THE ELEVATOR SPEECH

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“Warm-up” Small Group Exercise

• You are the head chef of Sofitel, a large hotel/restaurant in downtown Minneapolis.
• You are attending the International Culinary Convention in Rome, Italy.
• You happen to ride the elevator with world-renown Master Chef Jean-Pierre Laurent of France who specializes in European cuisine.
• You know that Chef Laurent is looking for a new apprentice, or sous-chef, and you really want this position because it will open doors for future opportunities.
• Your ultimate goal is to become a Master Chef yourself. You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to Chef Laurent and tell him he has found his next protégé.
What to say?

- Since you are not really a chef at Sofitel, be creative and make up what you think Chef Laurent wants to hear.
- Why would you be interested in the position?
- What kind of qualifications or experiences should you mention in your introduction?
- What could be unique about you that would attract his attention?
- The goal is to have him say, “tell me more”.
What is an elevator speech?

• brief, persuasive, succinct statement of your academic and professional goals.
• spark interests in what you do, your research and future direction.
• lasts no longer than 30 seconds.
• Approximately 80 – 120 words or 6 to 10 sentences.
• leads to further conversation.
• must tailor to audience and purpose.
• multiple versions strongly recommended.
• can begin and/or end with a question to engage the listener.

Adapted from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/elevator-pitch.htm
When to use an elevator speech

• Informal networking—conversations in hallways, meetings, elevator, etc.

• Formal situations—interview, conferences, career fair, professional development settings, etc.
Why have an elevator speech?

• Demonstrates to potential employers that you have a thought process that is
  • clear
  • organized
  • creative

• Helps you focus on your interests and priorities.

• Shows you have initiative, are proactive, and serious about your academic and professional development.

• Builds confidence; you know what you want.
Where to begin?

• State the problem or gap in field, if appropriate.
• What is your contribution/makes you unique in your field?
• What experiences do you have to offer?
• What’s exciting about your work or research?
• Start drafting the speech.
• Have at least two versions—general and specialized audiences.
• Can follow hour-glass format: broad, specific, broad.
• Practice with someone and get feedback.
• Revise and practice, practice, practice.
Small Group Exercise

• The University of Minnesota just announced that four graduate students across disciplines will be selected to serve as “ambassadors” to help recruit new graduate students world-wide.

• The ambassadors will each receive full funding for the duration of their studies and will travel to universities in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America—all expenses paid. The commitment is for 2 years.

• You applied and made it through the first cut. You must now submit a 30-second speech via video to introduce yourself and to state why you want to be a U of MN Graduate Student Ambassador.
Preparing for the video speech

• Why are you at the U of MN? What attracted you?
• What unique characteristics or strengths would you bring as an ambassador?
• Do you have any experience with recruiting or “representing” an institution or organization?
• What’s exciting about you that would encourage other students to come to Minnesota?
• In this case, your name and program can be mentioned at the very beginning or at the end.
Example—Public Health

What makes you unique in your field?

• You developed a new fitness program called “Fun Step” to help prevent childhood obesity among junior high school kids in the Twin Cities.

• The program is being piloted in three schools and will be expanded to other schools if successful.

What do you have to offer?

• You used to teach nutrition classes in MN public schools so you know the school system and have first hand experience working with kids.

• Certified to use the Lightner-Gamble instrument to assess fitness intervention.
Example—Public Health

What’s exciting about your work or research?

- The “Fun Step” fitness program focuses not only on the student but also on the family’s level of physical activity.
- Schools have embraced the program and are very supportive.

Putting it together—start drafting the speech
• I am Marc Jones, a third year doctoral student in public health at the U of MN. In the US 60% of children between ages 3 and 10 are obese, so I developed a new fitness program that is being piloted by three elementary schools in the Twin Cities. If successful the program will be expanded to other schools. I used to teach nutrition in the public school system so I have experience working with kids. Schools really support this project so my goal is to work with the Minnesota Department of Education to implement the program throughout the Twin Cities. (102 words)
Elevator Speech—specialized audience

- I am Marc Jones, a third year doctoral student in public health at the U of MN. I developed the “Fun Step” program to prevent childhood obesity by engaging students and their families. The program is being piloted by Andersen, Emerson and Como Park. I am using the Lightner-Gamble instrument to assess the program and hope to expand it to other schools. I taught nutrition at Washburn so I have experience working with kids. Schools really support this project and my goal is to work with the Fit for Life program (within MN Dept. of Ed.) and implement “Fun Step” throughout the Twin Cities. So, what do you think about the Commissioner’s 7 point plan for healthy kids? (118 words)
Exercise—Let’s Focus on You!

- You go to a conference where Bill Gates is the keynote speaker. During his keynote, he mentions that his foundation will devote $2 million dollars to support individual graduate students in all disciplines with their research projects. A single award is up to $50,000. After the keynote, you happen to get on the elevator with Mr. Gates. You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to him before he gets to his floor. You want to make a good and memorable impression. What will you say?
Drafting—Focus on You

- What is your academic or professional interest?
- What is the problem or gap in research?
- What are you contributing/makes you unique in your field?
- What have you done or have to offer?
- What’s exciting about your work or research?
Example for Web Design (formal)

• I am May Vang. I am in my final year of the Master’s in the Digital Communications Program. I specialize in making websites easy to navigate and user friendly. For example, I recently contracted with West Metro Symphony because their old website held dynamic data about their rehearsal and concert schedules, and they needed their website designer to make the updates every time the schedule changed. I created a new website for them and now the board members can make these changes themselves, saving them both time and money. If you can use Word, I can show you how you can easily update your own website. (106 words)

Adapted from http://improvandy.com/elevator-pitch/examples-of-a-30-second-elevator-pitch/
Example for Web Design (informal)

• Have you ever tried to find contact information for someone at a company you’re doing business with, but was unable to because their website was very confusing and disorganized? Well, what I do is redesign websites for small businesses that need a stronger, more coherent online presence. By learning as much as I can about the company, I create a strategic plan for reinventing an existing website to be more functional and user-friendly. Do you know of any small businesses that may need a website reinvention? (86 word count)

Source: Alyssa Gregory at Sitepoint
Delivery

- Show enthusiasm and confidence
- Eye-to-eye contact
- Don’t over rehearse, won’t sound natural
- Remember it is an introduction to a longer conversation
- Practice, revise, practice