

THE ELEVATOR PITCH

POWER INTERVIEWING

PROFESSOR P



Preparing People for a Competitive Workforce.

Developing Your Elevator Pitch

Developing your Elevator Pitch helps you introduce yourself at career fairs, networking opportunities, and even in an interview's "tell me about yourself" question. It was initially named Elevator Pitch, from selling yourself or your business to a stranger to entering an elevator until you reach your desired floor.

One of the interview questions that most intimidates job seekers is one that most interviewers assume will be easy: "Tell me about yourself." It sounds straightforward — but as every job seeker knows, it's not simple. What do they want to know? Are they looking for a complete history of you? Do they want to know about your personality and personal life, or should you focus strictly on work?

"Tell me about yourself " doesn't mean "give me your complete history from birth until today." It doesn't even mean, "walk me through your work history." Instead, "give me a brief overview of you as a professional."

You might wonder why interviewers even ask this question; after all, they have your resume! If they've read it, they already know your professional background. But interviewers who ask this question generally ask because of one of several reasons:

- Before diving more deeply into the specifics, they are looking for a broad overview of how you see yourself as a professional as a sort of Introduction.
- It's their standard opening question
- They think this is an icebreaker question that will help candidates relax. Little do they know!

AN EFFECTIVE ELEVATOR SPEECH WILL DO THREE THINGS:

1. Defines yourself for others today and for the future
2. Helps you become an advocate for yourself. You are not only defining your interests but explaining, elaborating, persuading, and promoting
3. Teaches you how to pitch yourself quickly

KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

ALWAYS research your audience before preparing your elevator speech or even your resume. You are much more likely to succeed if you know who your target audience is, what they do, and what would interest them in continuing the conversation with you.

SO, WHAT EXACTLY SHOULD YOUR ANSWER INCLUDE?

The specifics of your answer will differ from person to person. However, generally, a good answer will summarize where you are in your career, note anything distinctive about how you approach your work, and end with a bit about what you're looking for next. You can pull from several standard buckets to develop your pitch: **The Origin Story**, **The Career Summary**, **The Unique Angle**, **The Goals Angle**, and **The Personal Angle**.

WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

(THE ORIGIN STORY)

If there's one thing recruiters and hiring managers love seeing in a candidate, it's passion. Rather than just telling them that you're interested in your field, start your career story by telling them why you're interested in the field and how that interest came to be.

Include some personal details about why you chose this career path. For example, if a high degree of organization is required, you might mention that you color-coded your sock drawer in your youth (and helped your family do the same), which led you to realize that keeping everyone organized as a project manager would be a perfect fit for you.

If you can emotionally connect to a recruiter or hiring manager through a funny, cute or heartwarming story about how you became involved in the field, you'll be that much more memorable.

Example:

Throughout my childhood, I spent scribbling down three-paragraph fairy tales in my blanket forts to an intensive but incredibly gratifying creative writing program in college. I've always been a storyteller at heart. So when it came time to look for a job, there was no doubt in my mind that writing and storytelling had to play a key role in my career.

I did a couple of internships that helped me hone my marketing skills – one in a Technical Writing role where I worked with internal stakeholders to produce engaging instructional videos and presentations for a company-wide intranet site and a Hispanic Marketing role where I created a data-driven creative marketing plan, which resulted in an increase in market share from #3 to #2 in my assigned region.

WHAT ARE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS?

(THE CAREER SUMMARY)

The Origin Story and *The Career Summary* can blend nicely. Here, you will summarize your career and showcase your achievements **most relevant to the company or job**. Include ‘evidence’ through professional experience, community engagement, industry leadership, and professional affiliations. Make the information in your introduction easy for the hiring manager to understand and process. Think in terms of what you have accomplished (X), how those accomplishments can be measured (Y), and what you did to achieve those results (Z).

But be careful — you don’t want to regurgitate what’s on your resume. Often, people take a ‘bottom-up’ approach, giving a chronological play-by-play of their entire career history. This typically doesn’t provide the interviewer with meaningful information beyond what he or she can ascertain from your resume. Instead, candidates should take a ‘top-down’ approach. This involves two steps: Deciding what narrative you want to tell and defining the significant chapters of your career. Second, pull out the key accomplishments and roles from your career history that reinforce that narrative, which feeds into one’s verbal career story.

