

Wisdom for Wednesday

Positive messages for daily living. Pass on the good feeling – forward this to your clients so they can reap the benefits as well.

The Elevator Pitch ...

We've all experienced that uncomfortable moment when someone turns to you at a social event and asks bluntly: *"So, what do you do?"* Unless you're a consummate professional who plays the game regularly, you will likely splutter a convoluted explanation that rambles so long you can see your audiences' eyes glaze over; or be so vague that their eyebrows levitate and their whole body turns into a question mark: obviously they have no idea what you are talking about. And, no matter how you respond, at some later point you are going to reflect on the conversation and wonder how you could have expressed yourself better and if you fluffed an opportunity.

The simple solution is to have a short descriptive sentence prepared and ready to produce at any time and in any place – hence the 'Elevator Pitch' tag. Your explanation should not exceed the time it takes to travel up or down an elevator (preferably one or two floors) – or approximately 30 seconds. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be able to tweak it for different occasions and changes in your career path. My most recent Elevator Pitch is: *"I'm a retired International Corporate Change Management Facilitator currently volunteering as a Small Business Adviser for Community Connect clients."*

Follow this simple process:

1. Write it down;
2. Edit it to make it concise;
3. Run it by people you trust, and remember to speak clearly and slowly (it is not a competition to see how much information you can get into the allotted time);
4. Once you've fine-tuned it, memorize it and practice, practice, practice;
5. AND always have a business card ready to hand out at the end – do not hand it out while you are talking as it will be a distraction.

Now you'll always be prepared to make the most of any future opportunity. Who knows who you may be talking to, who they know and what they do, and regardless, view every contact as a networking prospect.

The concept is a very valuable business tool and can just as easily be applied to statements about a service, product or project and become a major part of your sales arsenal. In this instance, since you obviously have more time - a scheduled meeting, you would follow a variation on the format depending on what outcome you are attempting to achieve.

For example - introducing a new product:

1. Brief description of the product: name, category (where it fits into the current focus);
2. Your goal or the challenge you are attempting to overcome: your role and what you do;
3. Your proposed solution: communicate your USP (unique selling proposition);
4. Key benefits of your solution;
5. Engage with a question that requires more than a 'yes' or 'no': *"How do you see this concept/product fitting with what you do?"*

A major benefit of this strategy is that in preparing for the delivery it helps you clarify your own understanding and gives a clearer perspective of what is really important – the priorities. Keep it succinct, compelling and descriptive (write a visual picture); record it; and (once again) that all important component: practice, practice, practice.

Lynette Davies