

Writing an Elevator Pitch That Kills

*It won't *literally* kill, but it may just hit them with a big fluffy pillow of awesome.



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Writing an Elevator Pitch That Kills

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to:

the bosses who put me in front of people and made me learn to speak in public

the trainers who sat through seeming hours of 'ums' and 'uhs'

and especially to my friends in Connections to Success who helped a new business owner learn how to market and give an elevator pitch

You all rock!



Do either of these sound familiar?

You've got yourself a nice little business, have a handful of business cards, and are headed to a business networking event. The first person you meet asks "So, what is it you do?" You hand her a business card and repeat the information on the card, your job title and company. She nods, smiles and moves on to the next person.

-OR-

At the last few networking events you've been to, you've noticed that people won't make eye contact and suddenly need a refill of whatever tasty beverage they are carrying around with them. You finally manage to corner someone and, 5 minutes into your elevator pitch, your new acquaintance fakes a stroke so you will scurry away in search of emergency help.

What's wrong with your current elevator pitch?

In the first example, you're not providing enough information. Your new friend is more than able to read, so she can get your name and title from the business card.

She approached you because she wants to get to know YOU. Your wants, your fears, your favorite color. Ok, she probably doesn't want to know those, but she wants to know if you can help her, or her customers, with a problem they have.



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In the second example, you've provided too much information. She doesn't want to know the history of your product, how you got into selling, where you went to high school, how she could buy your product wholesale and mark it up and make millions of dollars. She wants to know if you can help her, or her customers, with a problem they have.

True confession: I've been networking long enough now that I've heard almost every pitch for multi-level marketing that's existed. The mistake almost all of them make is to introduce themselves by telling me how selling their craptastic product is going to make me one of the idle rich. If you're one of those people - STOP IT! You're being an obnoxious jerk.

Whether you're providing the wrong information or you're coming on too strong, your elevator pitch isn't going to help you get new customers.

But there's hope! Developing an effective, informative, and enjoyable elevator pitch is not impossible and you'll have ample opportunities to practice and perfect it.

Now let's get down to work crafting your best elevator pitch, yet.



The 3 Kinds of Elevator Pitches

The best elevator pitch will be tailored to the audience. I've found 3 types of elevator pitches used in business: the pitch for funding, the pitch for networking, and the pitch for customers.

The Pitch for Funding

If you have a business and need venture capital, the pitch you develop should be short, explain what your business is about and it's potential. This is a specialized pitch and I'm not going to go into this here.

The Pitch for Networking

If you belong to any leads, referrals, or chamber groups or attend any business after hours programs, this is the elevator pitch you use. This pitch explains to the listener what business you're in and what type of referrals you are looking for. You are not giving this pitch to your end customer, but to someone who might be able to help your end customer find you.

The networking equivalent of spam is called the 'spray & pray' where the goal is to pass out as many business cards as possible.

Resist this at all costs!

The Pitch for Customers

This is the pitch you use if you're standing in line at the local market and find out that the person you're in line with is looking for a service or product that you provide. This is your chance to talk to a real customer!

Go to a networking event with the goal of making just a few good connections. at each event.

Let's talk first about how you develop an elevator pitch to use at networking events.



The purpose of networking

Some think that networking is all about selling their services or product. They're wrong. People do business with people they know, like, and trust. Memorize that list, have it tattooed on your arm, print it out and laminate it. Whatever it takes. And never forget that little word "AND".

*Networking is an Opportunity to make a **CONNECTION**, NOT a Sale.*

Networking is the first step in getting to know someone. Knowing is the first step to liking. And liking is the first step to trusting them. Once you have all 3, getting referrals will be much easier.

Elevator Pitches in Networking

When you stand up to deliver your 60 second elevator pitch in your weekly leads group, your elevator pitch should:

- Explain what kinds of services or products you offer
- What kind of problems your service or product solves
- Describe your ideal client
- Ask for the referral

Your elevator pitch should be a short, concise, 'personal commercial'. Keep it to 60 seconds or less.

"But I could never say everything I need to in 60 seconds."

Balderdash! Most TV commercials are 30 seconds or less. They tell the viewer what the product is, what it is used for, why it's better than the competition, and they tell you who the company is. Sometimes, they actually manage to be entertaining. All of this in 30 seconds. If they can do it, so can you. Let's see how.