For added color, explain your transitions and motivations along the way. Ideally, you also want to build a logical career narrative culminating at this moment when this next role is the perfect one for you.

WHAT MAKES YOU A UNIQUE CANDIDATE?

(THE UNIQUE ANGLE)

Before you launch into these topics, do some self-reflection and career research. You need clarity about what kind of job you want and what the employer is looking for. If you know what they find valuable and important, focus on that.

Once you've done your homework and are ready to explain what drew you to the opportunity, use the following questions to help you shape your responses:

- What caught your attention about the job?
- What made you apply?
- Why this company?
- What is essential about the products or services that the company provides? Why is it important to you?

Then, talk about what makes you uniquely qualified for the position. Mention why you are interested in the organization and how your *knowledge, skills, and abilities* align with their needs. Give relevant examples of how you used your strengths in a professional setting.

Show the employer that you can do the job using specific examples addressing their needs.

Example:

"I originally got into fundraising because I wanted to work with mission-driven organizations, and I know how crucial it is to raise money. Pretty early on, I found that my science background was especially helpful in talking with prospective donors about the work we were organizations like [A] and [B]. I love showing donors how their gifts translate directly into outcomes like [C] and [D], and I think my ability to do that by translating the science into layman's terms is responsible for some of the largest donations I've raised. For example, I raised the largest donation in our history last year by doing _____. I'm excited about the role you have open here because it would let me continue to use my science background while raising money to support issues I feel strongly about."

Example:

Since my first full-time position, I wanted to get closer to my storytelling roots, so I accepted a position as a content writer at a creative communications agency. In my current role, I'm tasked with strategizing, executing, and optimizing social media, creating blog posts, and developing case studies. I get to work with Global 500 companies, place stories in top-tier publications, and ultimately generate interest in my clients and elevate their reputations, but I'm often torn between too many different goals. Instead, I want to concentrate all my efforts on one company whose mission I believe in.

HOW DOES THIS OPPORTUNITY ALIGN WITH YOUR GOALS OR VALUES?

(THE GOALS ANGLE)

Why are you there? You're telling the hiring manager what you seek when discussing why you are there. "There" can mean the job fair, networking event, or interview.

Discuss areas for growth and how this aligns with your professional goals. Also, mention what you hope happens as a result of this meeting (Get an interview? Stay in touch on LinkedIn?). You can end with a question inviting the listener to join the conversation.

Again, do your homework and use the following questions to help you shape your responses:

- What caught your attention about the job?
- What made you apply?
- Why this company?
- Why is it important to you?
- How does their mission align with your values?

Example:

I am motivated by the idea of being a constant learner. I recently read one of Martha Stewart's books. She made a comment that has now been a daily theme for me. She stated that her goal in life is to learn something new every day. I have applied that same goal to my life, personally and professionally. I also have to give credit to my mentors and teachers. All these factors combined have enabled me to consistently be in the top 10 percent of sales for the last five years running.

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION OUTSIDE OF WORK?

(THE PERSONAL ANGLE)

Ending your pitch with this question allows you to personalize your message and create an emotional connection with those viewing - something your resume can't do. Your objective is to tie in how your career and personal life interconnect in a way that one complements the other.

Example:

As a financial advisor, my daily motto is "how can I help." This simple phrase is what has driven the growth of my business. I also bring this motto into my personal life to help the community. For the last fifteen years, I have served as a volunteer firefighter.



ACTIVITY 2.1

TIME: 20 MINUTES (SELF-DIRECTED)

Reflecting on the different buckets (**The Origin Story, The Career Summary, The Unique Angle, The Goals Angle, and The Personal Angle**), which ones will you pull from?

Create an outline encompassing the key information you want to convey within your pitch.



Don't get too tied into these examples! These are a few, but there are many ways to prepare an elevator pitch. As long as you're giving a basic sense of what differentiates you professionally – and you're not just regurgitating your résumé – you should be fine.



