

Crafting a Compelling Elevator Pitch

Postdoctoral ASPIRE Café
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What is an Elevator Pitch?



A short, polished, and accessible summary used to quickly define a person, product, organization etc...

The name “elevator pitch” refers to the idea that it should be possible to deliver the summary in the time it takes to complete an elevator ride— approximately 30-60 sec.

Examples online:

California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM)

Grantee Elevator Pitch Challenge videos

https://www.cirm.ca.gov/our-progress/stem-cell-videos?&&field_voc_video_event_tid%5b0%5d=746

Why do I need one?

- Job interview
- Meeting new people
 - Networking-jobs and other opportunities
 - Building new collaborations
 - Letting people know what you do-friends and family
- Attracting Funding for your research
- Science Advocacy- talking to a politician, or anyone else, about science funding

What's the Goal?

1. Create a memorable and positive impression
2. Open the door to further conversation

.....

(Not to tell someone everything you've ever done in point-by-point detail!)

Different kinds of pitches (you will need several)

Level	Audience	Example
Overview/Lay person	People who don't know much about your area	Social event, networking event, party, on an airplane etc...
Professional	People who know a little about your area- i.e. life science industry prof, but not in your field	Scientific conference, professional networking event among peers
Colleague or Prospective Employer	Person who knows a great deal about your area-	Job interview, someone with whom you might collaborate

Things to Consider

- Identify your audience
- Define your goal
- Think about your research in terms of a disease state
- Introduce the problem/challenge you are working to solve
- Explain the impact of solving this problem– the “So What?”



Example Situations:

Take a few minutes to read through the Cancer Biology Example

Job/Info Interview: So, tell me a little about yourself....

Original: 168 words, 7 sentences

Hi, I'm Zoe Gene. I currently work as a postdoctoral fellow at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in the laboratory of Dr. Protein. I study how DNA is replicated and repaired with a focus on trying to find novel genes that function in these processes. The ultimate goal of the laboratory I work in is to find new targets for cancer therapeutics. Many cancer cells contain high levels of DNA damage associated with replication and are more dependent upon repair processes, making genes involved in these processes good candidates for targeted therapies.

I am interested in applying my background in cell repair with my previous experience in basic cancer research into a career supporting clinical research focused on new treatments for cancer and other diseases. My graduate and postdoctoral training has provided me with a solid foundation in critical thinking, project development and management, and the ability to work both independently and as part of a team which will allow me to make valuable contributions to clinical research projects.

Job/Info Interview: So, tell me a little about yourself....

Revised (Info Interview focus): 169 words, 7 sentences

Hi, I'm Zoe Gene and I am a postdoctoral fellow in cancer biology at Vanderbilt University. My research is focused on finding new targets for cancer therapeutics. Because cancer cells are rapidly multiplying, they often contain high levels of DNA damage associated with replication and repair. So, we're looking for novel genes that play a role in these processes, which could serve as new drug targets to treat various cancers.

I'm starting to explore where I want to go next, and I'm really excited about applying my background in cancer biology to a career in clinical research where I can be more directly involved with making new therapies available to patients. I enjoy thinking about how to solve challenging questions, developing and managing large projects, and working both independently and as a part of a team. I'm eager to hear your thoughts and learn more about the different kinds of opportunities available in clinical research so I can determine if this is a good fit for me moving forward.

Networking Event : Mixed Audience of Life Science Industry Professionals:

Professional Level:

Pt 1: Tell me about you/your research: (87 words, 4 sentences)

Hi, I'm Zoe Gene and I'm a researcher in cancer biology at Vanderbilt University. I'm trying to find new targets for cancer therapeutics. We're trying to take advantage of the fact that cancer cells are rapidly multiplying so they often contain high levels of DNA damage associated with flaws in replication and repair mechanisms. If we can identify genes that are involved in these processes, then drugs could be designed to improve their function and this would open the door to new therapies to treat various cancers.

