

You Gotta Hear This! Developing an Effective Elevator Pitch

There comes a time in every budding relationship where you will need to make “the ask”--that is, request a commitment from your potential partner to do something. This tool is designed to help you develop a compelling argument, or “elevator pitch,” for why they should say “yes.”

And while not every ask will be made within the confines of an elevator, the term “elevator pitch” reminds us that these requests should be intentional and succinct, as if the elevator doors could open up at any moment.

What Makes a Good Pitch?

A good pitch anticipates and addresses the main questions a listener may have about what you are asking and why. Ultimately, every ask involves a dialogue—listening is critical to understand the needs of potential partners and developing a relationship. But before that, you need to make your case. To do that, you need a pitch that describes:

	<p>The three W’s—the “who,” “what,” and “why” of your message or request.</p>
	<p>The benefits of collaboration—to both you and your partner. Any barriers you’ve identified that could make it challenging to work together and how you plan to get past them.</p>
	<p>A call to action that clearly identifies what you are asking potential stakeholder to do if they say “yes.”</p>

Remember, a pitch that is effective in engaging one potential partner will not necessarily be right for another. Quality pitches are audience-specific, tailored to address the audience’s unique needs, values, and priorities.

Preparing Your Pitch

Here are some questions to help you develop a pitch that includes the key elements presented above:

Pitch Element	Questions to Help You Get There
 <p>Three W’s</p>	<p><i>Who</i> are you and whom do you represent?</p> <p><i>What</i> do you or your organization do?</p> <p><i>Why</i> is your organization doing this work? What need are you serving?</p>
 <p>Benefits & Barriers</p>	<p>How will the potential partner’s participation benefit you and your organization? What is the value-added to the potential partner of collaborating with you?</p> <p>What are potential barriers to working together? How will you address these barriers?</p>
 <p>Call to Action</p>	<p>What <i>specifically</i> are you asking the potential partner’s organization to do?</p> <p>What are the immediate next steps that you would like the potential partner to take?</p>

As you develop your pitch, also make sure to:

- **Consider any recent political, social, and economic events that might influence your partner’s receptivity to your pitch.** Pitches are not made in a vacuum, so it’s important to look at community context and climate, as these can affect how your pitch might be interpreted.
- **Avoid jargon.** “Insider” language—that is, terms, phrases, or acronyms specific to your organization or sector—can be confusing (at best) and off-putting (at worst). Take time to consider alternative ways to get your point across.

Here’s an Example

Here’s an elevator pitch made to a business community leader by a prevention task force chair. How might it be different if the Chair were approaching the Chief of Police?

Pitch Component	What She Said	Why She Said It This Way
	<p>My name is Terry Jones, and I’m the task force leader for the Everytown Substance Misuse Prevention Coalition. Our mission is to reduce growing rates of alcohol use among the young adults in our community. These rates are particularly alarming for young adults who are in the workforce, where problem alcohol use often leads to poor job performance, as well as on-site alcohol-related injuries.</p>	<p>Terry clearly defines who she is, the purpose of the coalition, and the link between alcohol use and workplace injury.</p>
	<p>To prevent substance use in this group, we need to go where the young people are—where they play and where they work. And that’s where you can really help us. You are a major employer of young people, so you can really help us reach them. I understand that as a business owner, you have limited time to dedicate to programs like ours. However, I think that engaging in this work could prove good for business, by reducing staff turnover as well as alcohol-related injuries at your stores.</p> <p>Would you be willing to partner with us to develop a series of trainings that we could offer to the young workers in your stores? We would do the heavy lifting—we would just ask you to let us spend some time interviewing some of your employees, and then provide the space and time to deliver the trainings.</p>	<p>Terry knows that this business leader’s biggest concern is having his workers injured while on the job, so she makes sure to include this in her pitch.</p> <p>Terry is specific about how she’d like to work with this business leader.</p>
	<p>If we work together to tackle this problem, I believe our partnership can help your business thrive and assist you in becoming one of the community’s top performing businesses. Your involvement would also tie in well with the work that the Mayor’s Commission is doing to prevent drug use in the community.</p>	<p>Terry also places the request in the context of other prevention efforts going on in the city and underscores the importance of working together.</p>

Practice Makes Perfect

Use the template below to create your own elevator pitch to a potential partner. Before delivering it, make sure to check the following:

- Is your pitch sensitive to your potential partner’s needs, values, and priorities?
- Does your pitch contain jargon or words that are difficult to understand?
- Does your pitch take into account recent political, social, or economic events? Revise your pitch accordingly, and then go put it into use!

Key Component	Leading Questions	Your Pitch
	<p><i>Who</i> are you and whom do you represent?</p> <p><i>What</i> do you or your organization do?</p> <p><i>Why</i> is your organization doing this work? What need are you serving?</p>	
	<p>How will the potential partner’s participation benefit you and your organization? What is the value-added to the potential partner of collaborating with you?</p> <p>What are potential barriers to working together? How will you address these barriers?</p>	
	<p>What <i>specifically</i> are you asking the potential partner’s organization to do?</p> <p>What are the immediate next steps that you would like the potential partner to take?</p>	