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How to Prepare an Elevator Pitch

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One of the most common questions asked is “What do you do?” As researchers, it is very important that when asked that question, we can explain what we do in a short period of time. This has been termed the “elevator pitch”, in other words, could you explain what you do in the time it takes to ride an elevator?

In a research setting, an elevator pitch introduces you as a researcher, your research questions, and the significance of your research. Because an elevator speech is short, typically 30 seconds to 2 minutes, it is a great way to introduce and share your research with others at formal networking events, conferences, casual conversations, or even during an actual elevator ride. Ultimately, your elevator speech should provide a 'hook' and make your listener want to know more about your research!

There are several basic questions your elevator pitch should answer:

- 1) Who are you? - Don't forget to introduce yourself.
- 2) What is the topic of your research?
- 3) What is the problem, issue, or question that you are addressing in your research?
- 4) Why is that problem interesting and important? (i.e. So what?) – This part is incredibly important and will probably carry the weight of your elevator pitch.
- 5) How does your work connect with a broader disciplinary conversation about this topic/problem in your field, and what does it add to that conversation?

When delivering an elevator pitch there are several important considerations to keep in mind:

- Keep it simple and to the point. State your research topic, report your findings, and convey the significance of your work.
- Focus on your audience when delivering an elevator pitch. For example, you would likely tailor a message to a room full of 1st graders differently than a room full of museum-goers.
- Avoid jargon. Try to leave out technical or discipline-specific terminology. Similarly, be sure to define acronyms and use everyday examples or analogies to help your audience understand key concepts that may be unfamiliar to them.
- Practice. It's a good idea to write out a draft first and read it out loud a few times to make sure it flows and is of appropriate length. To make your elevator pitch not sound robotic, however, it's a good idea to memorize key points of your research rather than read a full script.
- Lastly, be enthusiastic! Recall what first sparked your interest in your research and be sure to convey that to your audience.

Sources

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