

How to Effectively Introduce Yourself  
Before You Reach the Third Floor

U p t u r n  
POINTING YOU IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

# Elevator Presentations



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# The Value of an Elevator Presentation

**W**hat you say—and how you say it—matters, especially when you're first introducing yourself, your company, the products you sell, the services you offer or any other topic that matters. Most people know how to take the long way around the barn. Given enough time, they can fumble through plenty of details to adequately explain what they do and who they do it best with.

But with today's ever shortening attention spans, those who say what they do clearly, precisely and quickly have the edge. They know and understand the value of an elevator presentation.

What is an elevator presentation? In its simplest form, it's two or three well thought-out ideas, phrases or sentences. It answers who you are, what you offer and perhaps why you're different or better than competitors. It gives people a glimpse of your offerings and packages them in a way that makes sense.

At the same time, elevator presentations should never be so rehearsed that they are tired and stale. The best elevator presentations aren't delivered the same every time. They're adapted to your audience, their experiences, level of understanding and interests. Because of this, I like to build elevator presentations using bullets that can easily be moved around as they are spoken. This helps you say as much or as little as you need to. If you can have a couple of interestingly or funny lines to say, this helps even more.

Remember, when you're creating a first impression, most people will decide whether they like you in the first few moments. Then spend the rest of their time trying to confirm or deny their suspicions. Use an elevator presentation to make a positive impact and get them saying, "I want to learn more!"

# 15 Questions to Ask about Your Audience Before You Write Your Elevator Presentation

Obviously, you have to think about your audience when you put together your elevator presentation. They are an important factor in what and how you say things. So before you start the writing process, think about the typical audiences you're in front of. Ask yourself these questions:

1. **How much do they already know?** Think about whether your audience has some background in your topic, product or service. If they do, your presentation will be different than if they don't.
2. **Will they get it?** Is your topic too complex for the audience to understand? If so, what can you do to simplify it?
3. **Have they been there?** Does your audience have first-hand experience with the topic? If not, how can I make it more real to them?
4. **Will they evaluate?** Are they likely to evaluate the evidence and examples you use? Do you need to be ready to cite sources or provide other facts?
5. **Is it focused?** Is my topic tangled up with other difficult topics? If so, you may need to simplify the plan and focus on just one or a few of these.
6. **Will it keep their attention?** Is your elevator presentation familiar and boring? If so, what can you do to give it a fresh and exciting perspective? If it is more interesting or presented in a different way, they will be more focused on listening.
7. **Do they like your topic?** Does the audience have negative, preconceived ideas about your topic? If so, how can you adjust your presentation to address them or change their minds?
8. **Is the topic controversial?** Will the topic conflict with their beliefs, attitudes and values?

9. **What will they need to do?** How much time, money and effort are required for your audience to do what you are suggesting? (Buy my product, give me a referral, etc.)
10. **What do the leaders think?** If you are speaking to a group, what do the formal and informal leaders think about the topic?
11. **Will they run into issues if they agree?** If they do what you want, how much resistance can they expect from friends, family and peers?
12. **Is this the right audience?** Can you reach the people you want to persuade? Are you introducing yourself to the true decision makers?
13. **Who needs to buy in?** Will they have to work together to accomplish what you want or will they have to work alone?
14. **What is the complexity level of what you are asking?** Is what you want them to do simple, obvious and likely to produce immediate rewards—or is it complex and difficult to evaluate?
15. **What will they think?** How are they likely to interpret what you have to say?

# Use a “Concept Statement” as Your Opening

One of the greatest obstacles to marketing success is your inability to communicate what you do and the types of customers you’re looking for—in just a few seconds. If you do it well, you’ll see your sales rise dramatically. If you do it poorly, you’ll find yourself lumped together with other competitors fighting it out on price.

There are three primary ways to position what you do:<sup>1</sup>

1. **Titles:** Doctor, printer, consultant, banker architect, plumber, etc.
2. **Products/services:** Printing, legal services, banking, clothes, accounting, insurance, software, etc.
3. **Concept:** The outcomes of what your products, services or ideas do for clients... saves time, increases profit, reduces waste, etc.

Here’s an example of someone who offers consulting services:

1. **Title:** Consultant ← Sounds like everyone else!
2. **Products/services:**
  - Marketing research
  - Strategic marketing planning and facilitating board retreats
  - Leadership communication seminars
3. **Concept:** “We help organizations figure out how to more effectively sell their products, services or ideas.” → Different!