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I'll be using a massage practice as an example, just so you get the idea. Don't copy the pitch word-for-word, write your own.

Step 1 – Who the heck are you?

List your name, occupation (if necessary), and company (1 sentence). If nothing else, this helps me pronounce your name correctly.

Example: I'm Kelli Wise, my business name is Mountain Shadow Massage. I'm a massage therapist, which should be obvious by the fact that Massage is a part of my business name, so I probably won't need to say that in my elevator pitch



Step 2 – What do you do?

Instead of telling me your occupation, you can use one sentence to describe what your business or product is. This is also your chance to use your witty tagline. (1 – 2 sentences)

Example: My tag line is “Relieving Life’s Aches & Pains”, so I should mention that. I’ve had business people tell me that they like a new contact to say “I’m in the business of ...”, so I will probably throw that in there. My tag line pretty much sums up the purpose of my service – I treat stress and injuries and the pain that results.



Step 3 – Why should I care?

Tell the group what your product or service can do FOR your clients. People don't buy features, they buy benefits. For example, people don't buy toothpaste, they buy fresh breath and cavity prevention (actually, they buy the hope that they will save themselves the cost and pain associated with cavities).

People buy with emotion. You can tell a story here about a past customer whose life was made better by using your product or service. Make sure that you do not make the customer look like a fool – people will remember and won't want to be the featured star of your 'wall of shame'. No one wants to think that their dentist is running around talking about how rotten their teeth were at the first visit.

Another good tactic is to make the pitch seasonal. If you have a product that makes a great gift, make sure you are letting your contacts know. Make it timely and relevant. (2 – 3 sentences)

Example 1 (seasonal): Summer is coming and more people are heading outside and using muscles that they haven't used in months. They are likely to be very sore after a weekend of gardening, biking, baseball, etc. Massage can help relieve that soreness so that they are ready for more outdoor fun a lot sooner.



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Example 2 (anytime): People who work at computers all day typically have very sore shoulders/neck and their arms and hands can get fatigued from typing and mousing all day. Many of them suffer from headaches caused by tight muscles and trigger points. Regular massage can relieve this pain so they are more comfortable at work and it can relieve muscle tension headaches.

What do you do if you have more than one product or service?

Do NOT try to promote every single product or service you offer in your pitch. Too many choices will leave your networking friends a little lost as they try to remember everything you just said. Pick one product and talk about it a couple of weeks in a row. Don't worry, you have 50 meetings a year so there will be plenty of time to promote your other products in other meetings.



Step 4 - So What?

What is your unique selling proposition? Why should I use your product/service? (1 - 2 sentences)

Example: I've done considerable research into muscular problems and trigger points that cause pain from sitting at computers and that cause headaches. The majority of my clients and experience is with computer workers and I spent more than 2 decades working in the computer world.



Step 5 – Who do you want me to tell this to?

Who is your ideal client? What should I be listening for in conversations that might make me think of giving them your card? (1 – 2 sentences)

Example: A really good referral for me is someone who is suffering from tension headaches. I'm really good at relieving headaches.

Step 6 – One more time, who are you?

Let's have that name and tagline again. You worked hard coming up with it and I love hearing it. (1 sentence)

Example: Mountain Shadow Massage, relieving life's aches & pains



Step 7 – Put it all together

Now string all of these things together. Say it out loud a few times. Tweak it and add a little polish. Edit it down to 60 seconds. To give you a guideline, the average person can say 150 words per minute, so get your word count to less than 150 words.

Example:

“Good Morning, I’m Kelli Wise from Mountain Shadow Massage and I’m in the business of Relieving Life’s Aches and Pains™. Did you know that a lot of headache pain is caused by muscle tension in the neck and shoulders? Massage can help with that, whether it’s caused by stress, poor work station setup, or overuse. A good referral for me is someone who works at a computer all day and complains of headaches and sore, achy shoulders. If you know someone like, please have them call me at Mountain Shadow Massage, where I will relieve their Life’s Aches & Pains.”



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That, by the way, is exactly 100 words long and takes 31 seconds to deliver. You can see that it still allows a full 30 seconds for me to have thrown in an example or talk about a discount I might be running.

Now, you give it a try. Make sure you actually complete steps 1-7. If you want to be able to do this well, practice it before your meetings. It's OK to read from a script the first couple of times, but try to wean yourself off by gradually moving from a script to bullet points to nothing at all.

