



WE 012: Elevator pitch

Good evening everybody. I decided to greet you today like this because it is late evening here. Everybody is asleep or they are thinking about going to bed and this is the perfect time to record this episode, the next episode.

The issue that I would like to address today is how to make a proper presentation. I decided to talk about it particularly because my experience tells me that most people have trouble speaking English. They have trouble speaking English in public and most people I work with have to **overcome** this fear and we work how to do it.

So, the people who learn English, but I believe other people, all the people that learn other languages, they know the grammar rules, they know the vocabulary, but they don't know how to use that knowledge in practice. They don't know how to speak smoothly, how to get rid of the stress involved, this is the greatest problem, but they also don't know what to say and how to say things.

Presentations are especially difficult. They are difficult in your mother tongue and they are even more difficult when you have to speak a foreign language. And today what we would like to talk about, what I would like to talk about and what I would like to refer to is a very special type of presentation and this special type of presentation is called an elevator pitch or elevator speech.

I guess what we'll have to do here and what we'll have to begin with is, we'll have to trace the origins of this phrase. There are a few ideas, and there are a few stories here that would describe or that would tell you why an elevator pitch is called an elevator **pitch**, but I'd like to refer just to one of them.

And why an elevator pitch is called this way? Well, everybody, I believe that the word elevator is not a problematic one, is not a problematic word. So everybody knows the word elevator. That's an American word and its British equivalent is a lift, right, so there are elevators in buildings, there are elevators in



hotels. This is where we use them most often or we also use them in a block of flats, some people who live in a block of flats they use elevators on a regular basis. And when you enter an elevator or when you enter a lift, it may so happen at times that there are other people traveling with you, right? So you either enter an elevator full of other people or you are traveling and there are other people that join your journey, so to say.

Usually, what we do with these people traveling with us, we talk about something rather unimportant, right? So we talk about the weather, we talk about the films that we've recently seen. Perhaps we talk about a match, football is a very good subject cause this is the subject that everybody can relate to. And let's imagine that during this little journey you are supposed to **encourage** or you are supposed to **convince** the people who are traveling with you, to follow you, to choose you as the best person for a given project, to give you a job or they are some kind of investors and you are supposed to make them believe that you are the best person, the proper person, the right person and they should invest their the money, they should help you.

So, what can you say, right? How can you do it? But, before we get there, before we discuss how a good elevator pitch should be composed, I'd like to come back to the origins, as I said, to the origins of this particular presentation. And there is this story that there were two people, quite famous people, quite important figures and they couldn't meet up, I mean, because they were so famous, they were so important, they were also super busy and there was no opportunity for them to meet and no opportunity for them to discuss their issues. So, one of them decided, one of them just had this idea that okay if the other person cannot meet me and if the other person cannot talk to me in a given time, I will just join the person while she is, because I believe that was a woman, while she is traveling in an elevator and this is the perfect opportunity for me to tell her what I would like to tell her. And this is, this is one of the stories. It tells us that this is exactly when an elevator speech was born.



Of course, it is not very probable, I would say, that you would meet your future employer or some investors in an elevator. So this is just a metaphor because elevator pitches are delivered in standard conditions, you don't have to use a lift to do it. But what it does, I mean the very name, it just gives you this feeling, gives you this idea of the presentation and how it should be composed because when you're traveling in an elevator, what you are actually having problems with is the time, usually. I mean it is the time but also the people around you, right, so they are very close, they are around and you have to get rid of the stress, you have to somehow confront them. But you also have very little time to tell them what you think is necessary.

Let's imagine and this is a very proper exercise here. Let's imagine that you enter an elevator and there are some key players on the market traveling with you. Of course, everybody would search choose and name other key players. Let's just say that one of them is Bill Gates, for instance, or for others that key player would be Amancio Ortega. I don't know if you know who Amancio Ortega actually is. He is this very famous and yet not very known person because he is the owner of Zara and actually he is the owner of Inditex. So there are other brands belonging to Inditex, other than just Zara and these are the brands Pull&Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius so it could be Amancio Ortega waiting for you in your lift. Or it could be Elon Musk perhaps, so let's just imagine that these people are waiting for you in the lift and you are supposed to talk to them, you're supposed to convince them - yes, I'm the right person, yes, please cooperate with me, yes, please employ me, for instance.

