

# Your Elevator Speech, or “Who are you and what do you want?”



**Say you're out at a gathering** and someone wants to introduce you the Executive Senior Vice President of Something Important at Really Successful Company Inc. And you want to work there so bad you can taste it. You would gladly tattoo his company's logo on any part of your body just to get an interview at this place. Unlike most VPs, this one is friendly, easy to talk to, and is actually interested in meeting you! The VP says, “Hi, what do you do?”

Suddenly, panic strikes. You haven't felt this awkward since you were a 12-year-old and you were forced to dance with your cousin at your uncle's wedding. Without warning, you utter something that even that 12-year-old would be embarrassed to say, and you can literally see the job opportunity flying off into the sunset. The VP smiles, everyone feels uncomfortable, and you'd like to hide under the carpet.

That's a lousy way to start a professional relationship.

If only you had a prepared statement that effectively summed-up what you do. Even better, you would rehearse it, learn it by heart, and deliver it just as smoothly as you would any other topic of conversation.

Welcome to the Elevator Speech, my friend!

Some people call it the 30-Second Commercial or even your Positioning Statement. Whatever you call it, if you're looking for a job, you need one. Now!

Don't put it off, thinking you'll figure it out when you need it. Nailing your elevator speech is usually the first, and sometimes the only, chance you get to make a great first impression.

## **Now that you've got my attention, what is an Elevator Speech anyway?**

An Elevator Speech is a brief statement that tells someone who you are and what you professionally do. It doesn't tell everything about you, but it gives probably 80% of the information someone needs to know what you're all about.

The Elevator Speech has a few standard elements, and one that I throw in to bring it to the next level.

- 1. Your name** – Ok, this seems simple, but your name is the foundation of who you are, and people will mess it up at any given opportunity. They'll forget your name, pronounce it wrong, spell it wrong, or even call you someone else's name. If someone can remember your name and get it right, you're on your way.
- 2. What you do** – Here it starts to get tricky. You don't want to be too defined as to narrow your appeal, but you don't want to be so vague that you sound like you don't know what you're doing.

Here's a hint... use the word “Professional” after stating your field of work. Statements like Marketing Professional, Benefits Professional, or Sales Professional can make you appear confident and accomplished in your line of work, and that's a great place to be.

By all means, though, if you have a “what you do” statement that better describes you, go for it!

- 3. How long you have been doing it** – If you have three or more years of experience doing what you do, say it! This statement will show you have a track record. You're not some “wanna-be” professional. You're the real deal.

Now, if you have two or less years of experience, there are other approaches. Giving the amount of experience in years is a how you quantify your experience. People understand years. It's easy. In your case, though, you'll have to quantify your experiences some other way. Maybe you've sold \$30,000 worth of office equipment, sold 500 different types of products, or honed your skills on more than 200 customers. Use this opportunity to show that you've been around the block.

- 4. The industries you've been working in** – Communicating an industry that you have experience with shows where you've been strutting your stuff recently without mentioning your employers. If you have a current or former employer that's worth mentioning, go ahead, but only mention one, maybe two. What employers are worth mentioning? An employer that the person you're talking to probably knows and probably has a favorable impression of is worth mentioning. If you're not sure, just stick with the industry you have experience with.

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- 5. What you specialize in** – This is your chance to shine. What you specialize in is also known as “What makes you different and/or better than everyone else?” This is important. While so many people try hard to be like everyone else to “fit in,” they usually forget to stand out. What are you good at? How can you specifically make a difference at a company? Do you specialize in cutting costs? Helping customers out of tight situations? Resolving employee disputes? Here’s a tip... the most effective specialty is something that positively affects an employer’s bottom line.
- 6. Bringing it to the next level - What you want** – This is no time to be shy. If you want something, say so! Simply state what you’re looking for. Maybe it’s a multi-national position in sales. Or perhaps it’s a foot in the door so you can get your first chance to make a difference for an employer.

**This is all great, but where can I use such a speech?**

Lots of places! You’ll find the opportunity to use this speech often, so I highly suggest writing it out and memorizing it to the point where you can say it naturally, any time you need to.

**Networking** – Just like in the example at the beginning of this paper, you can pull out your Elevator Speech anytime you meet someone new at any networking event. It’s a great way to get things started!

**“So, tell me about yourself.”** – It’s an interviewer’s favorite question, mainly because it will show how prepared you are. If you haven’t heard that question yet, you will soon, and it trips up even seasoned interview veterans. When you hear

this question, bring out your Elevator Speech, and then stop talking. Amateurs go on and on. Be a pro and allow your answer speak for itself. Let the interviewer break the silence.

**On the phone** – When you’re placing the dreaded “cold call” for a job, your Elevator Speech is your foot in the door. Most people don’t know what to say when calling a prospective employer, but with your Elevator Speech, your opening statement is already taken care of. When you get to the person who you want to speak to, simply and naturally recite your elevator speech. It gives everything the prospective employer needs for the conversation to begin. And you get bonus points for your upbeat attitude. Trust me, it’ll show!

**Your resume** – Most resumes start with a professional summary, and your Elevator Speech has it all! What you do, where you’ve done it, what you specialize in... it’s all there! Fashion it to fit your resume and you’re on your way!

**The last word**

Properly done, your Elevator Speech will be your best job-seeking friend. Work on it. Practice it. Polish it. Make it natural. Make it your own.

And make it memorable.

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