

Crafting Your Elevator Speech

University of Oregon, January 27, 2017

Dr. Mark Samples

www.mark-samples.com

Why elevator speeches?

- An elevator speech allows you to quickly communicate who you are, what you do, and how it's valuable.
- An elevator speech teaches us how to create interest in what we're doing.

What is an elevator speech?

The elevator speech is the headline for a deeper relationship.

Four common myths about elevator speeches:

- Myth #1: People already care about what I do.
- Truth: Attention is a scarce resource, and has to be earned.
- Myth #2: People should understand everything I do all at once.
- Truth: A little mystery can be a good thing.
- Myth #3: I am totally unique.
- Truth: Connect your work to something your listener already understands.
- Myth #4: I don't need to plan out my elevator speech, the words will come to me in the moment.
- Truth: A consistent elevator speech will build your brand.

Three principles to remember:

Principle #1: Your social common sense supersedes any of these rules.

Principle #2: An elevator speech is actually not about you, it's about how what you do relates to others.

- No click bait please. Be empathetic and authentic.

Principle #3: It is your responsibility to communicate, not theirs to understand.

The goal of an elevator speech is to get from blank stare to “Wow, tell me more.”

How to craft an elevator speech: Problem-Value-Benefit

One effective approach that I learned from Donald Miller at StoryBrand (www.storybrand.com):

- State a problem,
- describe the value you have created in response,
- show how it benefits your fans.

The problem statement:

- A top of mind problem for your target audience.
- In addition to a problem, it can also outline a major desire or set context.
 - Example: “Parents with young children don’t get to go to as many concerts as they’d like...”

The value you have created:

- This is the solution you’ve created for the problem.
- Make the solution concrete in some way.
- Your solution should connect to your broader brand identity.
 - “so I created a concert series with hip music and on-site child care...”

The benefit your fans experience:

- This is the benefit your fans will get from you.
- Paint a picture of what they're life is like after they experience you.
 - “so that parents can have an evening of civilized entertainment without having to worry ‘what will the kids be doing?’”

Some examples of the P-V-B approach:

- “Parents with young children don’t get to go to as many concerts as they’d like, so I created a concert series with hip music and on-site child care, so that parents can have an evening of civilized entertainment without having to worry ‘what will the kids be doing?’”
- “Most parents of young piano students don’t know how to help their kids get better during the week, so I created a membership site where they can get essential, plug-and-play resources and strategies to help their kids improve between lessons. What this means is that kids get better faster, there are fewer fights around the piano bench, and parents can squeeze every dollar of value out of their monthly tuition payment.”
- “A lot of musicians don’t know what to do when it comes to turning their talent into income. So I created a 4-week online workshop to teach musicians the essentials of creative arts entrepreneurship, so that they can learn the mindsets, strategies, and techniques to create a career that's both artistically fulfilling and financially sustainable.”

Now what?

Here is the process for crafting your elevator speech over time:

draft — test — feedback — revise

Draft your first P-V-B elevator speech on the next page.

Your turn: craft your elevator speech

Problem/desire/context: (“A lot of people...,” “People often...,”)

Value you create: (“So I created...”)

Benefit to your fans: (“So that they...”)

For more elevator speech resources, and a pdf version of this worksheet (and the answers!), go to www.mark-samples.com/elevator.