

The Elevator Pitch

By Jeff Belanger

www.jeffbelanger.com

About Me

I'm Jeff Belanger, and I pay my mortgage and feed my family with ideas. But those ideas don't pay until they're pitched to someone else, and moved along through a process of connections. I'm here to help you turn your ideas, and your own super powers into something bigger.

What's Possible?

Climbing a mountain is impossible. Writing an entire book is impossible. But we can take a step. We can write a sentence, then a paragraph, then a page. To look too far ahead is daunting and can raise doubt. So don't do it.

Everything can be broken down to its simplest pieces. Your career is made up of millions of connections. This pitch is just one of those connections.

What is the Elevator pitch?

It never literally happens. It's breaking down what you have to offer into 30 to 60 seconds.

When we're done today, you'll see you can't fail at it. That's encouraging.

You should be able to explain who you are and what you have to offer in an hour, in 30 minutes, in 15 minutes, in 5 minutes, and even in 30 seconds. Each of you should have this summary down to one or two sentences.

Did anyone see Lord of the Rings? Can you summarize it?

A hobbit learns that his magic ring is the key to saving Middle Earth from the Dark Lord.

How about Star Wars?

A farm boy from a backwater planet learns that he is the galaxy's last hope against the tyrannical Galactic Empire.

If we can break those epic movies down to one sentence, we can break ourselves down to the same.

What's Your Super Power?

We all have at least one. Identify it. Strength? Invisibility? Connecting with People? Persuasion? Creativity? Leadership? Order? Funny? Finding the right Thing to Say? Predict the Future?

What do you do?

I'm between jobs. I'm an out of work engineer.

Does Tom Brady say he's out of work in March? "I'm between seasons right now?" No! He's a quarterback, whether he's on the field or sleeping at night.

Stand behind that super power like a shield. Use it to define who you are. Brand yourself.

"I'm an accountant who developed the 'Jeff Belanger Accounting Method.' It saves time, and makes money. I'd love to tell you about it."

"I make software for hospitals that gets patients in and out faster."

What's your sustainable competitive advantage? How will you continue to add value no matter what?

Knowing People

All people have a few things in common.

1. I have problems and I don't care about yours.
2. I don't have enough time or money.
3. When given the choice, I will want to help others.

Address those needs and you can't go wrong.

Step to the table as an equal, because you are. You're both just people. You need work, and they need you (even if they don't know it yet).

Knowing Your Audience – You Start the Pitch

If you're starting the conversation, some research ahead of time will open doors. Knowing a bit about what this person's company does, their value proposition, and where their competitors stand will make them listen. Make it about them. Figure out their problems and present yourself as part of the solution.

Bad: I'm a hard worker and I need a job.

Good: Your company has made amazing inroads with your accounting software package. I know ABC Company has something similar, and you guys need to stay ahead of the curve. I develop solutions that keep financial software packages on the fast track.

They don't care what you do. They care what you can do for them.

Identifying the Market

Answer these questions for yourself. You are the product of all the success you've ever been around.

What are we selling?

What are we selling against?

Who are we selling?

Who are we selling against?

How do we sell?

Answer those questions thoroughly and you'll define the landscape of career choices and where you can fit in that picture.

Think Like a News Reporter

Blast out a headline, then in the first paragraph tell who, what, when, where, and why. If they want to know how, that will cost them another meeting. Another meeting is always the goal.

Spitting out a ton of ideas or jargon is a mistake in this setting. Tell them you'd be glad to talk about it over lunch or in a sit-down setting.

If you can pull it off:

- I make people a lot of money.
- I find things others miss.
- I make sure my boss has time to go to little league practice at the end of the day.

Tweak

Tweak your pitch to who you're talking to. Higher level hiring executive? Speak in broader strokes. Manager with technical know-how, use the right language. Give details, but not too many, not too few.

BAD: "I'm in finance."

GOOD: I manage a team of financial advisors and utilize a special Jeff Belanger methodology to keep them focused on bottom-line results for our clients and investors.

Be Easy to Understand

Grandma should be able to understand what you're selling.

Be Memorable.

Give a story or anecdote on how you solved a problem your audience likely has.

Take a deep breath, and know you're in control of your own destiny.

When to Use the Pitch?

Job fair.

First voicemail.

First email.

Dinner party.

Networking function.

You never know where you're talking to a connection.

Not in the bathroom!

Closing

People want to give. At the very least, ask for an email address so you can follow up with some more ideas. That email is your next opportunity for the next step in your career journey.

Enhance your credibility, and get your audience to do something. Give you their card, or email address. You **must** ask for something. In return you will give back.

Succeeding

If you're standing in front of a potential career opportunity, you've already succeeded. You won't get a job from this pitch. So take the pressure off of it. You WILL make a connection. That connection could pay off in a week, a month, or five years. But connections are good.

Connections are steps up the mountain.

If you're nervous, pretend. Fake it til you make it.

Tell the truth. Be honest.

Adapt your pitch to the situation. Have a script, but be willing to go off it. Have a map, but be willing to take side roads.

Practice, practice, practice.

Mountains are climbed one step at a time. Thank God no one ever reaches the top. Successful people never succeed. Tom Brady wasn't happy with one, two, or even three Super Bowl victories.

William Shatner wrote a song called "Success, It Hasn't Happened Yet." But forward progress is critical to our well-being and sanity. Step to the pitch with confidence. It's easy to believe in what you're selling, because you're selling you!

More About Jeff Belanger

Jeff Belanger (www.jeffbelanger.com) is a prolific author and public speaker.

He has written more than a dozen books (published in six languages) including the best sellers: *The World's Most Haunted Places*, *Our Haunted Lives*, *Weird Massachusetts*, and *Who's Haunting the White House* (for children). He's the founder of Ghostvillage.com, the Web's most popular paranormal destination according to Google.com.

He's also the host of the cable/Web talk show, *30 Odd Minutes* which is available in over 5.5 million homes in the United States. Belanger has written for newspapers like *The Boston Globe* and is the series writer and researcher for *Ghost Adventures* on the Travel Channel. He's been a guest on hundreds of radio and television programs and networks including: The History Channel, The Travel Channel, Biography, PBS, NECN, Living TV (UK), The Maury Show, CBS Sunday Morning, The CBS News Early Show, FOX, NBC, ABC, and CBS affiliates, National Public Radio, The BBC, Australian Radio Network, and Coast to Coast AM.