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Elevator pitch - 5 tips for creating a concise and strong sales message.



By [Steve Strauss](#)

Q: Steve - I go to a lot of networking and socializing events for my business. Some are good and some are not, but eventually I drum up business. My problem: I feel like a robot sometimes, saying who I am and what I do over and over. How can I spice it up? -- Helen

A: Your question reminds me of a time about five years ago when I was just starting out as a public speaker. At that time I had the credentials to be successful (books, columns and so forth), and I certainly marketed myself to meeting planners. But my speaking gigs were few and far between.

And then it happened. I met Teddy Roosevelt, and he changed my life.

You see, one day I was lamenting my lack of progress in my nascent speaking career to a fellow speaker. A rotund gentleman who would dress up as Roosevelt, our 26th president, and share T.R.'s ideals to business and civic groups, he had plenty of engagements. I asked him to tell me his secret.

"What is it you talk about Steve?" he asked.

"Oh, small business success, basically," I replied.

Pregnant pause. "Hmmm," he finally responded.

So I asked, "Well, what is it you talk about?"

"Me?" he answered excitedly, "I share with groups the values and ideals of Teddy Roosevelt and show them how they can use those values to make a difference in their world. By the time I'm done, they are so excited and so committed to the idea of making a

difference at home and at work that I usually get a standing ovation."

Now, if you were going to hire a speaker, and the choice was between animated Teddy and boring me, whom would you choose?

I knew the answer, and it wasn't pretty. "Steve," he said, "If you want to succeed in this business, you need an elevator pitch." Of course he was right. I created one soon thereafter, and I must say, it absolutely, totally, changed my speaking career.

An elevator pitch is a brief statement about who you are, what your business is, and why it is special. The idea is this: If you were in an elevator with a potential business investor and you had only 30 seconds or an elevator ride to make a memorable impression, what is it that you could say to make an impact?

We are all asked, from time to time, what exactly it is that we do. Sometimes it's at a cocktail party or a business meeting. Having a sharp, intriguing statement ready makes the difference between being remembered and being forgotten. You never know which simple conversation may lead to that big deal, and I say that from experience.

So I think it is a good exercise for anyone in business to create their own elevator pitch.

Here's how to create yours:

1. Figure out what is unique about what you do

The whole idea behind a great elevator pitch is to intrigue someone. It's an ice-breaker and a marketing pitch — all rolled into one.

Your elevator pitch must have a hook. "I own a flower shop downtown" doesn't hold a candle to "I'm a specialty florist who deals in rare, South American tropical flowers that bloom in the winter."

2. Make it exciting

A superior elevator pitch increases your heart rate. It speaks to who you really are and what excites you about your business. It has integrity. What is it about your business that really motivates you? Incorporate that.

3. Keep it simple

A good elevator pitch doesn't try and be all things to all people. Rather, it conveys a clear idea in a short amount of time. It might be a few sentences, but no more than a paragraph or so. Keep it under 30 seconds.

4. Write it down

Use the guidelines above and take a stab at it. Write down your pitch, say it out loud, re-write it, and then re-write it again. Remember what I always tell my daughters: "Writing is re-writing!"

Practice, and the practice some more

The first few times you try out your elevator pitch may be a bit uncomfortable, but it gets easier. After a while, it will become second nature to you, and when it does, you will be glad you practiced.

You never know what will come from having a great, natural, elevator pitch, but you can bet that you've just increased your chances that it will be good.

