

**Elevator Speech 101**

**Busy? We all are.** Your schedule is tight and the people who you meet are busy. However, **many of these “busy” people are folks that your board needs – grant makers, individual donors, elected officials and potential board members.** These people are vital to the organization’s ability to carry out its mission and continue to thrive.

As a board member, one of your **primary responsibilities is to serve as an ambassador for the organization**. How can you make new friends for your organization? How can you engage people in a limited amount of time and in a way that captures their attention and leaves them wanting to know more? Try developing an “elevator speech”.

The elevator speech is a short statement, 2 minutes or less, that conveys the essence of the nonprofit in concise, clear and compelling terms and peaks the listener’s interest. As you develop it:

 ***DO***

**Introduce yourself and your role in the organization**. “Hi, I’m Jane Smith, board member of XYZ nonprofit.

**Keep it simple**. Convey what your organization does and who it serves. Include a quantitative result, but just one statistic. Don’t bombard listeners with numbers.

**Provide some perspective.** Put the nonprofit’s services in context, in one sentence. Why is what you do so important? What’s the scale of the problem? What sets this nonprofit apart from similar organizations?

**Find your own anecdote that illustrates its impact.** People love stories. Have a story that you can tell.

**Invite involvement in the organization**. Let whoever you’re taking to know that they can get involved in a variety of ways: join as a member, volunteer, donate, etc.

**Spell out the opportunity through customizing it.** Your pitch for requesting a donation and the one you use for attracting a potential board member should be different. For ex: “With a donation of $ \_\_\_\_\_ we could expand our meal services to an additional 500 clients.” Or “Your expertise in the area of finance would be tremendously valuable to our continued positive effect in our community.”

**Make it compelling.** Use language that will really grab the listener but that reflects who you are. The more comfortable you are, the more passionate you will sound.

**Offer to provide additional information.** “I’d be happy to call or meet with you to tell you more about XYZ. May I have your card or e-mail so that I can speak with you more about XYZ?”

**Write it out.** Take time to write out your pitch and edit it. Then edit it again.

**Practice it.** Practice your pitch aloud until you are comfortable and the timing is right. **Perhaps start out board meetings with one board member volunteering to deliver his/her elevator speech.**

 ***DON’T***

**Memorize your mission statement for your elevator speech**. Mission statements are often awkwardly worded. Just make sure you can clearly articulate the organization’s purpose.

**Use jargon and technical terms**. Most people don’t like to have to ask what an acronym stands for or what a specialized term means. It makes them feel inferior to the speaker.