The idea of an elevator pitch is that you would have roughly 20 or 30 seconds to present yourself and to tell the people who are listening to you that you are the right person they are looking for. Of course the subject of an elevator pitch could be different or subjects could be different because you could be presenting yourself, but you could also be presenting a project or you could also be presenting some product. It all depends on the purpose of your presentation. But the key thing here is how to draw their attention, right, how to make them stay interested in what you've got to tell them, how to win their trust.



Of course the worst thing you can do is just keep on introducing yourself and just presenting your story, how you became this or that person, how you finished university or whatever, how you got your first job. Obviously, it wouldn't make any sense because it is, well, let's call it, **a spade a spade**, right, it is boring. And the other thing is that you don't have enough time to do it, 20-30 seconds, definitely, this is too little time to just drag on the story of your life.

The greatest thing you can do is you can use some **catchy** opening, so something, some phrase, some joke, some anecdote that would draw the attention of the people who are traveling with you so these people you want to impress. You wouldn't like to use boring phrases or deliver some boring information about your education or professional experience. Usually what seems to be working here is presenting a problem or a statement that the interlocutor can relate to and then suggest some proper solution or present such a statement that would arouse their interest.

Depending on the purpose of this presentation of conversation and I used the word conversation here because this is something that people, in my opinion, people seem to forget that when you are presenting something, when you're talking to other people who are listening to you it is actually not just the presentation. Most people think that the presentation is something when they just keep on going, very often they just present their point of view. And what you have to do and what you have to remember about is that it has this kind of conversational style because even if the people don't manage to ask any questions, they are still there listening to you and they can enter some kind of conversation. So whenever you prepare a presentation, be it a longer piece of presentation or be it just this elevator pitch that would last like 20-30 seconds, you always have to remember about the people who are listening to you, so in a way what you're trying to do, you're trying to enter some kind of conversation and what you've got to tell them, it has to be **engaging** because you want to invite them. You want to tell them *come on, hey, please join this conversation*.



A proper elevator pitch or a proper elevator pitch conversation could be answering the following questions:

1. What is the product, the service, the project or something you are talking?
2. What benefits will follow? So you have to remember that the people who are listening to you and the people who you want to convince, they need to feel that there are some benefits for them, that they would get something out of it.

So it also comes back to what I've just said that it's not just a kind of presentation where you just keep on going and just talking about yourself, and you want to shine through, and you want to tell them how great you are but you have to engage them. So they also have to know if there is anything they they can get in return.

3. What is your position or how you are related to the project?

These are just the three rough questions. I believe you can produce other questions here. But what you have to remember is that this very short style of presenting cannot be a very long piece of talk, right. So that's why these questions cannot be more than just three or five here.

The thing to remember also is something produced by Chris O'Leary. And he produced this idea of the 9C idea. So there are those 9Cs that you have to bear in mind, that you have to remember when constructing this successful elevator pitch. And I'll tell you what these 9Cs are. I'll tell you how to understand them. I'll tell you what they mean and how to use them in practice. And later on I'll also tell you what proper vocabulary you can use there and hopefully this vocabulary will help you to construct a proper elevator pitch in the future because it may be you would need to use it pretty soon.

We'll start with these 9Cs. And the first C that comes into play here is **concise**. So, the speech that you're presenting has to be concise which means that it has to be short. This is what I've just related to, I've just talked about, 20-30 seconds - this is something you have to bear in mind. You can't keep on going, you



just have to stick to the point. You just have to be very precise and concise in what you've got to say.

