

Denver Business Journal - February 14, 2005

<http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2005/02/14/smallb2.html>

## DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, February 11, 2005

# How to make your 'elevator talk' a floor above the rest

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

First impressions in the high-pressure world of selling are becoming more important. Having an effective "elevator talk" is essential in networking, engaging prospects and opening new doors. First impressions are easily sabotaged with an elevator talk that's unimpressive because it's too long or too short.

Elevator talks should only be for a one- or two-story building -- the time it takes an elevator to traverse one or two floors, and no more than 30 seconds. Advertisers and video production companies change images every two seconds to keep their prospect's interest. People tire quickly of tedious talk about services and credentials.

Avoid common labels and descriptions, because they play into stereotyping. Industry job titles such as consultant, systems analyst, trainer, contractor, therapist, Web designer, engineer, etc. lead to preconceived perceptions that can immediately dampen interest.

Your real aim is to distinguish yourself and your unique capabilities, and create interest. You want your talk to be like a good résumé, creating enough interest on the part of the receiver to want to find out more.

Use the most appealing aspects of your offering from your audience's perspective. Make clear how you do it differently from everyone else.

The payoff is the "what's in it for me?" and doesn't always have to be explicitly stated. Potential clients don't really care about you and your business. They only care about your ability to solve their problems. You have a maximum of 30 seconds to get them to care. The easiest way to connect quickly is to articulate problems they can identify with. The stated or implied payoff is the solution to those problems.

Use your prospect's language and not your own industry or technical jargon. Unfamiliar acronyms cause the listener to tune out.

Trust and rapport develop if you convey that you understand your listener's world. The best way to convey understanding is to use the language of your audience, and know their challenges and problems.

A business owner hearing an introduction at a luncheon asked what a PEO (Professional

Employer Organization) was. A simple, "We solve payroll, personnel and insurance problems" is stronger and clearer.

Try this exercise: Pretend you have to explain what you do to a fifth-grade elementary class. Use no jargon or fuzzy words -- just simple talk. Then increase the grade level while keeping the simplicity.

Write out in 20 words or less how you do what you do. Describe your process and edit it until you have a creative way of conveying your message that stimulates the listener to want to know how you do what you do.

For example, if you're in a staff-leasing business, you could say, "I am in the staff-leasing business," which isn't unique. More intriguing is, "I provide quality emergency employees for businesses like yours, so that when one of your own employees is gone for any reason, there is no loss of productivity or reduction of services to your customers."

A specialty advertising products company says, "We impact your image, create sales and ensure repeat business by keeping your name in front of customers and prospects."

After you develop the best elevator speech possible, you should test and re-test it with prospects. Tighten it up so you'll know what works and what doesn't. When people start responding favorably, continue with the same message.

You may become tired of it, but remember that others are hearing it for the first time. Even if they've heard it before, the repetition reinforces it for a longer-lasting effect.

So tell me, what is it you do again?

*Garry Duncan is principal of Denver-based Leadership Connections, a sales training company. Reach him at 303-462-1277 or [garry@leadershipconnections.com](mailto:garry@leadershipconnections.com).*

*All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.*