

Momentum

Playbook 3

Nice To Meet You!

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Playbook 3:

Nice To Meet You!

You Step Warily Into The Crowded Room.

A soft murmur of small talk hovers in the air, interrupted only by the occasional clinking glass or piercing laughter from random conversations.

A smiling stranger approaches you and extends her hand. “Welcome! I’m Diane, president of the club.” You shake her hand back.

And then Diane utters four words that will set the tone for how everyone at this club remembers you...

“What do you do?”

This week, we’re going to talk about elevator pitches and sound bites to help you make the right brand impression crisply and consistently. In a later module, we’re going to refine this in more detail and in another one, we’ll cover the ins and outs of networking to build business.

The Importance of a Good Elevator Pitch

Remember when we talked about the three ways to convey your brand to the world in Week 1?

1. Visually
2. Verbally
3. Experientially

Your **elevator pitch** is part of how you convey your brand *verbally*. It’s a 30-second description to quickly articulate what you do, who you do it for and what value you provide.

You may have heard the term “elevator pitch.” It’s a succinct, short description of what you do. It’s called this because it refers to meeting an investor on an elevator and having only so many floors to gain their interest.

A traditional elevator pitch is used to lure investors or make sales. But I’m using the term “elevator pitch” as a branding tool to simply articulate what you do and why it matters, be it asking for money or at a cocktail party.

A good elevator pitch needs to be crisp, concise and memorable. **It's meant to be spoken**, so use words you are comfortable saying and yet still clearly convey what you do, as well as communicates passion. When submitting something in writing, you can use different length company descriptors or your personal bio.

You can definitely be clever and witty in your elevator pitch *if it makes sense* but it's not required, especially if that is not necessarily your brand personality or voice.

Don't Let Your Elevator Plummet!

Not preparing for an elevator pitch can be the quickest way to a bad first impression—as well as a missed promotional opportunity. I've seen many small business owners stumble when introducing themselves at a networking event or panel discussion. Sometimes they even leave the audience wondering if they provide a product or a service, the most fundamental point about what they do.

Here are three situations you do not want to find yourself in when asked, “What do you do?” whether for a one-on-one meeting, or group introduction.

Situation #1: “I don't want to pin myself down so I'm going to be intentionally vague.”

“Wow! Okay, um, hi, I'm Phil and I'm an accounting and finance consultant. I do almost any accounting task for my clients. I really just like partnering with them to be successful.”

What does Phil actually *do*? Accounting and finance are really big pots to boil. Does he offer bookkeeping services, does he implement software, does he provide interim CFO services, is he a financial consultant? Who are the best clients for him – freelancers, small businesses, large corporations? What are the key benefits he offers? He tells us none of this. It's as if he's never been asked this question before in his life.

Situation #2: “What I do is so complicated, I can't even explain it.”

Here's another one, which I've, sadly, heard way too often.

“I'm sort of a coach, but I do a lot of different things depending on what clients need. I help women in transition mostly. I combine energy work and coaching....well, it's kind of hard to explain, really.”

This one is slightly better as at least we know her target clients are “women” but what type of women? Women in what type of transition? “Sort of a coach?” “I do lots of different things?” This is all very vague, unsure and unnecessarily complicated. And any description that ends with “it's kind of hard to explain” makes me want to poke my eyes out.

“If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it well enough yourself.”

- Albert Einstein

If you—the person who runs your business and delivers the goods—cannot explain what you do, how do you expect a prospective client or customer to understand why they should care?

Situation #3: Too much jargon + too much marketing fluff = Huh?!

Before you can run, you need to walk. Many people jump straight to sprinkling things with fancy marketing glitter, trendy buzzwords or jumping straight into their mission statement with no explanations because they think it sounds intriguing.

It does. With context.

Expressing your larger mission and vision is great (see Week 2: *What's your WHY?*) but you have to lead with or follow with a clearer explanation.

