

# PERFECTING YOUR PITCH

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*Using an “elevator pitch” in networking situations is an effective way to quickly introduce yourself and establish your personal brand.*

## ***What is an elevator pitch?***

Imagine stepping into an elevator in a downtown office building. As the door closes, the person standing next to you says, “Hi, I’m a recruiter at your dream company. Tell me about yourself.” Are you prepared for this? Could you concisely introduce yourself, your background and your career goals in the time of a quick elevator ride – 30 seconds or less?

## ***Why is an elevator pitch important?***

In most situations, you won’t have time to tell someone your life story or to list every accomplishment. The best elevator pitches provide enough background information and enthusiasm so the other person wants to continue the conversation.

***Here is a simple process for developing a strong and effective elevator pitch.***

### **1. Know yourself.**

The first step to introducing yourself effectively is knowing who you are and what makes you unique. Ask yourself the following questions and jot down your answers:

- Which of your previous jobs, even if they were part-time jobs, internships or volunteer positions, provided you with experience relevant to what you hope to do now? If none, what about your college major or extracurricular activities?

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- What are your strongest skills?

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- What are your strengths and passions, career-wise?

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- What kinds of jobs, companies or industries are you pursuing right now?

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- What can you say about yourself that will set you apart from other internship or entry-level candidates? What makes you memorable and special?

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## 2. Craft your pitch.

Think of your pitch in three parts:

- *Who are you?* Remember your primary goal is simply to introduce yourself. Share your name and place yourself in context by explaining what school you attend, what you're studying or where you currently work.
- *What are your major accomplishments/passions/unique skills?* Leverage the skills you listed earlier and frame them in a way that is meaningful to a potential employer or networking contacts. What can you say that will make a recruiter remember you or networking contacts want to know more about you?
- *What do you want/Where are you going?* This is the part of your pitch that lets the other person know what you're looking for and the topic you're interested in talking about. Don't be pushy or aggressive, but do be forthright about the fact that you're looking for a job.

## 3. Practice, practice, practice!

When possible, practice your pitch in front of a trusted friend, family member or career coach and tape yourself to see how you come across.

Finally, be sure to tailor your delivery to the interpersonal circumstances of the moment: the goal is to maintain a conversational tone and not sound rehearsed. Think of the above elements as "sound bites" that you can mix, match and cater to each unique interaction.

### Some Examples:

"Hi, I'm Kate Spitler. I'll be receiving my Bachelor's in Accounting in April from Calvin College and I interned last spring at Deloitte in the auditing division. I'm also the Vice President of the Calvin Business Forum, a student organization on campus. I'm currently seeking an auditor position in the Chicago area, which is why I'm here at this conference."

"Hi, my name is Todd Smith. I'm currently a junior at Calvin College, majoring in business with a marketing concentration. I'm also minoring in Chinese language and I spent last semester in Beijing, where I studied and had an internship with a small American marketing firm working with Beijing's tourism agency. I saw that your agency has added some Chinese clients lately, which is why I'm eager to apply for one of your internships."

"Hi, my name is Mark Lewis. I'm an organizational communications major at Calvin College and I'm pursuing internships in the nonprofit field. I'm really active with several organizations on campus, helping them design their websites. I'm also a big advocate of social media and have helped some nonprofit organizations create their Facebook fan pages. I saw that your organization is doing a lot of great things with social media..."

*Handout adapted from PriceWaterhouseCoopers Personal Brand Week eBook*