



# What's An Elevator Pitch?

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At its core, an elevator pitch (aka elevator speech, elevator presentation, or elevator story) is several things. Of course, an elevator pitch is a communication tool; it will help you articulate your message. An elevator pitch is also a sales tool; it will help you raise the money, and close the deals, you need to be successful.

However, and most importantly, an elevator pitch is a teaching tool.

While it's of course important that you eventually close the deal, **there is no point in trying to close the deal if the audience doesn't understand what you are talking about and why they should care.**

As a result, an elevator pitch is designed to play the role of a primer; as a high-level and basic introduction to whatever it is that you are selling.

Given that, an effective elevator pitch is designed to give the audience just enough information that they will have a sense of what you are talking about and want to know more. Second, and just as importantly, it is designed to not give The Audience so much information so that they feel overwhelmed (and tune you out).

Think drinking fountain, not fire hose.

If you are going to be successful, you've got to ease the audience into your subject; you've got to give them a chance to catch up to you and all of the thinking you have done over the past months or years.

## Why You Need An Elevator Pitch

While you no doubt love, are fascinated by, and are passionate about what you are doing and could spend hours talking about it, most people aren't like you.

In all likelihood, when it comes to the people whose help you will need to bring your Solution to life, they aren't going to be nearly as knowledgeable about or as interested in it as you are. As a result, **they are unlikely to appreciate -- or even notice -- the intricacies, subtleties, and details of it.** Instead, they will only understand and -- initially at least -- be interested in the big picture.

Even if they do share your interest in and knowledge of your field, the odds are that they are extremely busy. Just like you, they have too many things to do and too little time to get them done. That means that they must constantly -- and quickly -- decide what to pay attention to and what to ignore.

What's more, it never fails that the more potentially helpful a person is, the busier they are likely to be.

As a result, you must come up with a way of explaining your Product that will grab the attention of someone who has seventeen other things on their mind. You must assume that people are looking for a reason to tune you out, not that they want to hear what you have to say. You must explain your idea in a manner that requires The Audience to do the least amount of work.

Above all else, you must get to the point. Only by doing that will you get the attention of The Audience and even have a chance of getting into the details of what it is that you are selling.

## **Elevator Pitch Definition**

Now that I've given you a high-level overview -- or in other words an elevator pitch -- of what an elevator pitch is and why you need one, let me give you a definition...

*An elevator pitch is an overview of an idea, product, service, project, person, or other solution and is designed to just get a conversation started.*

While that definition is fairly self-explanatory, let me take a moment to discuss exactly what the most important of those words mean.

## **Overview**

The point of an elevator pitch isn't to get into every detail of your Solution. Instead, all you want to do -- and all you have time to do -- is to make sure the audience understands what you are talking about and what's in it for them.

## **Just Get a Conversation Started**

One reason why so many people deliver completely ineffective elevator pitches is they don't understand the purpose of an elevator pitch. They act like the purpose of an elevator pitch is to close the deal while in truth the purpose of an elevator pitch is to just interest the audience in continuing to talk.

## **The Nine C's of an Effective Elevator Pitch**

Now that you have a high-level sense of what an elevator pitch is, and what an elevator pitch is designed to do, let me drop down a level and discuss the characteristics of an effective elevator pitch.

After working with hundreds of would-be entrepreneurs, and studying hundreds of effective and ineffective elevator pitches, I have found that an effective elevator pitch is nine things.

### **1. Concise**

An effective elevator pitch contains as few words as possible, but no fewer.

**2. Clear**

Rather than being filled with acronyms, MBA-speak, and ten-dollar words, an effective elevator pitch can be understood by your grandparents, your spouse, and your children.

**3. Compelling**

An effective elevator pitch explains the problem your Solution solves.

**4. Credible**

An effective elevator pitch explains why you are qualified to see the problem and to build your Solution.

**5. Conceptual**

An effective elevator pitch stays at a fairly high level and does not go into too much unnecessary detail.

**6. Concrete**

As much as is possible, an effective elevator pitch is also specific and tangible.

**7. Customized**

An effective elevator pitch addresses the specific interests and concerns of the audience.

**8. Consistent**

Every version of an effective elevator pitch conveys the same basic message.

**9. Conversational**

Rather than being to close the deal, the goal of an elevator pitch is to just set the hook; to start a conversation, or dialogue, with the audience.

**About Elevator Pitch 101**

Elevator Pitch 101 is an excerpt from *Elevator Pitch Essentials*, a business book by Chris O'Leary that teaches entrepreneurs, salespeople, project champions, [job seekers](#), and others how to get their point across in two minutes or less. *Elevator Pitch Essentials* goes into much greater detail about each of The Nine C's and is full of real-life examples of effective and ineffective elevator pitches.