



## Overview

THEME	TIME	MATERIALS	SETUP
NOW	60+ MINUTES	HANDOUT, PROJECTOR, & MORE	OPEN SPACE

**Topic:** Communicate about your issue and work clearly and succinctly to inform potential allies and build support.

**Audience:** Emerging leaders beginning work on an issue or project. A group of 15–30 people is ideal.

**Conceptual Objective:** Participants will understand that an elevator speech helps introduce an individual and the work with which they are involved. The aim is for the speech to be captivating enough to lead to further conversation, resulting in new connections, relationships, support, and possibly collaboration.

**Experiential Objective:** In this workshop, participants will learn the basics of an elevator speech and create their own. Then they will have the opportunity to practice their speech with a variety of audiences while also hearing from their peers.

**Facilitator Prep:** Write and practice your own elevator speech until you are comfortable telling it. Collect some examples relevant to your audience, if possible.

**Related Content:** This could be a good workshop to follow the Public Narrative: Story of Self session.

**Materials:** Handout, paper, pens, computer, projector, name tags, and, if possible, snacks and/or beverages and music for the role play activity.

## Procedure

### OPENING ICEBREAKER (3 MIN)

- ❑ To start, share the quote “You only get to make a first impression once” with participants. Ask them how they feel about this quote and to recall a memorable first impression (positive or negative) that they have had with someone. Ask them to share this with someone sitting next to them.

### INTRODUCTION TO ELEVATOR SPEECHES (5 MIN)

Share what an elevator speech is and why it is important, with reference to handout.

- ❑ An elevator speech is a short (15-30 second, 150-word) sound bite that succinctly introduces you and your project/issue/organization.
- ❑ Elevator speeches are intended to prepare you for very brief, chance encounters, such as in an elevator. But elevator speeches are not just for elevators! You can use it whenever you want to introduce yourself to a new contact, who could turn out to be a potential ally or supporter.
- ❑ An effective elevator speech displays passion, precision, and persuasiveness.
- ❑ It focuses on the goals or benefits of your work. It spotlights your topic’s importance and/or urgency. It is understandable and relatable to those unfamiliar with your issue.
- ❑ A great elevator speech makes a compelling first impression and allows others to imagine how their interests might align with yours.

Read a few examples, such as those provided on the handout, or others more relevant to your participants’ context.

Share that while the name of the activity came from the idea that you are in an elevator and only have the elevator ride to share your story, there are many other times when an elevator speech can be used. Ask the group to brainstorm some of these (e.g., at a meeting, when waiting in line, at events with unstructured time or meals, when trying to build support for a new project, when meeting someone who has the type of influence/relationships/network you would like to access).

## HOW TO CRAFT AN ELEVATOR SPEECH (15 MIN)

Share with students the outline for creating an elevator speech. This includes (not necessarily in this order):

1. Who are you?
2. What is your organization/project/group working to accomplish? Give an example.
3. Why does this work matter? (and how can they be involved?) Give an example.

Spend some time going through the elevator speech tips as well. In particular, share with students strategies for modifying the elevator speech to different audiences.

- Make it interesting!
- Keep it under 30-60 seconds.
- Don't go too fast!
- Keep it simple.
- Practice and be comfortable.
- Don't memorize!
- Watch for jargon and acronyms.
- Be conversational.
- Follow the C's: Clear, Concise, Consistent, and Compelling
- Know your audience.

## INDIVIDUAL WORK TIME (15 MIN)

Allow the group some individual work time to craft their elevator speech. Provide pen and paper for those who want to write it out. If working with a group of people of different ages and levels of experience, pair up the more experienced with those who are less experienced to walk through the process. To help people relax and think, play background music, if appropriate.

## NETWORKING ROLE PLAY & PRACTICE (15 MIN)

Provide each participant with a name tag with an "identity" on it. These identities should represent a variety of individuals to whom participants might give their elevator speech, e.g., nonprofit staff, college administrator, student group leader, community member impacted by the issue, neighbor, family member, donor.

After each student has received a name tag, tell them that they are now at a local community or neighborhood celebration. (Discuss relevant examples in their contexts.) Their goal is to mingle with as many people as possible. Students should move about the room and give their elevator speech to different people as if they were the person on their name tag. The students should then switch roles.

Open the "concessions," turn on some music, and provide treats/beverages for students to set the tone of a community event.

Halfway through their practice period, ask students to switch name tags with someone else, adopt a new identity, and continue.

