

# TheTrophicLink

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## The art of advertising science: “elevator pitches”

As scientists we can underestimate the importance of communicating what we do; this does not only mean publishing specialistic articles, but also sharing our findings with the non-specialistic public. After all, science becomes knowledge only when shared. Also, I like to think that tax-funded researchers have a responsibility toward who funds them (i.e. any tax payer) to do good science and make it understandable.

Talking science with non-specialists is challenging because we cannot count on the fact that the other person at all aware of, or interested in our discipline; moreover, we cannot hide into jargon. We need to be engaging and crystal clear.

I bumped in the concept of “elevator speech”, a two-minute long, punchy teaser of what we do in science. Two minutes time to engage and share. This might sound too much like an advertisement or an attempt to banalize science; on the other hand, simplifying does not necessarily mean banalizing, and advertising is not synonym of “selling off”. A good speech is all up to the speaker, like good science is all up to good scientists.

Recently, my colleagues in the Petchey-Hansen group and I have been practicing our personal elevator speech during a group retreat and it was an interesting experiment. Here are some advices for a good elevator speech:

- Prepare it and practice it. It's not easy to improvise.
- Beware of trying to convey too much knowledge. Force yourself to convey the essential: WHY you do what you do (e.g. what's the original question/need), WHAT you do, What you found (and what are the practical implications).
- Like in good science, keep it simple and remember: less is more. No rambling, no jargon. If you made a good job and they are interested, they'll ask more.
- Tailor your speech on the person you are talking to.

More about elevator pitches here:

- <http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7435-137a>
- <http://thepostdocway.com/content/elevator-pitches-scientists-what-when-where-and-how>
- [https://cfn.upenn.edu/aguirre/wiki/public:elevator\\_pitch](https://cfn.upenn.edu/aguirre/wiki/public:elevator_pitch)
- <http://www.jillhopke.com/2013/03/communicating-science-from-the-elevator-pitch-to-research-presentations/>
- <http://www.scienceineurope.com/post/27410585454/researcher-work-on-your-elevator-pitch>

07-08-2014 UPDATE. Catherine Searle gives more advices on perfecting your elevator pitch here: <http://dynamicecology.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/perfecting-the-elevator-pitch/>



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