



Developing an elevator speech

Whether at a formal networking event or having a chance encounter with a stranger, a nonprofit's staff and board should be armed with a short description of the organization and its impact.

Remember, you only have a few moments to make a first impression. You should introduce yourself and the organization briefly in an engaging and conversational way.

Often referred to as an elevator speech, this short well-crafted statement should be concise but detailed enough to inform a potential supporter about the organization in the amount of time it takes to ride in an elevator.

Everyone in a nonprofit, from volunteers to staff and board members, should know and be able to use this statement to help others understand the organization and engage them in your work. Your elevator speech should not be the organization's mission statement. Mission statements do not translate well and people often don't find a mission statement compelling.

An elevator speech should be short; three to four short sentences, about 50-100 words and take less than 30 seconds to deliver. A good elevator speech will grab your listener's attention by saying a lot in few words and leave your audience wanting to know more.

Keep in mind the following when writing your elevator speech:

Practice makes perfect. You should write, edit and write again. Practice your speech out loud to see how it sounds, how long it is and gauge if it's understandable and interesting. The speech should sound like its conversational and "off the cuff."

Skip the alphabet soup. Keep it simple. Avoid using jargon, acronyms and terminology that others outside your organization or field wouldn't understand.

What you do and why you do it. Briefly talk about what you do, how you do it and why it's important for your community. Start with a simple impact statement answering each of the following questions with short one to two-word answers. What do you do? Why do you do it? How do you do it? Build off your impact statement.

Show the impact and tell a story. Don't just give a statistic of how many people you serve. Bring a face to that number. Talk about your work in a real way, letting your audience know the impact and the importance for the people you serve.

Call to action. At the end, call your listeners to action. Tell your listeners about an upcoming event, how to volunteer or where to donate. Send your listener to your website for more information.

Prepare a 30-Second Elevator Speech

Can you make a **compelling statement** for support about your organization in 30 seconds? Try this exercise to help you concisely state your case in your fundraising efforts.



Imagine yourself in the elevator of a major bank and the president of the local community foundation appears. She notices your briefcase bulging with literature and says, "You're obviously on your way to a major presentation. What does Save The Earth do?" During the next 90 seconds you have a great opportunity to state your case. To create your own elevator speech, answer the following four questions.

- Where has your organization been?
- Where is it today?
- Where is it headed in the future?
- What will it cost to get there?

Write this out, practice it and read it aloud until you've got it down to 30 seconds.

Write an Elevator Speech

All organizations have a value proposition – a unique combination of attributes that makes them stand out. Is yours documented? If not, go to your organization's Web site and then visit competitors' sites. Make notes about what makes your organization different. Has your company won any service awards? Do you have a unique proven approach? More experience working in a difficult service area? A fuller range of services? Write down who your constituents are, what you give them, and why they should work with you over another organization.

Now convert these notes to plain talk. Think of a story that shows the value proposition in action. Here's an example from an HMO:

I work at Morningsun Health, an HMO that specialized in strong services to uninsured seniors. Let me give you an example. A new client called a month ago and we found out that she's just paid for a wheelchair so we called the supplier to get it covered retroactively. She had only called to find out if her drugs could be covered.

This story happens to be true. Good organizations have good stories. Figure out how to tell yours.

FOUNDATION EXAMPLES

The Community Foundation helps donors fulfill their charitable desires. Our foundation was established in 2001 as a non-profit, public charity to provide a locally managed resource for establishing endowments. Here is an example, Cliff and Rubye Angleton were lifelong residents in Butler County. They owned a successful business and gave much to their community during their lifetime. But they wanted to leave more, their estate established a scholarship endowment that will help men and women pursue degrees in the medical field. This legacy impact is a true testament to what the Community Foundation is about - Supporting donors with the vehicles for gifts that make a long lasting impact. Presently we are trying to gain awareness about our organization so that more funds are established, which leads to more grants to the community. Do you know anyone that might be interested?

The Community Foundation is a non-profit public foundation that manages endowments for community good. Endowments are established based on a donors' intent – the cause or passion that is dear to them. Distribution of grants is managed by the Foundation – ensuring the charitable purpose of the donor is honored – scholarships, animal welfare, community revitalization. Another specific example is our KT Weidemann Children's Endowment. The earned income from this fund will be distributed to qualified



organizations that help children right here in BC. Are you interested in learning more? Would you like to donate to one of our existing funds, or possibly establish a fund in your name?

A community foundation is a unique type of charity that provides donors a flexible, accountable, impactful way to make current charitable gifts as well as gifts through their wills. The Foundation's board is made up of a cross section of donors who know the community's needs and its nonprofits. Your gifts can support specific charities, multiple charities, a field of charitable interest, or to make grants from your fund to the community's identified greatest needs. All gifts can benefit from the knowledge, direction and oversight of the Foundation - from the simplest to the most complex. Let us show you how.