

Preparing Your Elevator Speech

COMM 415

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“An elevator speech that worked was able to describe and sell an idea in 30 seconds or less. Today, an elevator speech can be any kind of short speech that sells an idea, promotes your business, or markets you as an individual. An elevator speech is as essential as a business card. You need to be able to say who you are, what you do, what you are interested in doing and how you can be a resource to your listeners.”

1. Anticipate your Audience:

Before writing any part of your elevator speech, research your audience. You will be much more likely to succeed if your elevator speech is clearly targeted at the individuals you are speaking to. Having a generic elevator pitch is almost certain to fail. Consider **where** you are likely to meet individuals that are key to your success in your chosen career.

2. Know Yourself:

Before you can convince anyone of your attractiveness as an employee you need to know exactly what it is. You need to define precisely what you are offering, what problems you can solve and what benefits/skills/training you bring to a prospective employer.

Consider:

1. What are your key strengths? What adjectives come to mind to describe you?
2. What special skills, training, certification, experience do you want them to know about?
3. Why are you interested in the company or school the person represents?
4. What would I like the listener to do/how would I like them to respond as a result of meeting me/hearing this?

3. Outline your Talk:

Start an outline of your material using bullet points. Simply write a few notes to help remind you of what you really want to say.

-Greet them and give them your name and offer any connection you might have to them (perhaps you have a mutual acquaintance, know something about their business or school district, have applied for a position, etc.).

-See the list above and offer a couple of sentences that outline your key features, strengths, or training that would be relevant and of interest to this person.

-Offer why you might be interested – maybe ask them to keep you in mind if they have future openings, ask if they would allow you to send them a resume, accept a business card, etc.

-Thank them.

4. Practice and Time: Try Not to EXCEED 35 - 55 seconds! DO NOT RUSH.

EXAMPLES:

Situation – [Professional Conference]

Me (walking up to an Administrative Dean from another University):

“Good Afternoon Dean Larson, my name is Theresa Hest. You probably don’t remember, but we met at the Central States Conference last spring in St. Louis. I am looking to re-locate and saw on the NCA website that you are looking for an Interpersonal Communication Qualitative Scholar at St. Thomas. I have heard from several colleagues about the strength of your Comm program. If you read the latest Family Communication Chronicle, I wrote the chapter on Family Stories that won the NCA award. If you have a few minutes for coffee while we are at the conference, I would love to ask you a couple of questions about your University. Thank you so much. Here is my card – again, my name is Theresa. Enjoy the conference!”

Situation – [Career Fair]

Me (at a table for a high school CA/L teaching position)

“Hello, I’m Theresa Hest and it looks like you have a Communication Arts and Literature opening at your high school. I did a bit of research on your school district and was excited to see that you have a robust fine arts program and a diverse student population. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Secondary English and Speech, a Master’s degree in Communication, and a Doctorate in Communication. I have taught high school and college for 34 years. I also coached speech, debate, and directed other extracurricular activities. I left high school teaching to be a college professor, but I miss the interaction with this age group and I’m looking to return to the secondary classroom. I have a current Minnesota teaching license and would love to hear more about the position. If you don’t have time today, here’s my card and we can set up a meeting. Again, my name is Theresa and I hope we can connect.”