

Two Techniques for a Winning Elevator Pitch

By Steve Slaunwhite

Imagine this scenario: You're attending a networking event hoping to meet a new prospect or two. Perhaps it's a marketing conference in your town.

You're walking around the event and then you strike up a conversation with the person next to you.

At some point early in your conversation, the person says, "So, what do you do?" You're likely to say, "I'm a copywriter." That's okay, it's certainly clear what you do.

But in my opinion, you're leaving a lot of opportunity on the table.

For example, what if there are other copywriters at that event? Then you're just one more copywriter in the group. That person is going to walk away not knowing what it is about you that's special.

Is that person going to remember you as an expert in anything in particular? Because keep in mind that copywriting is a field, it's not a specialty.

Now, if it's a small group or event and you're the only copywriter in the room, yes, perhaps you'll stand out, but in larger networking situations where there may be other competitors, you're probably not going to stand out simply by saying, "I'm a copywriter."

What you need is a better reply when someone asks you what you do.

We often call this your 'Elevator Pitch' — an explanation short enough to be given to someone you're talking to on a brief ride in an elevator.

You want to respond in a way that makes it very clear what you do yet will make you stand out as unique and memorable.

That's the whole point of networking to begin with.

So, how do you create an effective elevator pitch? Now, I know there's a lot of information on the Internet and elsewhere on how to write an elevator pitch and, frankly, a lot of those tips and ideas, I think, get it wrong.

I think they teach techniques that look good on paper, but when you're in the real world of networking and you're meeting people and talking to them, saying those things becomes very difficult and awkward.

For example, I read one tip that said that you should pack your elevator pitch full of benefits. So you would say something like this:

What do I do? I leverage my background in writing industrial equipment to help manufacturers significantly boost the results of their websites, emails, and other marketing communications by up to 53% while at the same time honing their message so it resonates with their target audience, telling their story and building their brand with great messaging and copying, blah, blah, blah, blah.

You can see how that might look good on paper, but when you say that in a networking situation, people just roll their eyes.

It's a pitch, and it's not very effective. In fact, studies in networking have shown that when people introduce themselves at a business-networking event, the other person only remembers about three things. They'll remember what you do, they'll remember what you specialize in, and they'll remember who you help.

So your elevator pitch needs to be simple, and it needs to be clear because that's what they'll remember. There's no sense trying to create some fancy elevator pitch because it looks good on paper, but in a conversation with someone at a networking event, it's awkward and ineffective.

So here are two techniques that work very well in crafting an elevator pitch. I've used both these techniques, and both of them work very well in face-to-face conversations.

Keep it Short and Sweet

The first technique is what I call the 'short and sweet' technique. You simply make a clear statement as to what you do, what you specialize in, and who you help.

Let's say you specialize in white papers. Your elevator pitch, using the 'short and sweet' technique could simply be, "*I'm a copywriter specializing in white papers. I work mainly with marketing managers of healthcare IT companies.*"

That's it.

That's a very simple elevator pitch. It's not packed with benefits, it's not fancy, but it's natural and clear. If the other person has any interest at all in white papers or in marketing healthcare IT services and products or copywriting, they're going to remember what you said.

So that's the 'short and sweet' technique. It's simple and it works very, very well in most networking situations. But there's another technique that can work well in situations where you can have more of a conversation with the other person.

Ask a Question

When you're not just meeting someone and moving on, you can use the 'question first' technique.

What you do is answer a question with a question. But the question you're answering the question with is positioning you as someone who can really solve a problem.

Let me give an example.

Just like before, let's say you specialize in white papers and you meet someone at a networking event who asks you what you do.

Rather than jump in with your 'short and sweet' technique, you can say, *"What do I do? Well, let me ask you a question. Do you ever find it a challenge to write an effective white paper that helps build your business? Well, that's what I do. I'm a copywriter, I work with marketing managers in healthcare IT, I help them plan and write white papers that establish thought leadership, generate leads, and move the sales process along quickly."*

When you use the 'question first' technique, you have an opportunity for a longer, more extended conversation you didn't have before. But this only works if you have a little more time to talk and your prospect is more engaged.

Let's look at this technique in a little more detail.

They start with asking you "What do you do?" or perhaps a topic of conversation comes up that requires you to tell them what you do. But instead of jumping in and telling them what you do, you're starting it with a question.

The question really identifies a need, a problem, or an interest and then you simply say, "Well that's what I do." And then you say, "I'm a B2B copywriter specializing in white papers," or whatever the case may be.

The 'question first' technique is very powerful simply because you have a little more time to expand on what you do and make a bit more of an impression. It can be a very effective technique.

Give Both Elevator Pitch Techniques a Try

Use the 'short and sweet' technique when you don't have a lot of time, when it's just a quick chat with somebody where you have to be very quick. Just say what you do, what you specialize in, and who you can help.

Then if you have a bit more time with a person you meet at a networking event, try the 'question first' technique. Ask the question first that identifies their need, then segue quickly into a statement that you are the solution.

Both of these strategies for writing an elevator pitch can work very well and both are very easy to use in face-to-face conversations.

You don't have to sit down and spend hours crafting the perfect positioning statement to recite at a networking event. It should be natural and conversational.

So the next time you're at a networking event, a conference, or a workshop, give one of these techniques a try. And let me know in the comments how it went!

This article, [Two Techniques for a Winning Elevator Pitch](#) was originally published by [B2B Writing Success](#).

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8 Responses to "Two Techniques for a Winning Elevator Pitch"

Insightful and concise.

Yuddycreation – over a year ago

This was extremely helpful, I rewrote my opening conversation with clients, to include your question to start. Then I cold called 20 different businesses to see if it worked. I got 17 appointments. Thank you, Steve.

Show me the money – over a year ago

This is a excellent creative technique

DrHakim – over a year ago

Hi everyone, greetings from Milan. I have just joined this wonderful world of copywriting. Hope to learn a lot from all of you.

Emilia T – over a year ago

I think it's a good idea to answer a question with a question, since it creates a two-way conversation. That way the person asking won't feel talked at; instead they might feel talked TO. But this is only if there is time. The first suggestion, keeping it short and devoid of too many details, also seems like a good strategy.

Little Blue Fish – over a year ago

Though new to the world of Copywriting ,yet the article is on point.

My take home here is the word "stand out". From this I've discovered the reasons I'm lost in the crowd.

May I ask if this could be part of or go for a profile.

Thanks

Copy-option – over a year ago

I have been asked what I do by friends and when I say copywriting-the light dims. I will make two pitches. One for my not business friends (eventually) and one for clients with the question. My problem is that I have no client or experience so I have to wing it until I do.

That's why a read so many AWAI articles. Couldn't do it without them. Thanks

DeeJay – over a year ago

Hello everyone Im new to this. I have written poetry in the past. so I do have some writing experience. but this is all new to me. I hope to learn a lot and gain a new lifestyle.

Kaylo – over a year ago

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