



TIPS ON PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING “THE ELEVATOR PITCH”



Networking best-practices describes two potential interactions referred to as the “elevator pitch” or the “personal commercial”. Creating professional and personal growth often depends on the quality of professional relationships and the network that your intern develops. Good relationships are not spontaneous, and should not be left to chance.

NGWD’s mentor best-practices are designed to create and cultivate fruitful relationships between interns and relevant industry contacts and business experts. The development and cultivation of these relationships creates optimal conditions for professional growth. As an integral part of anyone’s professional toolkit, an elevator pitch (or personal commercial) needs to sell professionals effectively. The message needs to convey a value-oriented, compelling and memorable message that encourages the listener to take action.

The elevator pitch is a short description of what you do, or the point you want to make, presented in the time it takes an elevator to go from the top floor to the first floor or vice versa. In reality, most people encounter silence in an elevator, and yet we have a captive audience for about 15 to 30 seconds.¹ Interns should take the initiative and present their core message and market themselves and/or their business in a way that entices further interest from their audience.

Structure

The structure of a 30 second elevator pitch/personal commercial generally follows this pattern:

1. Introduce yourself, if appropriate.

¹ Agadoni, L. (2011). The 30 Second Elevator Pitch Technique. AZ Central. Retrieved from <http://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/30second-elevator-pitch-technique-4504.html>.

2. Discuss your experience. As an intern this would include your major field of study, and any relevant work experience.
3. State a strength or skill in which they would be interested.
4. Follow that with an accomplishment (or two) that proves you have that skill. It can be related to school, work, a volunteer experience, an activity (like Eagle Scout), etc.
5. Describe your employment goal. What are you looking for now and/or in the future.
6. Most importantly, tell how you can immediately benefit the company.

Development

Once they create a networking strategy, the intern will want to develop a 30 second personal commercial or “elevator speech”. This is a script or brief introduction about them that can be used in a variety of settings. They will want to alter the speech depending on who they are speaking to and the objective of the discussion. It is imperative that the intern is comfortable with the script, as opportunity may present itself at any time. Ensure that they practice their elevator speech so that when the moment presents itself, they are comfortable with their presentation.



Image retrieved from <http://nuannaarpoq.wordpress.com/2011/09/07/paganisms-30-second-infomercial/>.

Utilization

The elevator speech use should not be limited to the elevator. This speech should translate very well during events, conferences, conventions, or meetings. One of the first questions people ask is, “And, what do you do?” “Oh, I’m a student ... or an accountant ... or a consultant ... or an artist...” It doesn’t matter, because they will often say, “Oh, that’s nice,” and immediately label

you in their mind with all of the stereotypes they perceive the label carry with them. However, if you turn your message around and start with an answer like, “I am a rising junior majoring in computer science so that I can work with small businesses that are grappling with computer problems,” right away — especially if they own a small business — their ears will perk up and they will want to know more. The way a personal branding message is developed and used will determine the interest developed by the audience.

Additional Considerations

One goal of networking is future job opportunities. With this in mind, HIP has provided interview tips below:

- When seeking a job, it is important to be familiar with the company's major products or services, financial status, and total number of employees.
- Get acquainted with the company’s profitability, financial strength, and its status in the industry.
- Informational visits are easier to arrange than actual interviews, and can lay the groundwork for ultimate job-hunting success.
- Follow up with thank-you notes or emails to everyone conferred with regarding your job search.