

Crafting Your Elevator Speech

The job market is competitive, and getting the job you desire is a competition. Your fellow competitors are your classmates with the same degree and the entire nation of graduates or interns with the same degree.

Your goal is to differentiate yourself from the competition. Highlight and promote what uniqueness you bring that matches what the employer desires and thus why you should get the job. In an increasingly competitive job field, it's important to distinguish yourself from the leagues of other students and job applicants. Whether you're at a networking event, cold-calling a potential employer, or attending a job interview, it is critical to be able to promote yourself in 90 seconds or less. This short "sales" pitch is often referred to as the personal commercial or elevator speech.

Your Elevator Speech (or personal commercial) is about you, what you have done, and why they should hire you. This needs to be concise and focused on your RECENT accomplishments it can provide an overview of who you are, what you have done, and what you are seeking. It can allow you to articulate your career goals clearly and, at the same time, create a positive, lasting impression with the listener

This commercial/speech can include:

- Your employment background and career aspirations
- Your education and work highlights
- Your current situation and what you are looking for (the purpose of the conversation)

Remember to use your commercial/speech to stimulate their interest in learning more about you and to confine your introduction to the average attention span.

When to Use It:

- When responding to "Tell me about yourself"
- Informational Interviewing
- Networking
- Interviewing
- Career Fairs
- Happenstance meeting with a new person
- Any social situation

What to Include:

The purpose of the speech is to paraphrase who you are and what you have to offer. It answers the question that may or may not have been asked: "So, tell me about yourself." The most effective way to tell someone about yourself is to focus on your most relevant attributes for that specific person.

Keep it short. You don't want your speech turning into a Shakespearean monologue. When you're crafting your commercial, take a moment to identify the one or two key points you want to drive home.

What do you want the listener to remember about you? Talk about one or two of your most impressive skills or accomplishments, or talk about your interest, niche, or passion.

Using the 90 seconds (or given time for the situation): Discuss your past in 60 seconds or 2/3 of the time and present the big picture. Think about what is important to the listener, and target the conversation in that direction. The other 1/3 of the time should be spent telling what you want or can do for them. (future)

Start your Commercial:

1. Write a brief summary that can include: where you're from, how you chose Mercer, your major and other relevant educational information, a discussion your job-related experiences, and a discussion of your key skills/abilities.
2. Current/Future – Write a description of what you are doing now and what you want to do in the future. Be as specific as needed.
3. Question –If appropriate, what questions may open the two-way discussion?
4. Discuss your current situation and/or desired future (in 30 seconds or one-third of the “perceived” time you have)
5. Talk about what you are doing now and what you want to do in the future. Be as specific as possible. Talk about your target jobs, industries, and/or companies. If doing an informational interview or if
6. Networking, mentioning actual names of organizations can help. If it is in an interview, your talk should target to that organization and the job you are seeking.
7. **Example:** “I am seeking a quality internship experience for next summer. I would like to do something in the medical device field with companies such as ABC Devices and Medical Stuff USA. I hope to get exposure to the more technical side of medical devices...”
8. If you are informational interviewing or networking, ask a question of the listener.
9. Asking a question is polite and a way to promote two-way discussion.
10. **Example:** “Do you have any other ideas?”
11. **Example:** “You’re familiar with the industry. What other companies should I be considering?”
12. **Example:** “In what other fields do you think I should look?”

Example “I am from Queens NY, and came to Mercer because of its national recognition and its strength in adult education programs. I majored in Human services because of my interests in Civic engagement and my leadership abilities. I see that it can allow me to use both my motivational and people skills. I coupled with a minor in Educational studies to better get an understanding of the educational side of the field. Last summer I participated in Mercer’s Study aboard program where lived in a village in Senegal West Africa to work and served with a variety of non-profits organizations whose mission is to help improve the life’s of the Senegalese natives. I was able to go into field and experience first-hand the challenges of working with little or no resources and provide assistance by sharing my knowledge and skills.

Perfecting your Speech

Practice makes perfect. In practicing, you’ll notice different things, like your rhythm might be off, your tongue might trip over certain words, or it just might not feel like it’s really you. For some personalities, it totally makes sense for them to say, “Hello. My name is Jones, and I’m completely committed to doing training and helping people become the best they can be. That’s my passion.” But if you’re shy and soft-spoken and say, “I’m passionate about math,” that passion just won’t come across. It’s very important that the style of your speech reflects you as an individual.

If you feel your elevator speech sounds forced, practice in front of a mirror or in front of friends to help make it feel more natural. And if you’re worried about the length of your speech, practice it while riding in an elevator or use a timer. You never know when an opportunity will arise, so make sure your speech is always in the back of your mind. The key is to have enough fluency with it to be able to go into the speech whenever an opportunity presents itself.

Conquering your Nerves

If you're at a networking event and find your palms getting sweaty, it's okay to admit, "I'm a bit nervous, but, let me tell you a bit about myself." It will take the pressure off to be perfect. Having an easy question ready to ask the person with whom you're speaking once you've given your speech can also calm you. A simple question like, "why did you choose to work for XYZ company/organization/school system?"

Keeping it Flexible

Your commercial/speech needs to be flexible. You need to customize it and make it responsive to the agenda and needs of the listener. It is important to be able to expand your story when the opportunity presents itself, or to hold back if that is more appropriate. In either case, once you are comfortable with your basic story, you will find telephoning, networking, and interviewing to be easier and more rewarding.

Basic Tips

- Don't forget to include your name when you introduce yourself.
- Make your speech engaging. You want the person to remember you.
- Smile, make eye contact, and, most importantly, make a connection.
- Make sure you communicate the one or two details you want the person to take away.
- Make sure your speech is ninety seconds or less, depending on the situation and audience.
- Make sure the style of your speech reflects your personality.
- Be careful not to come across as too aggressive.

Your Tag Line. In networking meetings you often only have 15 seconds or less to present your marketing case. Ending your short marketing statement with a memorable tag line makes you stand out from others in your field.