Pitch>





3. WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

If your field is not directly service oriented you could also frame your passions like the following examples:

It was during my time at a start-up that I discovered my motivation for using technology to find solutions to complex problems.

My passion for marketing and fundraising developed while participating in a walk for cancer - I saw the impact that fundraising and marketing could have.

I originally became passionate about sustainability while interning at a water conservationist organization in Latin America.

WARNING: Be careful not to name a passion that detracts from your message. If you are really passionate about art, but you're seeking a position in accounting, it may be wise to discuss a more relevant passion.





4. WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

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By first establishing what your passions are, you can transition seamlessly into your goals. Goals should be concrete, clear, and realistic. Include a timeline when possible. You are responsible for figuring out the best way to describe the type of position you are pursuing and it should be readily apparent to the listener what you are asking of him or her. Let's use an example from above:



Passion: *I originally became passionate about sustainability while interning at a water conservationist organization in Latin America.*



Goal: *I believe I would be a good fit in a company whose culture aligns with the principles of sustainable development.*

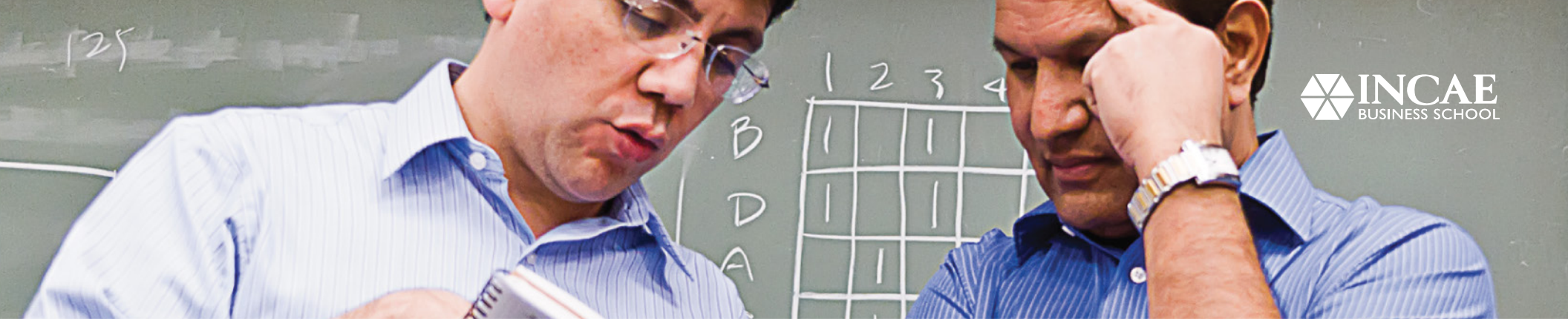


5. WHAT IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION?

How can you add value to a potential employer or company? This idea is closely related to your professional or personal strengths and skills. Summarize and reiterate the strengths and skills that make you an asset:

As a graduate of INCAE, I have gained a more profound understanding of sales as well as developed a strong professional network throughout Latin America. I know that my connections will be a great asset to your sales department as you expand your territory. I don't know if that is something that you would be interested in discussing with me further, but let me give you my business card.





5. WHAT IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION?

Lastly, identify your low-risk-next-step. Depending on the context of your interaction, you may not want to immediately request a sit-down meeting. Imagine you met a person you wanted to date: you might not invite them to dinner on the spot, but you could ask for their phone number. So assess your listener, always have business cards handy, and don't be afraid to clarify an appropriate means to follow-up. The examples below are listed in

order of perceived risk, the last being the most risky.

