

Effortless Networking

Elevator Speeches vs. Self-introductions

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As you probably know, in the business networking context, people are encouraged to craft and use "elevator speeches" when introducing themselves.

But I found myself resisting the concept. Something about having a canned speech to introduce myself made me uncomfortable. As I thought about it, I realized why.

In my mind, there is a big difference between "elevator speeches" and self-introductions.

Let's think about this for a bit.

The story behind the elevator speech concept is that one day you might find yourself riding up the elevator with someone with whom you've been wanting to talk for a while. This is your unexpected opportunity! You have a just a few minutes to "pitch" your offer (product, service, whatever), and persuade this person that whatever it is your offering they really need it.

Elevator speeches can be very useful when you're out prospecting (i.e. specifically looking to find people to whom you can sell your products or services). It can even be helpful in networking situations.

However, there are several implicit assumptions that may or may not be true.

It assumes that:

1. You have something the other person wants, whether to sell or for free.
2. You *know* what the other person wants.
3. You have *only a few minutes* to convince the other person that you have what they want.

When I meet someone for the first time, I don't know if any of these assumptions are true.

Do you?

So, in such situations, I find that a concise self-introduction is more useful.

A good self-introduction includes your name and something about you that establishes what you have in common with the person you're talking with.

Depending on whom you're talking with, and what the context is, you will of course introduce yourself differently. You will use different analogies to explain what you do. Or highlight different aspects of your work.

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There is no pitching or selling involved. However, by simply highlighting a particular aspect of what you do, that you think might be of interest to the other person, you can create an opening for an interesting conversation to emerge.

And once you truly *engage* in conversation with another person, you begin to find out all kinds of information.

This information is what you can then use to determine whether the person you're talking with would be a good prospective client or customer for you. Or whether they'd be a good source of referrals for you. Or a good mentor for you.

Now you're in a much better position to make a "pitch", if that's what you decide you want to do.

If you want to work on developing or mastering the art of engaging people in conversation, let me know. I'd be happy to work with you further on this. For details, go to <http://www.effortlessnetworking.com/services.html>, or simply contact me (my contact information is at the bottom of the page).

If you found this article useful, and want to receive future articles and resources on business networking, go to <http://www.effortlessnetworking.com/freeguide.html>

Till next week,
-- Sri

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