

The Elevator Pitch – 30 Seconds to a Great First Impression

1. BE SPECIFIC, BUT NOT TOO DETAILED

One of the key mistakes people make when answering what they do is to automatically start at the macro level, with their academic major or job category. For example: “I’m in IT,” or “I’m a Psych major”

While such broad descriptions may be true, they’re far too abstract. You can be sure that the less specific your answer, the more likely that the other person’s eyes are glazing over. Instead of dealing in vague descriptions, focus on the problems you solve... “I’m particularly interested in exploring how the use of social media impacts youth self esteem.” By talking about how you help people, you become instantly relatable.

Remember, your cocktail pitch doesn’t need to tell your entire story; it doesn’t even need to cover all the important points. A great pitch succeeds if it draws interest from the other person and gets them to want to know more.

2. SPEAK LIKE A HUMAN BEING

Yes, you should prepare and practice your pitch, but it should always be simple, natural, and in plain English. And if you find yourself stuck on the receiving end of a stuffy, jargon-filled elevator pitch, try to shift the dynamic with a question like, “so what does that mean?”

3. EXUDE CONFIDENCE

Whether you’re dating or networking, confidence is a major turn-on. When answering what you do, don’t mumble through the response. Definitely never sound as if you’re apologizing.

Yes, in the digital age, people can have incredibly niche roles and it’s all easy to assume that others won’t understand or won’t care about your [augmented reality](#) company. By making that assumption you’ve lost their interest before ever opening your mouth. No matter how obscure your academic program or job, begin with the assumption that the other person will be interested.

4. ASK QUESTIONS

Sometimes we become so focused on how to answer basic questions that we forget to actually make conversation. The best way to be remembered is to build a connection. For this reason, never consider the other person “your audience.” Ask them a few questions as well.

5. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

While some people may look like natural networkers, in actuality, very few create a perfect pitch on the fly. Practice in your head, in front of the mirror, or a video camera. Then try it out on a group of friends or colleagues, and ask what specific points they remember. That instant feedback will help you determine what to cut or change in order to make a connection and be memorable.

And don’t worry about making mistakes. You’ll have plenty of opportunities to learn through trial and error. The best way to improve is to just practice. You never know whom you’ll meet and what opportunities that will bring your way.