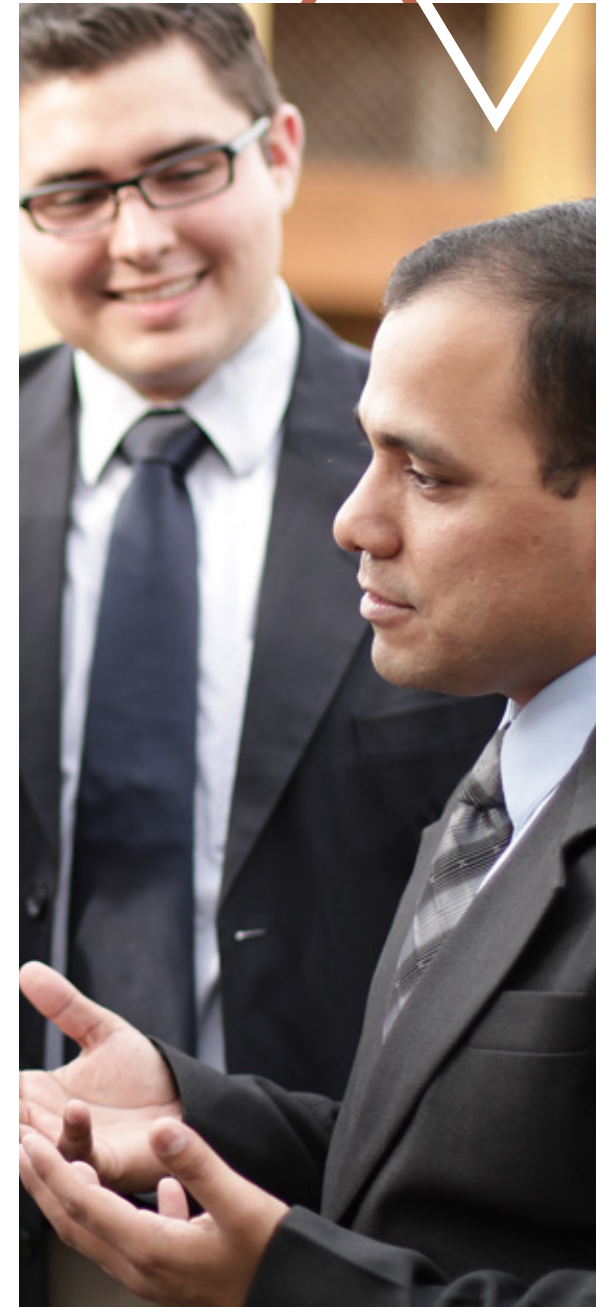
Could I give you my business card?
Could I get your business card?
Would it be alright if I connected with you on LinkedIn?
Would it be alright if I emailed you my resume?
Would it be alright if I contacted you to meet in person at a later date?



It's up to you to assess the situation and define how far you can take the next step.

IV. EXECUTING YOUR PITCH

Now that you have a clear blueprint for the content of your elevator pitch, it's time to craft it and make it elevator-ready.





IV. EXECUTING YOUR PITCH

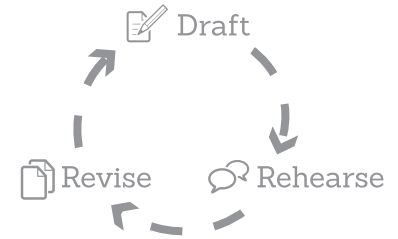
Draft. All of our sources suggest sitting down and drafting the pitch like you would any speech. Typing it out is helpful because the recommended word count should not exceed 350 (approximately 2-3 minutes speaking). Programs like Word make it easier to monitor your verbiage¹⁴. Once you have the long version drafted, begin to cut it down to just 75-125 words (approximately 0.5-1 minute speaking). The one-minute pitch is necessary at networking events,

but the three-minute pitch is useful if your listener is willing to give you the extra time.

