

ELEVATING YOUR BUSINESS WITH YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH

By Craig Harrison

Source: National Association of Catering Executives

Let's break each down to its component parts. Both opening lines tantalized. Whether you open with a provocative statement, a bit of mystery or something funny, the objective is to grab a stranger's attention. You've got to draw them in. Starting out by simply stating "I'm a caterer" is great for people taking a census. I challenge you to cast your occupation in its most ennobling light, to captivate your listener. A midwife "brings life into this world" and a nutritionist teaches people "how to behave in front of food." I even know an IRS agent who simply tells people he's a government fundraiser. What is it that you do in your occupation which can capture a stranger's attention? (For a useful tool on casting your occupation in its most ennobling light go to <http://www.craigspeaks.com/Recast.doc> to download a free worksheet.)

Next, some deliverables, also known as features, are mentioned. In my case I mention what I do: keynotes, training and off-sites, to allow people to begin envisioning how my services can be utilized. And I mention the benefits: helping others aspire and achieve, and also helping them to communicate more effectively. That way, they don't have to decipher how 'what I do' can benefit them.

In the case of Sandy, she stresses some features (whose language she speaks) and the benefits (how her handling of negotiations and implementation offload clients' headaches and free them to enjoy the event). Many elevator speeches end with a question to both involve the listener and glean new information which helps qualify them in the speaker's eyes. A caterer might ask questions about the nature and frequency of special events requiring catering services, or who the company contact is for such services. Questions that can't be answered with just a "yes" or "no" will engender meaningful information to determine whether a good fit exists. Another tip is to include a take-away: something the stranger can keep of yours to reinforce the new connection just made. Whether it's a business card, a magnet, pin or pen with contact information on it, or other curio item, it goes with them and keeps you in their field of vision thereafter. I knew a man who was turning the world green one garden at a time (a gardener) whose elevator speech ended when he handed out his business card. What's memorable about that? It was green!

So what are you waiting for? Craft and practice your Elevator Speech. Try it out in the mirror, and among your friends and colleagues. What feedback do they give you? Call your answering machine and leave it for yourself. Now listen to it. Are you confident? Does it flow off your tongue? Is it memorable? The true test comes when you unveil it with strangers. Are they engaged? Do they want to know you better? Are you giving them a clear sense of your deliverables and uniqueness? Tweak yours as accordingly. When you craft and deliver your sixteen second elevator speech the doors to success will be opening any second!