



Episode 20: How to Create the Best (and Easiest) Elevator Pitch

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Let's imagine that we're meeting for the first time, and I say to you, tell me about yourself. How ready are you with a great personal introduction?

If you're like some of my clients, you have an idea about what you'd say, although you might not have the exact words at the tip of your tongue. You can come up with some phrases, although you wish you could say them with more confidence and authority.

Today, I'm going to help you with that. I'm going to share the 3 pieces to creating your best personal introduction, so that you always feel confident when you get that question, tell me about yourself.

First, though, let's get clear what we mean by a personal introduction. A personal introduction is also sometimes called an elevator pitch. Your introduction or pitch is a brief explanation of who you are and what you do, that you share with someone you're talking with.

The goal of your personal introduction or elevator pitch is to start a conversation, to pique the listener's curiosity about you, so that they say, interesting, tell me more. Think of it as the appetizer of the conversation.

Because of that, there are a few guidelines to keep in mind. Here are some dos and don'ts for your personal introduction. Do keep it short and sweet. As you'll hear in a few moments, the best elevator pitches are under a minute and share 3 key pieces of information. Don't go on and on – an elevator pitch is not sharing your whole resume. Do be authentic, you get to be you – if you're funny, add some humor! Don't be too self-deprecating. Please be confident and own your strengths. Do make it easy on the listener's ears and brain; after all, there's another person who is listening to you. So don't use industry words or terms that are confusing or ones they might not understand.

Here's a great example of what not to do – and it comes from my husband. He's a medicinal chemist by training, which means that his job is to help discover and create new medicines and treatments to hopefully cure diseases. Early in his career, years ago, when someone would ask him what he did, he would answer flippantly, "I make drugs." He thought he was being funny. And when he said this, I would look at the listener to see how it was received. I noticed that the listener never quite knew how to respond. What did that mean? Was he doing something illegal? An introduction like that stopped conversation, rather than starting it.

The goal of an elevator pitch is to begin a conversation, to create interest and curiosity between 2 people, so that they can get to know each other.

Now, you might be thinking, do I really need an elevator pitch? I'm not applying for a job – do I need to be thinking about this now?

The answer is Yes. A big yes.

First, if you are going to network and build relationships – and this is something that you should be doing all the time, whether or not you are happily in an organization or looking for a new role – you are going to want a strong personal introduction. Don't let not having one hold you back and keep you from networking.

Second, and more importantly, creating a personal introduction is a tool that first and foremost helps you. It is a cognitive exercise to help you find clarity and confidence. Doing the exercise of creating an elevator pitch helps you clarify and speak to your strengths more fully, because taking the time to create one means taking the time to get clear about your superpowers, your purpose, and the people you want to impact.

And then when you share your introduction with others, you get to practice leadership and confidence. You get to show up as your best self as you describe who you are and what you bring to the world.

OK, now that you know why you need an elevator pitch, let's talk about how to create one easily. Do you know that word game Mad-Libs™? It's sort of like that. There are 3 big pieces for you to fill in.

Grab some paper and pause this podcast, if you need to, so that you have something to write on and with.

Ready? Here is the template. Write down these 3 sentence stems.

- I work with (blank)
- To do (blank)
- So that (blank)

Those are the 3 pieces that you will fill in. I work with ... to do... so that

Let's start with the first piece. I work with: blank.

Who do help? The other day, I was working with a client on her elevator pitch. Her first version of this was somewhat bland. She said, I work with IT teams. Well, that might be true, and here's where you get to make it more interesting. After asking her more questions about whom she worked with, she elaborated on this first piece to come up with the following: I work with global internal and external analytics-focused IT teams. Now, doesn't that sound much clearer and much more impressive?

The next piece of the elevator pitch is the action part. To do blank. This is where I suggest you brainstorm verbs and action descriptions. My client's first pass at this piece was to say "to design and develop programs." Again, that might be true, although it doesn't tell me anything about her and her superpowers. After coaching her a bit on her strengths, here is what she came up with: I work with global internal and external analytics-focused IT teams to design and deliver targeted and customized, high-value solutions. You see how that sounds a bit more interesting, and might make the listener curious about the types of solutions and how they are customized? Again, the key with your elevator pitch is to engage the interest of the listener.

The last part of the elevator pitch is about the impact you have. It's about your purpose and what lights you up and makes your days have meaning. Talking about purpose feels good, and there's always opportunity to do this more.

For the 3rd part of the elevator pitch, my client's initial draft was: So that the business can make more money. Now, here's the thing: money is definitely important, and I would invite you to go beyond the money to think about other ways to describe your impact.

After reflection, here's what my client came up with: I work with global internal and external analytics-focused IT teams to design and deliver targeted, customized, high-value solutions so that the business can feel confident that its processes are efficient and streamlined, and supporting its financial growth.

When she read her personal introduction the final time, she felt so much more confident. She realized that she actually does important work, and that now she has a way to share that as she networks to explore her next opportunity.

Let's bring this to you. In the next few weeks, I invite you to revisit and revise your personal introduction, to use it as an opportunity to get clear about what you do, what you're known for, and who you impact.

Here are the 3 pieces for you to fill in:

I work with _____

To do _____

So that _____

Have fun with it and get creative, so that your listener says, oh, tell me more!

Thank you again for listening and being part of my community. If you'd like personal help crafting your exciting elevator pitch, please email me at deb@debelbaum.com.

The more confident you are, the more conversations and opportunities will open up for you, moving you in the right direction for you, right now. Until next time!