

Elevate Your Elevator Pitch

Creating Conversations That Connect



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Introduction - the importance of the elevator pitch



Your marketing and sales team is working hard. They are writing articles, posting blogs, making cold calls, engaging in social media and networking. With all this effort, why isn't the sales pipeline bursting with qualified prospects?

The answer: your elevator pitch, value proposition, doesn't offer value. Why? Your marketing and sales copy doesn't create an emotional connection with your potential buyers, resulting in little urgency to change vendors or improve their current situation.

The good and bad news is that you are not alone. At a recent marketing conference, Jay Gaines, Vice President of Sirius Decisions, shared research showing the number one challenge facing organizations was their ability to communicate their value. And the number one tool for communication value is the elevator pitch, the value proposition.



What is an Elevator Pitch?

Elevator pitches are conversation starters. Design and mastery of effective elevator pitches are important, regardless of your sales role or number of years in your industry.

- A inside salesperson uses an elevator pitch to answer the inbound call that begins with, "Can you tell me about your company. Can you tell me a little bit more about this product?"
- Elevator pitches are an essential tool for inside salespeople or account executives making outbound calls and emails.
- A seasoned salesperson that is often referred into potential clients, needs a well-designed elevator pitch to respond to, "Mary told me you did a great job for her company. Can you tell me a little bit about your firm?"

ELEVATOR PITCHES ARE CONVERSATION STARTERS. AND HOW YOU START A CONVERSATION POSITIONS YOU AS A TRUSTED ADVISOR, AN EXPERT OR JUST ANOTHER VENDOR.

So let's get started and learn the five principles for creating elevator pitches that elevate the sales conversation.





Tool Number One: Focus on Problems You Solve

An effective elevator pitch, value proposition, focuses on problems you solve, not what you do. Most salespeople default to what they do rather than problems they solve. When you speak in “do” language, you look and sound like your competition. For example, isn’t your competition going to say they are a leading firm? And isn’t your competitor going to brag about their deep bench of expertise?

Because you look and sound like your competition, you also look and sound like a commodity. Now, you are viewed as a vendor, not a trusted advisor. When you are put in the vendor bucket, you engage in “what’s your price” conversations rather than “what’s your value” conversations.

The poor prospect isn’t hearing any real differentiators so she often resorts to buying on price, not value.



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For example, no one cares that I “do” sales training. However, they do care about the problems sales training solves. My elevator pitch focuses on problems I solve for clients.

- Help salespeople stop buckling in tough negotiations.
- Eliminate empty sales pipelines by teaching them how to better qualify prospects.
- Teach salespeople how to gain access to decision makers and stop wasting time with people that can say no but can't or won't say yes.



Here's a reality check. No one cares about what you do!

No one cares that you do sales recruiting. Prospects care that you reduce turnover and identify candidates that achieve goals---regardless of the business environment or competition.

No one cares about your great customer service. Prospects care about not getting lost in voicemail trees or actually talking to a live human being.





Tool Number Two: Sell to the real buyer.

The real buyer is not the economic buyer, the user buyer, the technical buyer or the power buyer. The real buyer is your prospect's brain—the reptilian brain, located in the brain's limbic system.

This is the emotional center of the brain and is designed to move away from pain and towards pleasure. Research shows that people buy two to three times quicker and more often to avoid pain than achieve gain.

Take a look at a company's websites and marketing collateral. All are focused on the positive, the benefits their company provides. Salespeople follow suit. When asked about their company or product, they start talking about the benefits of the product or service.

This all looks and sounds nice, except it's not the way people buy!

When salespeople deliver elevator pitches that are logical and positive, it doesn't evoke pain. *"We are a leading blah-blah firm." Or, "Our team of experts bring over 100 years of experience to help you streamline your processes and achieve top and bottom line revenue."*

Sell to the reptilian brain. Focus on problems you solve, the pain that buyer wants to avoid.





Tool Number Three: Speak in tangible language, concrete language

In “Made to Stick,” authors Chip and Dan Heath discuss six principles of why some ideas stick and other don’t. Concreteness is one of the six principles. The brain is wired to remember concreteness and most elevator pitches are ambiguous.

When working with clients, I teach them to create value propositions that paint pictures of the problems they solve for clients. The real buyer, the reptilian brain, likes information that is visual. Neuroscientists have research that shows that the reptilian brain processes images much quicker than other stimuli. An effective elevator pitch is supposed to be short and to the point. Make it concrete and tangible to quickly connect with your prospect.

Here’s an example of a typical elevator pitch.

“We are the largest company in the world providing IT and business process consulting.”



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Please get me a cup of coffee -- I'm falling asleep!

This elevator pitch is not painting a picture. Can I see business process consulting?

Let's elevate this elevator pitch by painting a picture of the problems these services solve. "We help companies install reliable systems that don't crash every time an enhancement is rolled out." Do you see the difference? (No pun intended.)

Below, is a chart that illustrates two elevator pitches. Which side creates an emotional connection with you?

Intangible / Positive (Do) No Picture	Tangible / Negative (Pain) Picture
We have good customer service	→ We work with clients who are frustrated with poor customer service. Spend all their time on the phone trying to find a 'live body.'
We have good quality	→ Our client come to us because they are tired of equipment breaking down resulting in late deliveries and upset customers.





Tool Number Four: Generic elevator pitches.

This one is a real conversation killer. Most sales organizations do not have customized, documented elevator pitches for their different buying influences.

Today's sellers expect you to know their world. They are being trained by the likes of Netflix, who gives their members suggestions of movies you should watch based on your last selection. (And yes, that can backfire after watching a bad movie....)

Generic, one size fits all value propositions do not emotionally connect with potential buyers. It's really common sense. Look at all the buying influences involved when purchasing your product or service. Is the economic buyer going to have a different set of pains and needs than the user or technical buyer? Is the power buyer going to have a different set of goals and worries than the influencer buyer?

Buyers are busy and will not waste time with salespeople that cannot demonstrate they understand their prospect's world. Most companies have one or two value propositions---that are generic at best.

The most effective sales organizations design ten to twenty value propositions that are customized by the industry and the buyer.

An outstanding inside sales manager we worked with on elevator pitch training developed over 100 value propositions with her team. She designed value propositions by market segment, decision makers and products. Did it work? Yes! One of her young, new salespeople, right out of college, closed four large hotel deals because he knew how to start a value sales conversation, not a vendor conversation.





Tool Number Five: Practice.

It's one thing to create great value propositions. It's another thing to deliver them in such a way they don't sound rehearsed or canned. Most salespeople stumble and bumble through their value proposition. Don't believe me? Stop reading this article, call one of your salespeople or one of your peers and ask him to deliver his value proposition for a specific buyer in a specific market segment.

Be prepared to hear a lot of *"Let me start over, umm...and we do...."* It's not a great way to look and sound like a trusted advisor.

Top salespeople memorize and rehearse their value propositions. They sound relaxed and genuine which builds trust and credibility. They are able to be in the moment because they aren't thinking about what they should say and do.

Elevate your elevator pitches. Focus on problem you solve, not what you do. Create emotion and sell to the real buyer, the reptilian brain. Customize your value propositions to each buying influence. And then, practice, practice, practice.



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Thanks for downloading our e-book. I hope you gained great insights on emotional intelligence and how to elevate your elevator pitch.

Our mission at SalesLeadership is to help CEO's, sales managers and salespeople change the way they lead and sell by leveraging the power of emotional intelligence. We know that soft skills integrated with hard selling skills accelerate sustainable sales results and build great sales cultures.

For more information, please check out our other resources at:
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