## REFLECTION (10 MIN)

After students have shared, ask them to take a seat again and discuss the following questions:

- What parts of your speech came naturally to you?
- Which parts still need some work?
- To whom are you most comfortable presenting?
- How did your speech change when you talked to different people or had a different identity?
- Did you have any challenges or miscommunications? What happened?
- Did anything surprising come out of your conversations? What connections did you create?
- How could this tool be useful?

## CLOSING (5 MIN)

Close by challenging each member of the group to give their elevator speech to three different people in the next week.

"Building Allies & Support: The Elevator Speech" is adapted by Minnesota Campus Compact staff based on a workshop from the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University Bonner program. The Agreements have been adapted from Glen Singleton's Courageous Conversations.

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the terms below.

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## Building Allies & Support: The Elevator Speech

What is an elevator speech?

- An elevator speech is a short (15-30 second, 150 word) sound bite that succinctly and memorably introduces you and your project or issue.
- Elevator speeches are intended to prepare you for very brief, chance encounters, such as in an elevator. But elevator speeches are not just for elevators! You should use it whenever you want to introduce yourself to a new contact.
- An effective elevator speech displays passion, precision and persuasiveness.
- It focuses on the goals or benefits of your work. It spotlights your topic's importance and/or urgency. It is understandable and relatable to those unfamiliar with your issue.
- A great elevator speech makes a compelling first impression and allows others to imagine how their interests might align with yours.

Elevator Speech Outline:

1. Who are you?
2. What does your organization/project do?
3. What is your role?
4. What is the goal?
5. Why does this work matter? (and how can they be involved?)

Tips

- Make it interesting!
- Keep it under 30-60 seconds.
- Don't go too fast!
- Keep it simple.
- Practice and be comfortable.
- Don't memorize!
- Watch for jargon and acronyms.
- Be conversational.
- Follow the C's: Clear, Concise, Consistent, Compelling
- Know your audience.

## Examples of elevator speeches:

Sense of Security provides financial assistance to Colorado breast cancer patients in treatment so they can focus on rest and recovery. Basically, we pay their bills, things like rent or mortgage, gas & groceries and other basic living expenses. (pause to let info sink in) Over the past 14 years, we have served more than 1,000 patients by providing \$1.5 million towards housing, utilities, groceries, transportation, COBRA or insurance premiums. We are proud that our services allow patients to stay in their homes and have enough good food to nourish themselves and their families. We are small but mighty, and all funds raised stay in Colorado. (Liz Miller commenter on [www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1](http://www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1))

In 76 countries around the world it is a crime to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. For LGBT and HIV-positive people, being out or being outed is life-threatening. Immigration Equality is proud to be the national leader in the field we pioneered: LGBT immigration rights. Every day we support gay and transgender asylum seekers, detainees and binational couples by providing expert pro bono legal counsel. We also fight to change the systems that hurt our families. (WinChesson commenter on [www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1](http://www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1))

Did you know that the average age of a homeless person in this area is 7 years old? Hillcrest Platte County moves families from homeless to self-supporting within our 90 day program of case management, budget counseling and life skills training. Families who come to us from their cars are now in their own homes with the skills and budget in place to sustain them into the future. (Donice commenter on [www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1](http://www.joangarry.com/nonprofit-elevator-pitch-1))



# Survey for “Building Allies & Support: Elevator Speeches” Workshop

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback. (Alternatively, you may also complete this survey online at <http://tinyurl.com/ja28zek>). If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to [info@mncampuscompact.org](mailto:info@mncampuscompact.org).

**Primary Role:** Student, Faculty, Staff, Administrator, Community Organization Staff, AmeriCorps/VISTA

**Institution** (College, University, Organization):

**Date:**

**Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the Civic Agency workshop you participated in.**

- I increased my confidence in my own ability to lead
- I gained useful leadership skills, strategies, or insights
- I learned about new leadership tools or resources
- I developed new or deeper connections with others
- I both learned from and contributed to the learning of others
- Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5

**Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself before the workshop**

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

## Before the Workshop

- I understood my own identities and cultures
- I understood how identities and culture matter in social/community change work
- I understood how I connect with social issues on a personal level
- I was aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups
- I was aware of strategies for effectively leading others
- I was aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change
- I believed I had power to address social/community issues

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10





Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself now:

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

**After the Workshop**

- I understand my own identities and cultures
- I understand how identities and culture matter in social/community change work
- I understand how I connect with social issues on a personal level
- I am aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups
- I am aware of strategies for effectively leading others
- I am aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change
- I believe I have power to address social/community issues

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I understand my own identities and cultures										
I understand how identities and culture matter in social/community change work										
I understand how I connect with social issues on a personal level										
I am aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups										
I am aware of strategies for effectively leading others										
I am aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change										
I believe I have power to address social/community issues										

**Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experience with the workshop?**