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The Art of the Elevator Pitch: 10 Great Tips

By [Audrey Watters](#) / April 16, 2010 12:00 PM / [24 Comments](#)

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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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attention_span) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attention_span), 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](http://www.readwriteweb.com/start/2010/01/how-to-ride-elevator-pitch-new-heights.php) (<http://www.readwriteweb.com/start/2010/01/how-to-ride-elevator-pitch-new-heights.php>), "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](http://venturehacks.com/articles/elevator-pitch) (<http://venturehacks.com/articles/elevator-pitch>).
- 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](http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-craft-a-killer-elevator-pitch-2010-1) (<http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-craft-a-killer-elevator-pitch-2010-1>) "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.

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 **JonBrien** • a year ago
 Very helpful post! That time in the elevator with your prospect is so incredibly vital, you really have to know exactly what you're going to say before hand. We recently posted a blog on our website with some other helpful hints to having a great elevator pitch which some readers may find interesting.
<http://www.stratascopes.com/blog/>
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 **programas didacticos** • 2 years ago
 Remember that first impression starts with the way you look, so smile. Also, don't be too aggressive in your pitch.
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 **Ken Accardi** • 2 years ago
 Great article! I know I can use help on this (so go ahead and share your constructive feedback). Here's my pitch (which I timed at roughly 40 seconds):
 Starting next year, 8,000 baby boomers will reach age 65 every day, ultimately tripling the number of seniors in the US. Our company, Ankota, is working to make the delivery of home care more patient-focused and efficient. We provide software (via SaaS/Cloud) that enables care agencies to be able to see more patients, and provide better care with lower overhead.
 I was a CIO at GE Healthcare, and I'm working with a doctor from Johns Hopkins, a successful software entrepreneur and a former Anderson consultant who recently sold a business.
 Our product is ready now and we have our first half-dozen customers on board. We're raising an angel funding round now to grow sales and improve our marketing, and we plan a Series A round for the end of 2010.
 Between home nursing, home-making care, and specialties like respiratory therapy, home infusion, and medical equipment delivery we already have 2 million potential users and these are some of the top job growth areas predicted for the decade.
 Ken Accardi, CTO of Ankota Inc.
www.ankota.com
 1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

 **Robert** • 2 years ago



Sorry, you lost me at, "According to Wikipedia..."

Seriously, did you just cite Wikipedia as a reference??

You really couldn't find a better source than Wikipedia??

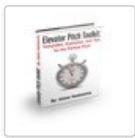
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Adam Hoeksema • 6 months ago

Here is how I would structure an elevator pitch to a potential investor:

Grab - Venture capitalists and angel investors are pitched every day. Your grab must be unique and compelling enough to capture their attention and imagination. Problem - As with any pitch your audience needs to feel the problem, feel the pain. Unique Solution - Investors look to invest in businesses that can be protected. If your solution can easily be copied, that is a risk many investors are unwilling to take, so explain what makes your company special. Traction - Traction trumps all else when it comes to investors. You will have VCs jumping in line to invest in businesses with great traction. Take Groupon for example, investors poured 100s of millions of dollars into the company despite the fact that there are literally 100's of copycat companies. Stage - What stage are you at? Do you need funding? How much? Or have you already received investment? Next Step - Ask for a business card, or ask for a chance to meet with the investor individually.



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cre8recovery • a year ago

Elevator pitch ... sounds scary to me. - [Best Homebased Business](#)

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Taat Pringist • a year ago

Here's my version of a elevator pitch. It is much, much shorter.

<http://www.iplanner.net/iplann...>

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Pam • 2 years ago

Sex Pitch. Nice! Haha very funny

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Rob • 2 years ago

I couldn't think of a worse spot on earth to pitch someone. Just as a matter of basic

psychology, people instantly feel trapped when entering an elevator and their fears

intensify on a sub-consciousness level. Now, knowing this, you go and "pitch" someone?

Other than a grunt back from the person, as they stare forward waiting for the doors to

open, do you think they actually listened to you? Here is a little tidbit.... why do you think it is said that sex is great in an elevator? Because the fear of being cornered, the fear of the doors opening to spectators and the fear of death all intensify the orgasm!

Hmmm, maybe if you pitch them while having sex in the elevator might work, I'll have to think about that one..... :)

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groom speeches • 2 years ago



Ahhhh. A breathe of fresh air regarding elevator speeches! I've been to several networking events lately, and everyone there touts their practiced elevator speeches. I even hear a presentation on how important they are, so it's nice to hear another perspective. No one is arguing that you have to be prepared to say who you are and what you do, but isn't it so much nicer to engage someone in conversation, rather than speech swapping?

Thanks for the article.

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Owen Glendower • 2 years ago

I believe that it was a Broadway producer who said, "If you can't write your idea on the back of my business card, you don't have an idea."

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Cards Home Business In Austral • 2 years ago

This is good advice. I like #3 best, although I think I'd reword it to say "Effective bloggers are engaged with their audience." Blogs should always be written with people in mind

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Safehaven • 2 years ago

Don't be too nervous. There's always another opportunity. Offer to give something instead of just wanting to get something for yourself. Sell yourself without selling out.

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Chuck Overbeck • 2 years ago

I agree, especially with the 8 seconds. I tell people they have 10 words to say what they do and why it is important to the other person.

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Katie Geoffrion • 2 years ago

I've always been one to pitch who I am rather than the product or service. Close the deal with a resume business card or a "pitch card" that might sum up the key point or make you memorable.

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Thomas Inda Closet • 2 years ago

Heather, you must be the result of the Scientology Akademy!!!

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Anne • 2 years ago

If I heard your pitch, Heather, I would be rolling my eyes and tuning out instantly.

0 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Electronic Cigarette Girl • 2 years ago

I pitch my products everywhere I go. Its easy because most people ask about it soon as they see it. Especially in Los Angeles where smoking indoors is prohibited.

-Bella

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Fanning • 2 years ago

You need to have other people pitch you, not pitch yourself. If you try to pitch yourself its going to come off as bragging and egotistic and turn

people off.

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chuck • 2 years ago

"Pitch yourself, not your ideas."

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA, ahem.

0 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Rick Morgan • 2 years ago

Having a good elevator pitch is valuable even if you are not looking for \$\$

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John • 2 years ago

Put yourself in the other person's shoes. What would they want to know and how would they want it delivered? Then do exactly that.

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r4i sdhc • 2 years ago

Well its important to know basics of creating elevator pitch because its the description and the first impression of your company and a product or service and so it should be well written that any one can understand it.

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Heather Plude • 2 years ago

When someone asks me what I do, I start off with a couple of undeniable truths...

You know how most people could use more money? (yes) And most people would love to earn a living doing what they love? (yes) I help people make money doing what they love. What do you do?

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