## Positioning

- Typically one sentence that gets a prospect to ask, “How do you do that?” Your answer is a more formal discussion of your products and services
- Written in simple language (8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Spoken in a conversational tone (answers what you do)
- Attraction (must attract your market segment)
- Dream-focused (focuses on the “dream” of your prospect)
- Contains “what” and “who” (outcomes and who is best served when buying from you)
- Sometimes dual-focused (uses two outcomes for a wider audience)
- Repeatability (someone else can easily repeat it)

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Mark LeBlanc, *Growing Your Business*.

## Creating Your Positioning Statement

Try creating your own positioning statement by transforming your title, products and services into a statement that your prospects will find attractive and motivating. Don't give up too quickly. It's taken many people six months or longer of thinking and refining their statements before they find something with which they are completely comfortable.

**1. Title:** What nouns do people use to describe what you do or your overall classification?

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**2. Products/services:** What do offer to customers and prospects?

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**3. Concept:** What primary benefits do customers receive from working with you?

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### Self-Introductions

The next time you're asked to introduce yourself at a meeting or social gathering, use these techniques to help create more positive initial impressions about you and your company.

- Speak from rehearsed "personal" and "professional" talking points.
- Work in one-liners and facts about yourself that others might find interesting... but don't be overbearing. Humor helps.
- Put your list on a small card, laminate it and carry it with you in your wallet or purse to aide memory.
- Use more of your professional points when you're in a business setting. Use your personal points in social gatherings.

## Next, Add “Professional” and “Personal” Bullets

A simple next step is to think of three or four “professional” bullets (or product features, benefits or using your services, etc.) and three or four “personal” bullets. Professional bullets are your key messages or ideas you’re trying to get across. They’re the big idea you want people to understand about what you do. Professional bullets focus more on who you are. The roles you play. How you can make a difference for your clients.

### Questions to Help You Create “Professional” Bullets

- What do you do?
- If you were explaining what you do to a child, what would you say?
- How long have you been doing it?
- What markets do you serve?
- How do your customers benefit most by working with you (or using your products and services)?

For an example on writing “professional” bullets I will share mine. One of the “professional” bullets that work for me is:

- **“I’m a business school professor working in the real world.”** I go on to explain that the same things business school professors do—research, teach, consult is a what I do (marketing research, executive seminars, marketing/sales/communications counseling).

## Questions to Help You Create “Personal” Bullets

- What do you like to do for fun?
- What would we find you doing on your day off?
- What is something interesting or unique about yourself that other people might not know?

For an example on writing “personal” bullets I will share another. On the “personal” side, this line has gotten me a lot of laughs over the years:

- **“A few years ago, my wife and I won the lottery.** Isn’t that great? But it wasn’t the Pennsylvania, Ohio, or West Virginia lottery—it was the twin daughter lottery. And a few years after that, we won the single kid lottery. I’m proud to tell you that I’ve accomplished one of my life’s goals—I’m surrounded by women.”

### Example of Elevator Presentation:

- “I teach people how to behave in front of food. I'm Ava Sheridan, a nutritionist based in San Francisco. I teach classes on nutrition, see private clients, consult with restaurants on their menus and also write a weekly column in Culinary Cuisine magazine. If you'd like to eat less and enjoy it more, I'd love to work with you. Let's exchange cards!”
- "What do I do? (smile) I'm a government fund-raiser. (pause) My colleagues and I actively raise needed funds to support the rest of our federal government as it supports you. It's nice to meet you. Allow me to wish you many happy returns"  
-- Steven Donahue, IRS Agent

From Craig Harrison: [http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com/ARTICLES/elevate\\_your\\_visibility.htm](http://www.expressionsofexcellence.com/ARTICLES/elevate_your_visibility.htm)

# Fill-in-the-Blank Elevator Presentation

If you're struggling to create the right elevator presentation, start by filling in the blanks to this one. It's worked well for a long time. It is important to consistently and professionally communicate what your company does in an efficient manner.

## Elevator Presentation Fill-in About the Company

- (Your company name here) is a \_\_\_\_\_ company that provides \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- We have offices located in \_\_\_\_\_, and serve \_\_\_\_\_ clients.
- (Our company) has been in business for more than \_\_\_\_\_ years and has over \_\_\_\_\_ employees.
- We're in the business of \_\_\_\_\_.
- We try to find \_\_\_\_\_, based on our client's needs and budget.
- We can handle \_\_\_\_\_.
- We provide quality \_\_\_\_\_, by \_\_\_\_\_.