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How I mastered my elevator pitch

Alan Manly | August 12, 2019



Everybody in business has a pitch. The goal is to deliver your pitch in the time taken for an average elevator ride being about thirty seconds. Whilst many pitches are refined by trial and error over time and serve their purpose well enough, in typical entrepreneurial fashion I have my own ideas about elevator pitches.

Maybe it is because, even after many years as an entrepreneur, I find that the hard sell is not where I am comfortable. I accept that it works for some but it is perhaps more for a full blown, in your face sales person, than a simple entrepreneur.

To overcome my discomfort with the hard sell I have refined a method that helped master the elevator pitch:

The Intro

Of course we all know who we are and what we do. But if you are asked in company, it needs to be concise and easy to understand. Pronounce your name so that someone can understand it. Do you really need to say your family name? That's your call but remember they are only half listening and you want to use the time effectively.

What if you said "Hi, Alan's my name, pleased to meet you" and then listen. The other person will most likely tell you their name, then obviously you respond with "Good to meet you, (say their name), can I give my card?" I have never had someone say no.

My Prop

I am keen to give my business card because I use it as a prop. My business card is not just any card, but one that I have field tested over the years. It has the usual company logo, company name, my name and contact details plus my photo. That it is to make it easy for a new friend to remember who gave them the card after the meeting. Then, to take it further out of the ordinary, I use the reverse side that others leave blank. This also has the company logo and a list of the products that the company offers plus a few tag lines.

Plan A – Deliver The Pitch

Some may wonder at the cost of cards that I spread like confetti. I consider that a handful of cards is the cheapest cost item for any function. I find that the photo is different and prompts many to comment on how it is a good idea or cheekily claim that the photo is of a younger me. All of which is an invite for me to follow up with comments such as I must have been selling our product for longer than I thought. Then one of two things happen. They may ask what does my company do? I courteously refer them to the reverse side that explains it more. Often as I have a card in my hand I turn it over and quickly read the list of about three or so items. If others are within earshot they are likely to also turn the card over out of curiosity. My pitch has now been delivered.

The second most common reaction is to turn the card over by themselves and see what the company does. It is very tempting for my new friend to ask a simple question

about my product. Naturally I have enough product knowledge to give a brief answer. Again my pitch has been delivered.

Plan B Follow – The Leader

Given that business is competitive, others at a function will be just as clever in the delivery of their pitch. If someone else is breaking the ice and commences introductions, plan B for making my pitch comes into play. Rather than leap into a sales pitch I ask for their cards. I introduce myself and make a point of understanding their name and ask them for their card.

I also want to know who I was talking to in a few hours time so that if desired I can follow up with a brief email. Once we have exchanged cards I revert to my usual process and use my card as a prop.

This approach is not a display of great self-confidence but with a pocket full of business cards I can work a room with confidence in the knowledge that my card talks for me after the event and as I collect others people cards I can follow up with new contacts as I see fit.

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Alan Manly is the founder and CEO of Group Colleges Australia, one of Australia's largest private education institutions and recently launched the private MBA school, the Universal Business School Sydney. From a high school dropout to successful entrepreneur, Alan is a true disrupter in the private education space. He the author of two books, *The Unlikely Entrepreneur* and *When There Are Too Many Lawyers There Is No*

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