Variety is the spice of life

If you use the same pitch week after week, your audience will eventually quit listening. You'll also probably get bored. I like to change things up on a regular basis. If you have more than one product or service, you can talk rotate between them every couple of weeks. This will give you plenty of time to educate your colleagues on what you have to offer and keep them interested.

A business person and a potential client walk into a bar ...

Or so goes the old joke. But what do you say if you happen to be in line at the local home improvement store and happen to overhear someone say "My back is killing me! I wish I could get some relief because it's making it really hard to work?" This happened to me. He seemed friendly enough, so I handed him a business card and gave him my elevator pitch for potential customers.

Let's talk first about how you develop an elevator pitch to use with potential clients.

Whether it's someone you meet in a checkout line, or a relative at a family get together, people you talk to have problems and they are looking for someone who can provide solutions. You might be the person who can help them.



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A word of caution here: don't be obnoxious. If you find people start avoiding you, start to walk backwards, or even fake a stroke, you're either coming on too strong or you've picked a really inappropriate time to pitch your business.

Keep it friendly and conversational

Elevator Pitches for customers

When you meet someone and find an opportunity to help them solve a problem, your pitch should:

- Politely introduce yourself
- Explain what kinds of services or products you offer
- Explain how your product or service can solve their problem
- Ask the potential client to take action

Your elevator pitch should be a short, concise, 'personal commercial'. Keep it to 60 seconds or less. As we've seen above, you can say everything you need to say in less than a minute.

This time, I'll be using my web design business as an example, just so you get the idea. Don't copy the pitch word-for-word, write your own.



Step 1 – Ask the person if they are interested in a solution to their problem

Starting this way lets the person know that the conversations they are about to be sucked into is all about them. (1 sentence) It's also kind of polite to ask a stranger if you can talk to them.

Example: Do you want a website that won't cost you a fortune?

Step 2 – Who the heck are you?

Introduce yourself and mention the name of your company and what your company does. (1 sentence)

Example: I'm Kelli Wise and I have a business that helps very small businesses with websites that will work with your budget.



Step 3 – What can you do for me?

Tell the prospect how you can help them. Remember, people don't buy features, they buy benefits. For example, people don't buy hammers, they buy artwork hung on the walls (using the hammer). (1 sentence)

Example: You need a website so that your clients can find you and I will take care of all of the technical stuff and guide you through the process of getting your website online.



Step 4 - Why should I listen to you?

People buy with emotion. You can tell a story here about how you have helped a past customer. Make sure that you do not make that past customer look like a fool. No one wants to think that their dentist is running around talking about how rotten their teeth were at the first visit. (2 - 3 sentences)

Example: I've been designing websites for over 10 years and in the 5 years I've run a massage practice, I've helped several fellow therapists get their business websites up and running.



Step 5 - So What?

What is your unique selling proposition? Why should I use your product/service? (1 - 2 sentences)

Example: I've been running a small business for 5 years and I understand the needs of a very small business.



Step 6 – What do you want from me?

What is my next step? Do I call you? Email you? Go to your store? Tell me, Obiwan. (1 – 2 sentences)

Example: If you're interested in hearing about how we can get your business a website without breaking the bank, please call me and let's discuss what you want your website to do and how we're going to make that happen.



Step 7 – Put it all together

The average person can say 150 words per minute, so get your word count to <150 words.



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Example:

Do you want a website that won't cost you a fortune? I'm Kelli Wise and I have a business called Pint Sized Sites that helps very small businesses with websites that will work with your budget. You need a website so that your clients can find you and I will take care of all of the technical stuff and guide you through the process of getting your website online. I've been designing websites for over 10 years and in the 5 years I've run a massage practice, I've helped several fellow therapists get their business websites up and running. I've been running a small business for 5 years and I understand the needs of a very small business. If you're interested in hearing about how we can get your business a website without breaking the bank, please call me and let's discuss what you want your website to do and how we're going to make that happen.

That, by the way, is exactly 157 words long and takes 51 seconds to deliver. Not too long to bore them.

Now, you give it a try. Make sure you actually complete steps 1-7. If you want to be able to do this well, so practice it and try it out on some friends.



The most important step:

Do IT

A few additional tips:

- Have fun with your elevator pitch.
- Be Yourself
- Practice practice practice
- Don't be apologetic
- Be confident, but not cocky
- Have fun with your elevator pitch

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