Networking Event : Mixed Audience of Life Science Industry Professionals:

Professional Level:

Pt 2: So what do you want to do next? (106 words, 4 sentences)

I'm starting to explore where I want to go next, and I'm really excited about applying my background in cancer biology to a career in clinical research where I can be more directly involved with making new therapies available to patients. I enjoy thinking about how to solve challenging questions, developing and managing large projects, and working both independently and as a part of a team. I would enjoy working as part of an academic institution or hospital administering clinical trials, or with a clinical trials research organization, where I could have a role in overseeing and managing the trial at multiple sites across the nation. (I'm always interested in learning more about these types of roles, so if you know of anyone in this area, I'd love to meet them)

Overview/Lay Audience:

(103 words, 7 sentences)

Hi, I'm Zoe Gene and I'm a researcher at Vanderbilt University. My research focuses on finding new ways to treat cancer. Unfortunately, current cancer treatments are not very specific and will affect all cells in the body. That's why people often get sick and lose their hair when undergoing treatment. I'm trying to find therapies that specifically target cancer cells. Cancer cells accumulate more damage than normal cells and are more reliant on repair processes for survival. So, I study how cells repair this damage to try to pinpoint parts of the process that can be used to develop drugs for cancer treatment.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ❖ Talking too much about yourself– “I am...” instead, “I work with (this disease/client) struggling with (this type of problem). Put yourself in your listener’s shoes: They are trying to quickly decide how you might help them, or how they can relate to you.
- ❖ Expecting others to “get you”– they 1) either don’t get what you do, or 2) think they do, but they aren’t interested, or 3) they are too embarrassed to ask further.
- ❖ Too vague or general, too long or rambling, too much jargon
- ❖ Using weak words– choose powerful verbs instead
- ❖ Overly rehearsed or inauthentic

Let's try our own!



Take 10 minutes to work on this:

Basic Elevator Pitch

(Shoot for appx 30 sec= 90 words=5-8 sentences)

Identify your audience, goal

1. Introduce yourself and where you work
2. Tell what you do- think disease state!
- 3-4. Explain the problem/challenge
- 5-6. Offer a vivid example, if possible
7. Explain the impact of solving the problem– the “So What?”
8. (Optional)- What are you seeking from conversation/ ID next steps

Now, Fine Tune your message

1. Cut the jargon and details- make strong, short and powerful sentences
2. Keep your listener in mind– can they understand your terms?
3. Connect the phrases to each others to make the pitch flow
4. Memorize key points and practice
5. Double check that you have answered “what’s in it for me” for your listener
6. Tailor different versions for different situations
7. Ask a “lay” friend to read and give you feed back on your lay version.

Delivery

- ❖ Should be 30-60 seconds
- ❖ Practice for natural, conversational, effortless delivery
- ❖ Show confidence
- ❖ Let your passion come out
- ❖ Make eye contact





Let's hear a few!

Listen/Watch for...

- Clarity
- Structure- who you are, what you do, why I might care (So what?)
- Audience engagement
- Timing (under 60 sec?)
- Body language?
- Is there a clear next step?



Think about ways to improve....

Make things more interesting

- ❖ Add a hook- statistics, fun facts etc...
- ❖ Bring in a prop for illustration
- ❖ Introduce a vivid, simple analogy
- ❖ Introduce a personal component- family or friend with the disease
- ❖ Reference a current event or news story that others would be familiar with



Thank you!



Elevator Pitch Add-Ins

(Optional and Situation-dependent)

1. Explain why you are interested in the listener
2. What do you have to offer (service, skills, solution, contacts?)
3. What are the advantages to talking/working with you?
4. What are your goals?
5. What are you seeking from conversation/ ID next steps

Ashley as an example:

Overview level:

“Hi, my name is Ashley Brady. I’m a career advisor at Vanderbilt University where I support biomedical sciences PhD students and postdoctoral fellows. Historically, scientists have only been trained to run their own research labs at big academic research institutions like Vanderbilt. However, not everyone wants to do that, and actually there aren’t even enough positions like that available for everyone if they did. So, the goal of my office is to help them learn about other careers where they can utilize their talents and training and to provide them with resources and support to pursue these other pathways”.

Ashley as an example:

Overview level:

Stats:

- ❑ 5/6 sentences
- ❑ 99 words
- ❑ 30 seconds to deliver

1. Hi, my name is Ashley Brady.

Introduction

2. I'm a career advisor at Vanderbilt University where I support biomedical sciences PhD students and postdoctoral fellows.

Who I am and what I do

3. Historically, scientists have only been trained to run their own research labs at big academic research institutions like Vanderbilt.

The problem/challenge

4. However, not everyone wants to do that, and actually there aren't even enough positions like that available for everyone if they did.

5. So, the goal of my office is to help them learn about other careers where they can utilize their talents and training and to provide them with resources and support to pursue these other pathways.

The solution