Rehearse. Once you have your draft ready we encourage you to practice it! Regardless of how compelling your content is, if you speak in a monotone voice, the words will be lost. Try to practice in front of a friend or colleague to get some feedback on both your content and delivery. The goal is to test how it sounds out-loud with



¹⁴ Amanda Augustine, "How to Pitch Your Value: Dissecting the Elevator Pitch," The Ladders (blog), November 14, 2012, <http://info.theladders.com/blog/bid/164239/How-to-Pitch-Your-Value-Dissecting-the-Elevator-Pitch>



IV. EXECUTING YOUR PITCH

the intention of moving towards a more natural delivery. Another option is recording an audio/video of your pitch and playing it back to yourself to see, first-hand, how you come across 15. There are many smart phone apps that allow you to record and playback on the device.

Revise. Written text does not always sound natural when spoken, so address any feedback you were given and don't be afraid to revise your pitch a few times.

When critiquing your pitch the following points can be helpful:

Were you smiling?

Did you stay within the time limit?

Were you speaking too quickly, slowly, softly or loudly?

Was it conversational, or did it sound rehearsed?

Were a lot of filler words ("ums" or "like") or redundancies?

How was your energy level?

Did you find yourself fidgeting or using your hands to emphasize ideas?

Was it memorable?



IV. EXECUTING YOUR PITCH

Here is an example a job seeker's entire elevator pitch according to our 5 basic pitch points:

1. Who are you and what do you do?

Before getting my MBA from INCAE, I helped launch a start-up, but it took this leading Latin American business school to help me truly realize the impact of supporting small businesses, especially in developing economies

small manufacturing start-up needed to establish a creative strategy, but could not afford a full-time marketing manager. I came in to design and implement a comprehensive digital marketing platform, as well as train current staff on the basics of maintaining their web presence. Sales doubled in 2014, and they now have a sustainable marketing strategy until their growth requires an in-house expert.

2. What are your strengths and skills?

I spent three years prior to INCAE as a marketing consultant in California. A

3. What are you passionate about?

My experiences have made me passionate about enabling more small businesses with a high potential

IV. EXECUTING YOUR PITCH

for growth by finding creative ways to maximize marketing budgets.

4. What are your goals?

I hope to continue my work giving small businesses a voice in Latin America by getting involved with a marketing consulting firm or non-profit organization that supports small businesses.

keep costs low, I would love to stay in touch. Do you have a card or a way that I can reach you in the future? Or do you have any advice on how to connect with like minded people that might be useful to talk to?

5. What is your value proposition?

If you know of a company, maybe even your company, who could use someone with experience broadening market reach using technology to



V. WHERE TO BEGIN



When composing the first draft of your pitch, start big and end small. Write down all of your ideas and then as you begin to narrow your focus and rehearse, it will be easy to cut the pitch down to three minutes (300 words), and then one (150 words).

You should have both the long (3 minutes) and short version (1 minute) at your disposal.

The following section includes additional prompts to consider when addressing the 5 basic pitch points.



V. WHERE TO BEGIN

Who are you and what do you do?

How can you connect your job with a higher calling or something that people generally value? How can you connect your job with something that you are personally passionate about?

What are your strengths and skills?

Can you identify a problem that you have helped resolve in your professional history? What results have you produced in different

projects and assignments you've completed during your career? What key skills or areas of expertise make you good at what you like to do? ¹⁵

What are you passionate about?

Why are you targeting this type of work in the first place? What do you like about it or find interesting? What motivates you?



¹⁵ Amanda Augustine, "How to Pitch Your Value: Dissecting the Elevator Pitch," The Ladders (blog), November 14, 2012, <http://info.theladders.com/blog/bid/164239/How-to-Pitch-Your-Value-Dissecting-the-Elevator-Pitch>

V. WHERE TO BEGIN

What are your goals?

What are your short-term goals and long-term goals? How do you plan to achieve those goals? Do you have a timeline?

What is your value proposition?

This is entirely situational so it's best to gauge your listener. Where do you excel compared to others? Do you bring anything unique or any exceptional experience to the table? What is in it for them? What do you anticipate being the low-risk-next-step?

Now is your turn:

What are you and what do you do?

What are your strengths and skills?

What are you passionate about?

What are your goals?

What is your value proposition?

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