

Public Scholarship in Action Workshop

Please take a few moments to prepare a brief introduction which you will use to present yourself to the other workshop participants. Listed below are two brief exercises for you to complete and practice prior to attending the workshop on Friday. Don't worry. They are easy to do and will take the pressure off having to make something up on the spot!

Exercise 1: Develop an elevator speech for introducing yourself on your ride to the top!

What do we mean by an Elevator Speech? It's a short introductory description of who you are and what you do, presented to a key person in the time it takes to go by elevator from the lobby to the top floor of a mid-rise building. Ideally, an "elevator speech" has attention-getting information that encourages others to want to know more about you, your research, and the institution you are affiliated with.

Writing your elevator speech - Here are the basic elements of an elevator speech for introducing yourself. Just fill in the blanks. This format is especially helpful when you introduce yourself publicly in professional or civic organizations, where you want to be brief, but memorable.

Greeting: _____

("Hi," "Hello," "Good morning/afternoon/evening")

Your name: _____

("My name is...Amber Kerr-Allison")

Title & organization: _____

("I'm a paintings conservator with the Smithsonian American Art Museum." Or my student example, "I'm a graduate student in art conservation at the University of Delaware")

What you do (including your value proposition): _____

("I work at the Lunder Conservation Center, a visible conservation lab that enables the public to view the treatment and preservation of artwork at the Smithsonian." Or my student example "I am pursuing a graduate degree in the conservation and preservation of paintings. ")

A "you-oriented," catchy benefit statement: _____

("I conserve paintings and educate the public on the importance of art conservation through outreach activities, gallery talks, and online media sources." Or my student example "an important part of my research involves the dissemination of knowledge to the public as to what

art conservation is and the importance of preserving our cultural heritage for future generations to enjoy.”)

Rehearsing your elevator speech - Now the time has come to turn your great writing into talk.

There are two ways to rehearse your elevator speech. First, just speak it out loud to yourself. Notice how the words flow. If you get tongue-tied, then rewrite the phrases that you get hung up on. Do it over and over until it comes out sounding natural. Second, think about being videotaped or recording yourself giving the speech. If you haven't been videotaped much, you may want to have someone tape you who can give you professional feedback on your performance.

Observe the following four things, represented by the **RSVP** acronym:

- R** – Really hit key words and phrases. Determine which words in each sentence of your speech you want to make the biggest impact.
- S** – Speak in short sentences and phrases. If you've written your speech in short sentences like the samples above, you've got half the battle won. Most people write in long sentences, but speak in short ones (about 7-10 words each). The reason for this is that in writing, you can always go back to the beginning of a long sentence if you miss an idea, but in spoken long sentences it's easy to lose a speaker's initial ideas and not possible to recapture them. Also short sentences flow easier and are easier to phrase.
- V** – Increase your Volume. Most people speak quite a bit softer than they think they do. Speak twice to three times louder than normal. The reaction from softer-speaking people when they do this is that they are shouting, but when they hear themselves on tape, they agree they sound better. It's not that we can't hear them. It's that they don't project as much energy when they speak softly.
- P** – Pause. Be sure to separate your sentences clearly. Speakers will tend to run the sentences of their elevator speeches together, giving the impression of hurriedness and a desire to just get it over with!

Finally, there's one last tip. End each sentence with a downward inflection. Most people introduce themselves with the kind of inflection we use at the end of a question. If I introduce myself, saying "Hi. I'm Amber Kerr-Allison" with an upward phrasing on "Allison," as though a question mark followed my name, it will make you wonder "Are you sure you're Amber Kerr-Allison?" Downward inflection at the end of sentences makes your statements more definitive and persuasive.

Do's and Don'ts of an Effective Elevator Speech

Do...

- Excite curiosity by putting together an attention-getting sound bite.
- “Hook” them with your clear and brief Value Proposition (what makes you special).
- If appropriate, start your “What I/we do” phrase with “I/We help ...”
- Use verb-based, benefit-oriented phrases.
- Use definitive downward inflection for every clause.
- Talk through a smile when delivering your elevator speech.
- Maintain solid, warm eye contact.
- Gesture outwardly toward the other person or audience.
- Have multiple versions of your elevator speech for different situations.
- Always stand. Give your elevator speech sitting, only if everyone else has.
- Change your speech over time to keep it fresh. Don't let them think “so what?”
- Be genuine in your expression and be courteous of your listener's time.

Don't...

- Make your speech formulaic or sounding memorized. People will tune out instantly.
- Rush your speech. Take a breath! Otherwise, it will sound canned.
- Start talking until you are fully standing.
- Use jargon unless the person or people hearing you are in your field.
- Improvise your speech. Rehearse it to get it smooth.
- Use abstract language. Down-to-earth words and mind pictures work best.
- Use closed gestures or upward inflection.
- Speak longer than the allotted time (generally 30 seconds).

*[The material above was adapted from an online article by People Skills for Skilled People: A free E-zine from Communication Excellence Institute, dedicated to improving communication in the professional workplace.
http://www.talk2cei.com/ezine/archive/vol5_num4.asp]*

Exercise 2: Defining a Powerful Brand Statement using four keys:

- **What you do.**
- **Why you think it's important.**
- **Why you do it.**
- **To change What.**

Example

What I do:

Amber Kerr-Allison conserves and cares for art.

Why I do it:

To preserve our cultural treasures.

Why I think it is important:

To preserve art for its historic and cultural significance and so that future generations can learn from it and enjoy it.

To Change what:

Increase advocacy and raise public awareness and education so that more works of art are conserved using the best technical and analytical means possible, and to ensure that art will be preserved for future generations to appreciate.

Brand Statement:

Amber Kerr-Allison conserves and researches artistic materials to preserve items of cultural heritage. She is dedicated to advocating for safe practice and research methods, raising public awareness, educating others on art conservation, and promoting the latest technical and ethical procedures in the preservation of art that will enable future generations to learn from and appreciate items of cultural heritage.