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The Art of the Elevator Pitch: 10 Great Tips
By Audrey Watters / April 16, 2010 12:00 PM / 24 Comments

The elevator door opens. And there stands your ideal investor. It's the chance of a lifetime. But that chance only lasts as long as the elevator ride - you have less than a minute to make an impression. Hopefully, you've got a well-crafted elevator pitch ready to give.

The elevator pitch is not the hurried presentation of a full-blown business plan. It's an introduction, an overview and a pitch - and a short one at that - meant to capture the attention of a potential investor. Of course, an elevator ride is a short one. Guides for elevator speeches that say you have one minute surely overestimate the amount of time it takes for an elevator to move from floor to floor. Of course, an elevator speech isn't restricted to elevators. Rather, it comes in handy for any occasion where a concise presentation is appropriate.

When crafting your pitch there are two key things to keep in mind: its content and its form. In other words, it's not just what you say but how you say it.

Here are a 10 tips to keep in mind as you craft your elevator pitch.

1. **Keep it short.** Be succinct. According to Wikipedia, an adult's attention span is eight seconds, so be sure to give just enough information (and more importantly perhaps the right information) so that after only hearing a sentence or two, someone knows what you do - and if it's a pitch, what you need.

2. **Have a hook.** As Mel Pirchesky advises, "The objective of the first ten or fifteen seconds is to have your prospective investors want to listen to the next forty-five or fifty seconds differently, more intently than they would have otherwise."

3. **Pitch yourself, not your ideas.** As Chris Dixon writes, "The reality is ideas don't matter that much. First of all, in almost all startups, the idea changes - often dramatically - over time. Secondly, ideas are relatively abundant." Instead of talking about ideas, highlight what you've done - the concrete accomplishments or skills - rather than some intangible concept or a future goal.

4. **Don't forget the pitch.** It's easy to get so caught up in the details of who you are that you neglect to mention what you need. What amount of financing are you seeking, for example?

5. **Don't overwhelm with technical or statistical terminology.** While being able to tout one or two amazing and memorable phrases or figures can be useful, don't fill your elevator speech with numbers or jargon.

6. **Practice.** Rehearse your elevator pitch so that when the opportunity to give it comes, you can deliver it smoothly.

7. **Use the same tactics for print.** You can hone your elevator skills by practicing them in writing. Babak Nivi describes the email elevator pitch here.

8. **Revise.** As your startup moves through various stages, be sure to update and refresh your pitch.

9. **Be involved in the startup community before you pitch.** Business Insider suggests, "Engaging in online discussions, writing insightful blog posts, and participating in the relatively small startup community can earn you a 'strong presence' that gets you noticed by potential investors." Building relationships with investors before pitching to them will help your success.

10. **Listen.** When seeking to build strong networks, remember it can be just as important to listen as it is to talk.

Do you have any other suggestions on crafting an elevator pitch? Feel free to add your tips in the comments below.