



## “So, what do you do”

### The Elevator Pitch

People can only be interested in you, if what you do is of interest to them.

Elevator Pitches are often misunderstood; in principle they are aimed at providing a response to the question “So, what do you do?” but are also an ice-breaker and a marketing pitch all rolled into one. From which a brief, typically 30-60 second (approximately 100 to 150 word) persuasive speech is given to spark interest in a company, product, idea or in yourself.

#### History

The original ‘elevator pitch’ comes from the studio days of Hollywood, when a screenwriter would catch an unsuspecting executive in an elevator and would take the opportunity to ‘pitch’ an idea to the decision-maker.

However the earliest written reference to it being used as a recognised business tool and entering published media was in Philip Crosby’s 1981 book ‘The Art of Getting Your own Sweet Way’.

By 1987 it had become a popular term amongst managers in the US and started to be used more widely in the UK from 1983.

#### Forms

There are two forms of pitch: ‘Written’ and ‘Spoken’. Whilst these may be much the same in context, there are subtle differences.

Some of the phrasing and words may differ. In the written version for example, we may write ‘that is’ whilst in the spoken version we may say ‘that’s’.

In addition, the spoken version will flow more naturally whilst the written version may have more of a grammatical structure. These small changes are generally to ease flow of the spoken version; to make it more natural, believable and to appear less scripted - which is very important.

Whilst the specific content of each elevator pitch will vary, there are some recognised features in terms of approach and construction.

#### The Hook

It must have a hook; eighty percent of its success will depend on the opening headline containing the ‘hook’.

#### Keep it interesting and the key-points memorable

#### How?

Make it succinct (as our cousins over the pond would say ‘short and snappy’). A cluttered pitch is an ineffective one. I have heard 2 minute elevator pitches and been none the wiser as to what the person delivering the pitch actually did.

Focus on what makes YOU different and unique. What you bring to the table that your competitors typically do not. When you are creating your Elevator Pitch, take time to understand the unique selling points that make up your Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

It needs to be about what I refer to as everybody’s favourite radio station ‘W.I.I.F.M.’ – ‘What’s In It For Me’ and therefore it needs to highlight the benefits someone will receive from working with you and not simply be about you; as they will only be interested in you, if what you do is of interest and benefit to them.

Keep it simple; avoiding technical (or clever) terminology and jargon, avoid long words when short ones will do.

Avoid detail that may be of interest to you but irrelevant to the audience at this time.

Make it intriguing and leave questions unanswered, so that they want to know more and explore your proposition.

**Remember...** an elevator pitch is simply an introduction to you, not a sale you have to make.

# Profit Discovery “So, what do you do?”

## The Elevator Pitch

Do not try to be all things to all people; therefore the likely target audience should be considered in relation to the message.

The message needs to be focused on what is important, but important in the context of the recipient and therefore service and client references may change to suit the recipient of the pitch.

If appropriate, speak about what you really are and what excites you about your business (The ‘Spirit of YOU’). It is as much about ‘why we do it’ as simply ‘what we do’. This passion if used wisely can add integrity and makes the delivery more believable.

Where possible, use words that create a visual image and develop a story rather than being a series of statements, facts or sentences loosely joined together.

Be careful if you use humour, it can create a bad first impression. I know of one pharmaceutical company whose team always opened with ‘I sell drugs’. Whilst they believed it to be humorous, in reality it simply created a bad first impression.

Avoid life stories – your pitch is not the place to give the history of your life, career and business. Monologues are bad!

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### Practice

When you believe that your Elevator Pitch is right, practice it to ensure that it flows and that you can deliver it under pressure.

Practice on your own in a mirror and when you are confident it flows and that you have the delivery right, then practice on someone you trust to give you constructive feedback on how your pitch was received, understood and could be further enhanced.

### Is it really that important to my business?

Put simply ‘Yes’, but if you are in doubt, this true story should convince you about the importance of a good elevator pitch for you business.

I was with a client on their stand at a business exhibition and as you would expect we had spent a little time together getting their elevator pitch just right. John, the MD of my clients company saw the Chairman of Regus walking down the aisle close to their stand (Regus provide on-demand office and meeting rooms with 1,800 locations in 100 countries).

John really wanted to do business with Regus but had never been able to get ‘an in’. As the Chairman approached the stand, John stepped forward and said “I want to do business with Regus.” The Chairman stopped, looked John straight in the eye and replied “You have 30 seconds.”

John delivered his elevator pitch; clearly, concisely and with passion. The Chairman simply turned to his PA standing beside him and said “Take their details.” and then walked on.

**Less than a week later John was invited to pitch to The Board of Regus and**

**subsequently won a contract worth £150,000 each year.**

This is my short pitch, which I use at networking events but also to gain interest in our services from those we meet at networking events but also conferences and exhibitions (often in the coffee queue).

This starts with a powerful hook – remember 80% of a successful elevator pitch is down to the ‘hook’.

It is concise, reflects significant benefit (accelerated success), is simple, intriguing and leaves the recipient wanting to know more.

“ For many businesses what they need to be more successful is already there. I work with companies to unlock this potential and accelerate their success in a way that delivers lasting, practical value and makes more of the resources and opportunities that already exists to them.”

Words = 46



### What Dale does is special and he has his own unique way of doing it.

Something distinctive, that works to make you the business leader and business success of tomorrow that you always believed you had the potential to be.

For almost three decades Dale has mentored leaders and teams from new start businesses to some of today’s most successful SME’s. Working with individuals that want to be known as leaders and elevating businesses from being an ‘also-ran’ to respected in their field and award winning at all levels. His unique approach and personal network have been key to driving this success.

As an Accredited CPD Speaker, Dale presents his Practical Insights and Key Lessons for Better Business to thousands of people across the UK, Mainland Europe and North America each year. From those attending conferences and business events to students within academic institutions and teams within a business.

**Unlocking the potential in both you and your business.**