

Perfect Your Elevator Pitch

Here's how to get it right.

Want a loan? A sale? A job? A new client?

When Brad Newman introduced himself as an *actrepreneur*, I was hooked. Everything about his title told me he had information I wanted to hear. Over a few additional seconds, I learned that this actor and entrepreneur is the founder of Zentainment, "a socially conscious media company committed to growing brands that encourage you to dream big and live a sustainable life." From there, a longer conversation — and a business relationship — followed, all spurred by an attention-getting introduction that took just moments to deliver.

The elevator pitch rides into the speed-dating era - Today's economic environment has turned job fairs, trade shows, networking events and even sidewalk sales into buyers' markets where only those with quick, compelling pitches survive.

In the 1990s, high-tech entrepreneurs named these short spiels "elevator pitches" because they could be conveyed during an elevator ride. The tech bubble ballooned and burst (and ballooned again), but elevator pitches are here to stay. Everyone — whether seeking employment, sales or profitable business associations — needs one.

Is your introduction ready to roll? - "So, what do you do?"

Those five words are on the minds of everyone you meet, whether in person or online. Brad Newman's introduction helps provide a formula that can assist you in preparing your answer and attracting attention from those you aim to impress:

Describe yourself in five words or less. Use a distinctive title or phrase that makes people think, "*This* sounds interesting" or "*This* is what I'm looking for." Consider the difference between "I'm a copywriter" and "I turn browsers into buyers." Or, in Newman's case, between "social media entrepreneur" and "actrepreneur."

Explain what you do in one sentence. After introducing yourself, introduce your offerings. "Our name combines the words *Zen* and *entertainment*, which stakes out our media space," Newman says. "We're a media company that focuses on socially conscious content. That definition tells what Zentainment is and rules out what it isn't." Work on a similarly specific description for your business.

Define your target audience. "Our market is comprised of 30- to 49-year-olds who care about socially conscious living," Newman says. "By defining our market in that way, people immediately know whether our business is for them." In other words, Zentainment isn't trying to be all things to all people. It's focused on a specific target audience, which is a key to success in today's crowded business environment.

Communicate your vision. "We're committed to growing brands that encourage you to dream big and live a sustainable life, whether they're our own brands or ones for which we consult and serve as producers," Newman says. "Our vision is clear enough to keep us focused and broad enough to make us adaptive to the opportunities of a changing market and media world." It's also compelling enough to attract a growing contingent of Zentainment consumers and business clients. What does your business stand for? What attracts your customers and their loyalty? Your answers can serve as a magnet for growth.

Practice, practice, practice. Create a script that conveys who you are, what you offer, your market, and the distinctive benefits you provide. Edit until you can introduce yourself and your business in less than a minute, which is how long most prospects will give you to win their interest.

Shrink your introduction even further so you can tell your story in 20 words or less. That's how much space you have in most marketing materials and online presentations, whether on your own site, on social media sites, or on sites that link to your home page. If you're thinking, "Twenty words? You've got to be kidding," scroll back to the start of this column. That's exactly what Brad Newman used to get my interest.

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