ACTIVITY 2.2



TIME: 45 MINUTES (SELF-DIRECTED)

Take your outline and prepare a draft using either bullets or writing it out word-for-word (whatever is better for you as a learner). Then, read it aloud a few times until you are sure it sounds ok.

Please e-mail your coach to have your draft reviewed.



ACTIVITY 2.3

TIME: 60+ MINUTES (SELF-DIRECTED)

You can begin to practice once you receive feedback and your coach approves your pitch. You can use a mirror to practice your speech or make a mock conversation with your friend. Practice your pitch until it sounds natural, not rehearsed. You should be ready to present your pitch to your coach over Zoom during the next session.



ACTIVITY 2.4

TIME: 20+ MINUTES (WITH COACH)

Present your pitch to your coach and discuss delivery feedback.

Executive presence may be difficult to describe, but it is a defining characteristic of successful individuals. Nonetheless, like the age-old debate about whether leaders are born or made, one might ask if executive presence can be learned. It certainly can be. Executive presence can be grouped under the heading of leadership acumen, and three of its elements are confidence, communication, and control.

CONSIDER THE 3 V'S OF MESSAGE

IMPACT:

- **Visual:** What others see coming from us when we speak, our nonverbal agenda
- **Verbal:** The words we use to weave our messages in meaning, to connect to our audience, and to resonate with others.
- **Vocal:** What others hear coming from us, all the sounds we produce or fail to deliver, including pitch, volume, rate, and articulation

EXUDING CONFIDENCE (VISUAL)

Calm, collected, and composed candidates put the entire room at ease. Due to the seriousness of the occasion, interviewers often present a stoic front. Confident candidates, however, can be disarming. It shifts the focus from whether the candidate is capable to how they would perform on the job at the prospective institution.

One cannot exude confidence if it is not present inside. Confidence can be cultivated through planning, preparation, and practice. When one is ready for the challenge, it is easier to erase self-doubt—doing homework, researching the potential employer, practicing answering questions, and rehearsing the interview repeatedly all help.

Confidence is self-assuredness, and it is miles away from arrogance or conceit. When one is confident, they can both 'toot their own horn' and give credit to others.

Making a positive impression and communicating confidence also involves appearances. How one dress and carries oneself communicates before a word is spoken. There is a reason for the saying that high-potential candidates are 'groomed' for senior opportunities. This metaphor about refinement reflects both how one looks and how one acts. Playing the part of an executive includes appropriate body language, posture, facial expressions, and other visible characteristics. Being polished is a part of being seen as presidential or having a similarly construed executive presence.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY (VERBAL)

Researching and practicing answering typical interview questions is also a standard protocol. Having the ability to think at a high level and to communicate complex ideas in a simple manner is a hallmark of a competent leader. Answers should be clear and concise and should reveal strategic thinking. Executives rarely get into the weeds. Instead, they provide strategic perspectives, inspirational thoughts, and visions of brighter futures.

SOUNDING THE PART (VOCAL)

The speaker's voice is essential to the success of a speech. The voice of a successful speaker enhances the expression of ideas without calling undue attention to itself or being distracting. Audiences can concentrate on what is being said if they are not distracted by the sound of your voice. Audiences can sense a speaker's enthusiasm and the significance of the main points when listening to a speech. Paralinguistic or vocal cues play a role in creating impressions that speakers make on an audience.

Pitch, the highness or lowness of one's voice on a tonal scale, is one type of vocal cue. Varying your pitch will protect you from sounding monotone and increase the communicative value of words by conveying the message's meaning.

Volume, the loudness or softness of the voice, is a second vocal characteristic that affects the meaning of the spoken words. When adjusting the volume, one must adapt to the situation and consider cultural adaptations.

- Regulating one's volume according to size and acoustics of the room, size of the audience, and competing background noises is required.
- Speakers may also stress or emphasize specific words and ideas by using volume.
- Culture also influences the impact of volume on an audience during a speech.



