

Why You Should Avoid Elevators

The Deadly Mistake Most Networkers Make and How to Avoid It

by **Cliff Suttle**

1204 words | 4 pages



Do people fast-forward their way through meeting you? The average person is exposed to thousands of advertisements daily. We become numb to it. Most of the time it's nothing more than background noise in our busy lives. The DVR was invented to allow us to fast-forward through commercials. Do your contacts consider you a commercial? Since the 1950s, sales trainers and networking experts have harped on the idea that everyone needs an elevator speech — a prescribed 30-

second-to-two-minute pitch about yourself and your company. Unfortunately this technique hasn't worked in decades.

Why do many people still teach this way of networking? Because it was always done that way and we humans resist change. The guitar was invented in the middle-ages. Back then the main way to play was to plant your left hand in one position of the neck of the guitar and do a lot of tricky finger picking with the right hand. Therefore, the guitar was designed with the neck in the left hand to allow the strong right hand to be in position to do the tough work. However, today most guitarists do the majority of their tricky hand motions on the neck. So, we have a world of backwards guitars. Why? Because, it was always done that way.

That is why, for the last two decades, I have not subscribed to the elevator speech doctrine.

Instead, I use the “anti-elevator speech.” This speech is not a pitch or a commercial, but an invitation to start a conversation.

You remember conversations, before the days of Facebook, Twitter and texting? You talked to people. They talked to you. It felt good, didn't it? Well, the art of conversation is still alive and kicking, if you know how to get one started. That's what the anti-elevator speech does — it starts a conversation. I've been using the anti-elevator technique since 1985, but it wasn't until recently that I decided to share it in my book about the topic. The concept is easy to remember, simple to apply and intrinsically makes sense.

So how does it work? It all starts with the hook. The hook is an extremely short statement that attracts attention. Here's an example of a hook I used to promote my company in the 1990s:

When someone asked, “What do you do for a living?”
I replied, “You dream it up, we make it happen.”

Confused? That is exactly how I wanted you to react. I wanted your confusion. Curiosity is an excellent conversation starter. When people are curious, they want that curiosity satisfied. Stay silent after presenting the hook and they'll usually follow with, “What do you mean?” By asking a second question, the contact has made an investment in the conversation. He wants to hear more. Crafting a good hook is the key to starting a conversation. There are four elements to a great hook:

- 1) **Make it short.** Since the attention span of the average adult has shrunk, you have less time to catch his or her attention. “You dream it up, we make it happen” is about the longest you would want your hook to be. The hook for my current company, “We excite audiences,” is even shorter.
- 2) **Make it confusing.** Nowhere in your hook should you ever tell how you do what you do. When you start with “I'm a car dealer,” people jump to conclusions. Don't make them jump to

conclusions. Make them jump to confusion. I'm sure no one has guessed what type of company "You dream it up, we make it happen" describes. That's what you want. If you can make them ask for the information, they are more likely to be interested and will remember what you said.

- 3) **Tell people exactly what you do, but not how you do it.** If you sell high-end sports cars, you sell an experience. If you supply home loans, you sell the American dream. If you sell drill bits, you sell holes. Great business people realize they need to focus on what the customer wants to buy, not on what they have to sell. What do you really do?
- 4) **Reach out to them where they live.** People respond to emotions and actions. If you can connect with this part, their interest in you will rise. In my hook, the word "dream" fulfills this requirement. In my current hook, "We excite audiences," excite is a great word. Other words, such as love, hate, push, drive, exhausted, stress and joy, also work.

So let's review "You dream it up, we make it happen" based on this four point system.

Is it short? Yes, it's only eight words.

Is it confusing? Definitely. This could describe any number of businesses or products.

Does it say what I do, but not how I do it? This hook was created to support my custom computer software business. Clients came to us with problems and we use computer software to improve the situation. What did we really do? "You dream it up, we make it happen."

Does it contain an action word or feeling word? Yes.

"We sell 15-minute vacations." — luxury car dealer.

"We make your special day more special." — florist.

"We make sure you never forget." — photographer.

These are all excellent hooks that actual business owners dreamed up while attending one of my Anti-Elevator Speech workshops. Note that all four rules apply to these hooks too.

It's important after you present your hook to say nothing. Be quiet and wait for another question. If you receive a reply you have the person engaged. The conversation has begun. You should still avoid going into a sales mode. Instead, go into a relationship building mode. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, *"Ask not what your contact can do for you, but what you can do for your contact."* The truth is most people do business with people they like. Be the likable, trustworthy and helpful person — and that will make you the successful person. The Anti-Elevator speech takes some thinking, tweaking and practice, but it is worth the effort. If your hook doesn't work well, rework it.

For the small percentage of people who don't respond to your hook, consider this a gift. Those people are just not interested in what you have to offer, and they have just told you so. Find out about them and move on to the next contact. Good luck and may all of your contacts be successful.



Presentation coach, **Cliff Suttle**, is an international speaker and founder of ExciteYourAudience.com. He is the author of two popular books, "The Anti-Elevator Speech," and "The Meeting Mastery System." For over ten years he has coached thousands to improve their businesses. He has spoken to MLM groups internationally showing them how to improve their ability to attract, engage, and maintain clients and affiliates.

Contact Information:

Email - Cliff@CliffSuttle.com

Web-site – <http://ExciteYourAudience.com>

Phone - 248-348-1023