Some variations of this include:

"I empower women to be their best selves." (*groan!*)

"We offer best-of-breed solutions to help your company maximize productivity and foster growth" (*who ever actually says things this way?*)

"I help companies strategize win-win outcomes." (*great...outcomes for what?*)

Again: **But what do you do?!** (*she pleads and cries*)

You, my friend, are smart and prepared. You will not let this happen to you!

Other elevator pitch killers:

- **Boring and unhelpfully vague:** "We sell software." Cool. What type? To whom? What does it help people do?
- **Dispassionate:** If you're going to tell someone what you or your company does, show some excitement! I've seen people roll their eyes, or even apologize. No bueno.
- **No mention of *the business name*:** Happens more often than you think. Consultants, coaches, even product companies. If you're going to tell me you run a coffee shop or have your own design agency or that you wrote a book, why not also tell me the *name*? Hello, free publicity. I purposely call people out on this to try and help them!

Recipe for a Killer Elevator Pitch

We're going to revisit benefits and differentiators in a later module all about effective messaging. But let's create a tool that you can use right now to attract business. We will refine this later on.

Use this elevator pitch template, also called a **Core Value Proposition**:

(YOUR NAME or BUSINESS NAME) offers/provides/delivers (WHAT) to/for
(WHOM) so they can (BENEFIT 1, 2, 3).

This template answers:

- What you do
- For whom you do it
- Why it matters TO THEM

...in 30 seconds!

Why only three main benefits? Of course, you may offer many, many more but now is not the time to throw everything at someone. We'll cover this more during our messaging module, but for now, remember you only have 30 seconds. What are the most important benefits your audience needs to know about what you do?

Finish Strong

A former track coach of mine once said, "No matter how you run the race, you need to finish strong." Wise words for anything in life!

You don't want to commit the biggest networking sin: ending your pitch with, "Okay, so, um, yeah, that's it. That's what I do." You want to leave a confident impression.

If you like, you can tack on a *bonus tag*: a mission statement or fun, memorable "tagline" to close out your pitch. But don't force it if it feels awkward. We'll talk taglines in a later lesson.

Don't have a clever close? You still must finish strong, either on a confident, final note (no "Ums", and Aws", or fade-out mumbling) or by clearly stating where people can find you, such as a URL or location address.

Here are some examples:

"Yoga Yoga offers yoga and meditation classes to busy people to help them increase energy, reduce stress, and improve their body's flexibility. We like to say that we help disconnected go-getters re-connect their mind, body and soul for complete harmony. Find us at www.yoga-yoga-yeah.com."

Hi, I'm Jane Smith. I write fantasy and sci-fi books for pre-teen readers. My writing ignites their imagination, love for science and desire to explore. You can learn more about my work at www.jane-smith.com.

Hello, I'm Ray DuMond and I'm a financial planner for entrepreneurs, especially those who are married or have families. I help them balance their personal and business assets, save for retirement and college and manage cash flow to fund future growth. I help my clients fund their business so that it fuels their life.

Mine?

Red Slice is a brand consultancy that helps solopreneurs, startups and small businesses craft irresistible brands to stand out from the crowd, attract raving fans and grow their businesses.

Or, when it's appropriate to introduce myself as an individual, I say:

I'm Maria Ross and I'm a brand strategist, author and speaker who believes that cash flow and creativity are not mutually exclusive, I help solopreneurs and small businesses craft an irresistible brand so they can stand out from the crowd, attract raving fans and grow their business.

Memorize to Make It Your Own

Do I say my pitch like a robot every single time? Heck no. You need to adapt. But it helps to initially memorize your pitch. Once you're comfortable, you can improvise.

And, if you have employees or partners, make sure they know the pitch. They can make the words their own over time, but you can rest assured that no matter whom a prospective client meets, they'll get a consistent story. At my past software companies, we gathered feedback from employees before crafting the pitch, to see how they described the business and what resonated for others. This gave us their buy-in. Then we asked every salesperson to memorize it and even quizzed them at sales meetings.

Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Find Your Sound Bites and Brand Words

Marie Forleo talks about having a business and a life you love and is known for clever sayings such as, "Everything is figureoutable." Melissa Cassera talks about running and promoting your business "as if it were a guilty pleasure". I always say that "brand is more than just your logo", "you can't be all things to all people", "share your unique story with the world", "use marketing for good rather than evil" and "make your brand juicy, delicious and irresistible."

Starbucks talks about creating a *third place in the community*. They also invented words like "Frappuccino!" Dove talks about *real beauty* and *nourishing your skin*. Whole Foods uses a slew of words and phrases like *organic, natural, sustainable and humane* and *wholesome*.

Sounds bites and brand words are not taglines per se, but your brand's "language."

You want to create a language for your brand, too, for consistency and differentiation.

Think about how you approach your work, how you treat customers, why you do what you do. Mine those thoughts for little "gems" that you can pepper into your brand story over and over again – and possibly use to spice up your elevator pitch!

Here are some prompts to help you figure out your brand language:

What are the analogies, words or phrases you use over and over? _____

What words are you drawn to? _____

What are the “hot” words or phrases in your industry or area? _____

What phrases or sayings best encompass your philosophy or tone? _____

What is industry jargon you’d like to avoid...or how can you turn it on its head? _____

Document your sound bites and brand words. Use them to:

- Add color and personality to your blog posts or other content
- Create speaking topic titles
- Name your products or offerings
- Create social media memes or images
- Stand out in media interviews

Your Assignment: Craft Your Elevator Pitch and Sound Bites

Use the template discussed earlier to craft a clear elevator pitch you can use right now! Remember, this is meant to be spoken so use words you would actually say:

(YOUR NAME or BUSINESS NAME) offers/provides/delivers _____ (WHAT) to/for
_____ (WHOM) so they can _____ (BENEFIT 1, 2, 3).

For flair, you can add a BONUS TAG on the end, like a tagline or a mission statement.

Your Turn:

Now jot down a list of your sound bites, sexy words, and key phrases that you can turn to over and over again in your content. Revisit the [prompts above](#) to help:

But wait, you're not quite done....

Now: post your elevator pitch (even if it's a raw, draft form or not quite where you'd like it to be) and your sound bites in our nurturing Facebook group. We can help you take it the rest of the way to sensational! And remember, you have a chance to win a fabulous prize for your efforts, just by showing up and sharing.

Remember, we are here to encourage you and provide any feedback. If you're like me, often it's fellow collaborators that help me polish my ideas to a glossy sheen.

Again, I'm going to reward you all year long, so don't lose your MOMENTUM: Post it now and keep that train moving!

One Last Thing

Don't worry if your elevator pitch is not "pitch perfect" yet. You're going to refine your elevator pitch and sound bites in a later messaging module, once you nail down more of your brand foundation.

This is just a place to start. Before you can create all the fancy marketing pieces, you have to nail down this description. For some businesses, this is all they have to start out and it propels their business forward when done right.

Have confidence in your value. Be clear about whom you serve. Introduce your wonderful work in a way that conveys how excited YOU are about it.

Only then will they get excited about it too.

Going up,

Maria

Goodies and Inspirations

Singer Edie Brickell tells us who she is, in this great song, [What I Am](#) – appropriate for this lesson, no?!

Possibly [the most hilarious elevator pitch ever](#), courtesy of Lloyd Dobler from *Say Anything*. Thank you, John Cusack!

As mentioned, I use the term “elevator pitch” as a simple description of what you do. Traditionally, it’s meant as a detailed, but brief, pitch you give investors or customers to get funding or land the deal. If your business requires this type of pitch, here are some great resources:

[What Virgin founder and brand guru Richard Branson thinks makes a solid elevator pitch.](#)

An example of a [horrible elevator pitch](#) totally focused on what the company does and not what the customer benefits from all those features. Snooze....And [another example of what not to do](#) – don’t tell me how to find you before you tell me what you can do for me!

Elevator pitch makeovers: Great [body language and presentation tips](#) (based on science) for when you tell people what you do.

[6 Tips for Perfecting Your Elevator Pitch](#), including a great video of a detailed investor pitch.