



HOW'S YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH?

By Laura Sheridan, President of Viva La Brand, the Brand & Marketing Strategy Consulting Firm that has worked with dozens of Jewish Day Schools in North America

You bump into a business associate you haven't seen in years and she asks you what you're doing these days. You open your mouth, pause, try to organize your thoughts, and start rambling. Who knows, she could have a child or neighbor who could be at a student at your school. You don't get a second chance. That's why you need a short, compelling pitch that explains why a customer should pick your organization. Next time someone asks you "What do you do?" be ready with a thoughtful and compelling answer.

What is so different about an elevator pitch?

Like the name suggests, it's a message that can be delivered on an average elevator ride, no more than a minute or so. Yes it's short, but it's a powerful selling tool as it can be used in any situation from a meeting to a networking event to a barbeque.

A great elevator pitch serves to tell everyone from employees to prospects what your brand's about and why it's different and better. Like any thoughtful strategy work, customer insights should be at the heart of the message.

The best elevator pitch is an expression of your brand strategy. The first step is drafting your brand strategy, then you can tackle writing the pitch.

Why do you need an elevator pitch?

It's crucial to nail a powerful, relevant and compelling elevator pitch. It's key for you and your brand ambassadors, which include employees, board members and other business associates, to deliver a consistent and brand supportive message.

We're bombarded with 5,000 messages from brands every day. To breakthrough, you need a succinct message that's compelling and relevant to your target audience.

Today's elevators are fast and attention spans are short. Consumers are accustomed to quick, targeted messages. It's no wonder Snapchat, the mobile app that allows users to capture videos that are ten seconds or less, has attracted 30 million users, over half of whom use it every day.

And how about Twitter? Users get only 140 characters to communicate their updates and the site has 236 million regular users. Learn from consumer behavior. A short pitch about what makes your organization special is a "must have" in today's business universe.

What makes a great elevator pitch?

- 1) Customer-focused:** At the core of the pitch is your brand positioning, which is a product of customer research and analysis.
- 2) Short and engaging:** The average elevator ride in NYC is 118 seconds. Some say elevator pitches should be 60 seconds. Some say a couple of minutes. We often draft short and long pitches for clients. The one they use depends on their audience. Be prepared. Develop both.
- 3) Conversational:** An elevator pitch is not a sales presentation or regurgitation of scripted text. It's a one-to-one, informal chat that's an expression of your organization's specialness framed according to the target audience. After you succinctly convey why your business is the best choice, you can further



engage your audience by asking a question or providing an example that connects their business to yours.

4) Simple and direct: A great pitch will include a couple of takeaways that clearly define why your brand is unique and better. Industry jargon and fancy words don't belong. Shoot straight, be real and keep it simple.

5) Current: A smart elevator pitch is fresh and relevant, and changes in sync with your customers' needs and interests.

How do you get started?

Pull out your brand strategy and ask yourself, "Why is our school special?" Jot down those "reasons to believe" that differentiate your organization and are compelling and important to your target audience. It'll take some noodling and plenty of practice. Use it, tweak it and perfect it. Then you'll be well on your way to recruiting mission appropriate families, recruiting top talent or creating brand ambassadors on your next elevator ride.