

ATTACHMENT 8: THE 30-SECOND ELEVATOR PITCH FOR NON-PROFITS

Source: Mathias, Devin T. 2011, *10 Elevator Pitch Tips for Non-Profits*, Through Nonprofit Eyes- The More Donors Blog , viewed October 30, 2013, <http://blog.moredonors.com/2010/09/10-elevator-pitch-tips-for-non-profits.html>

(Devin T. Mathias is a Consultant with Marts & Lundy and can be contacted at mathias@martsandlundy.com)

The **elevator pitch** is the quick description of your cause that will motivate a listener to ask for more information, invest in your efforts, and/or encourage others to engage with your organization. In written and verbal form, it is one of the key fundraising tools that every employee and advocate of the organization needs to know by heart. The elevator pitch contains the following information in ideally 30 seconds:

- How: How focused leadership is on the organization's mission?
- What: What is the organization focused on and trying to do?
- Why: Why should someone support this organization and how are we different from everyone else doing it? (the case for support)

Granted, if there is a lack of clarity on a), it is likely b) & c) are murky. The same can be said for c) if b) is unclear. More importantly, if your leadership can't speak about why to invest in your organization, why would anyone on the team be able to do so? ...And why should a donor invest in you?

It is important for everyone in your non-profit to have a sense for the elevator pitch, even if they are "backroom" staff who many rarely or never engage with constituents. There is a sense of focus and importance that comes with an employee fine-tuning the elevator pitch.

Top 10 Tips:

- Think short - no shorter than 30 seconds and no longer than 3 minutes. Time it. Practice it. Get feedback from your invested donors and board members.
- If your topic is complex, use the "anchor & twist" format to orient your audience. Anchor on your organization's impact - we help people lift themselves up, we help students graduate from college and make an impact in the community, we prevent childhood obesity, etc. - and twist to the investment that will make the end result happen.
- Don't wing it, script it. Once you've figured out how to explain something well, there is NO value in novelty. Tell it the same (effective) way every time. (* While you should script it, it does not mean you can't improve your script over time via input, etc.) Practice in front of your peers and colleagues and critique how engaging you are. You don't get a second chance to make a first impression.
- "Why" comes before "What." People will understand better what you're doing if they first know why you're doing it. Here's an example: "Most people invest some of their savings and give some of it away to charity. Wouldn't it be nice if you could do both at once -- get interest AND impact? That's why we invented the Calvert Community Investment Notes."
- Mandatory: Include a story. For a nonprofit pitch, talk about the people or cause you help. Put a true face to the aide.
- Know what you want and include an "ask." This does not have to be a request for a financial contribution - it can be an "ask" for volunteer work, ideas or even just more time to discuss your organization. Invite them to be engaged with your efforts.
- Tell "who." Illustrate why you and your team are the right people to implement your efforts and why you will be successful. People like winners. Illustrate why you and your co-workers are winners.
- Use questions as well as statements. This shifts your audience from questioning and challenging your idea to wanting to assist you.
- Delivery matters. In the restaurant business, it is a common training tip for wait staff to say something like "Your customer should never know if you're having a bad day." The same goes for your elevator pitch - have passion, clarity and focus. Make it clear you are not just an employee of the non-profit, but a believer, ambassador and active participant.
- Think through all the non-verbal aspects of your pitch. Videotape yourself. Practice in front of others. You get one chance to make your best impression.

Your goals:

- a) Make your audience curious - you want them to leave wondering what they could do for you and what more they could learn about your cause.
- b) Get your audience to discuss your pitch with others.
- c) Have an opportunity to revisit the audience members to firm up investment of time, talent and money.

Other tips:

Put yourself immediately in the mindset of your audience; don't assume they know anything about what you do or how you do it

List out the end benefits of your activities, not the activities themselves. For example, health charities may campaign and lobby on behalf of people with a particular condition but what they are actually doing is perhaps "helping society understand XXX to ensure people with XXX get a fairer deal from government and the public"

Focus on one or two core benefits. Employ a wordsmith if necessary but you need to find a way of articulating your services in the collective, not individually

Only use lay terms and avoid jargon altogether

Include evidence to back up your claims. This might be the number of people you've helped, how long you've been established, awards you have won for your work (from the recipient's perspective, not the sector's)

Make it no more than one paragraph long

Look at your marketing materials, campaigns, Impact Reports etc. and try to find your pitch in there. Does the message come through loud and clear? If it does, your organization has a clarity of purpose on which all your communications are being built and your target audiences will be receiving consistent messages about what you do. If not, what kind of story are you telling? Is it as compelling as it could be or do you have multiple stories which could simply confuse your audiences?