Rate is another vocal characteristic that, when regulated, the speaker can reflect the mood by leveraging silent pauses and avoiding verbal fillers. “Tell me about yourself ” isn’t usually going to be a significant part of the interview – it’s the easing-in that happens before you get into more nitty-gritty topics that don’t need to be an extensive treatise. Roughly one minute is a good general guideline. That’s not to say you can’t go longer if your interviewer looks interested and engaged. But, as with any interview response, watch the cues you’re getting from the interviewer and adjust accordingly.

- Rate is the speed at which words are spoken.
- Most people speak at a rate of 125 to 175 words per minute.
- Speaking too quickly is viewed as a desire to get the speech over in record time.
- Speaking too slowly communicates tentativeness and a lack of confidence.

Speaking slowly can express thoughtfulness, solemnity, or concern; quicker when you want to convey excitement, a sense of urgency, or eagerness.

Pauses are used to slow the speech rate. Pauses should be used before starting, after posing a rhetorical question, before an important point, when transitioning from one part of the speech to the next, and after delivering the closing remarks. The meanings attributed to pausing during a speech are also influenced by culture.

Verbal fillers are considered to be unnecessary pauses. “Er,” “Uh,” “Um,” and “Okay,” are viewed as disruptions to the natural flow of the presentation by lowering the speaker’s credibility.

Articulation and pronunciation are additional vocal cues. Articulation is the way in which individual sounds are pronounced. Speak the sounds of words sharply and distinctly. Pronunciation is the way in which words are stated correctly. Be aware of dialects and regionalisms.

CONTROLLING EMOTIONS

Listening intently to questions and responding in a measured manner without being too nervous are indicators of being in control. Being in control does not mean being flawless. During interviews, things can and will go wrong. Candidates make mistakes, misspeak, or sometimes flub some answers. Some confident candidates use self-effacing humor to get back on track. After acknowledging their mistakes, they ask the interviewer if it would be okay to try again or revisit the response later in the interview.

Emotional control is a sign of high EQ (emotional quotient or emotional intelligence). For example, getting excited in an interview is appropriate to demonstrate one’s passion for a particular subject. However, appearing a bit miffed when expressing disappointment over past situations that did not turn out well is also appropriate. The key is to show emotion with restraint. This reserved control is a sign of strength and unflappability.



ACTIVITY 2.5

TIME: 15 MINUTES (SELF-DIRECTED)

Reflecting on the 3 V's of message impact (Visual, Verbal, Vocal):

- Which one is the easiest for you? Why?
- Which one do you struggle with the most? Why?

Using the evaluation tool on the following page:

- How would you evaluate your current elevator pitch?
- What are the top three categories that concern you the most?



ACTIVITY 2.6

TIME: 30+ MINUTES (SELF-DIRECTED)

Refine your pitch with the delivery feedback from your coaching session. Continue practicing to strengthen your delivery. Be prepared to present your pitch to your coach over Zoom during the next session.



ACTIVITY 2.7

TIME: 20+ MINUTES (WITH COACH)

Present your revised pitch to your coach and discuss delivery feedback.



ELEVATOR PITCH EVALAUTION TOOL

CATEGORIES		5 EXCEPTIONAL	4 ABOVE AVERAGE	3 AVERAGE	2 BELOW AVERAGE	1 UNSATISFACTORY
C O N T E N T	HOOK/INTRO The problem, need, or opportunity is clearly explained and the significance is evident For Video: The speakers' names and faces are presented clearly					
	SPECIFIC SOLUTION A detailed explanation that you are a solution and a convincing statement of how you provide value for the audience (receiver), customer, client, or company					
	TARGET AUDIENCE The intended receiver is well-defined/identified					
	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE Understanding of the market and competition are highlighted. Showcases your creditability and qualifications to indicate strong potential for success. State skills, knowledge, uniqueness, or, talents					
	CLOSING Has a clear concise closing or question stated					
D E L I V E R Y	TIMING Appropriate time length					
	CLARITY Rehearsed; Speaker is polished and delivery techniques make the presentation understandable and engaging					
	MESSAGE IMPACT Inspires and holds attention Both persuasive and informative It exudes confidence					