Then, what you have to remember and what you have to do is you have to stay *clear* and O'Leary, that's a very funny piece of advice, but I agree, it works perfectly here and it works in any type of presentation, in my opinion, but what he said is that if you prepare this piece of presentation, it has to be so clear that if you were to present it to your grandparents, they would still understand it. And the mistake that most people make is that they try to be so wise in what they've got to tell us, they make it, the presentations, they make them very difficult to understand. So they use this very difficult vocabulary, very difficult expressions, but you have to remember, always bear it in mind, a presentation is not about you, a presentation is about the interlocutor, a presentation is about the people who are listening to you, that's why it has to be clear, that's why you have to use these clear, easy to understand structures and expressions so that the other people can understand.

The next C, I think it's the third one, is ***compelling***. When something is compelling, it means that it is convincing, that it is attractive, that it is something that other people would like to follow. What you have to put in your elevator pitch is you have to put only the most important things, the most important aspects but also you have to do that in a way that is attractive, that attracts the attention, that grabs the interest of the other people.

Credibility or *credible*, when we say that the presentation has to be credible. This is a piece of advice that I guess would relate to any type of presentation. You have to stay the kind of person the people would trust. So what you say, you have to make this impression that what you've got to tell them, it is true, it is credible, that you can win the trust of these people. If your future employer, investor, whoever, if they have this feeling that you are not a person they can trust, obviously, they wouldn't do any business with you.

Conceptual. That's another C here. Conceptual would refer to presenting the matter, presenting the stories in a way that are easy to understand, that they



are factual, that they stick to the point and in a way they build some pictures. So the people listening to you, they've got these pictures, they've got these concepts, these images. They are clear, they know what is going on.

An elevator pitch also has to be *concrete* and it, I guess it comes back, again to the very first C that is concise or the next C that is clear. Then we've got this concrete, just the most important elements, just the most important details. You stick to the point, 30 seconds in mind, not much time, to the point and then you'll be successful .

Customized. I told you at the very beginning that an elevator pitch can be anything. I mean, it could be presenting you, you as a person, because you want to win a contract, because you want to get a new job. Just think about the people, I was talking about, in the elevator, just think about the people you would like to meet in such an elevator. So, there is Elon Musk. Let's think about him and let's convince him that you are the right person to get a job. So that could be a presentation presenting you, it could be a sort of job application or a job interview in a way.

But it can also be a presentation of the product, that can be a presentation of the project. It can be a presentation of the project you would like to get money for, so there are a lot of elevator pitches here. And always, when preparing a presentation, you have to bear in mind, I guess I've repeated that a couple of times here, that you have to bear it in mind who you are talking to. So if a presentation is customized it means that you would use different expressions or you would you talk in a different way to different people. I mean if there were investors you would use a different speech or a different pitch, if that were the director of a huge company you would also need some other expressions. If that were the editor-in-chief, let's say, you would need a different elevator pitch.

The last two Cs that are left here, that I would like to refer to, is being *consistent* and being *conversational*. Consistent means that although you can prepare different types of elevator pitches, these different types of elevator pitches, they always have to convey the same type of information. So you cannot



lie there, it has to be composed of the most important details, the basic details, the most important information but it has to be the same. So, it cannot be that different pitches have different types of information.

And the very last one, it is conversational, as I mentioned. So the people listening to you, they need this pleasure out of listening to it. So it has to have this conversation element in it. And this is something I have referred to, you're not talking about yourself, it is not like talking to a mirror and just admiring how great you are and how much you have achieved, but it is to achieve a certain goal and it is for the people who are there. I say for the people who are traveling with you because I come back to this idea of an elevator journey, but as I said, in real life, in most cases or just in reality, I guess, it can happen, right, you can meet a great person when traveling in an elevator and it does happen, but most of us would deliver this speech in regular conditions. So it would be an office, it would be any other room, any other place, a cafe even, I can imagine, it could be a cafe or a restaurant. So you are not traveling anywhere. But the idea, right, of an elevator pitch is this meeting in a lift.

What I told you at the very beginning is that I would like also to present some vocabulary, some handy vocabulary that you could refer to when preparing a speech. At first, I'd like to say that it is a bit difficult because, as I said, there are different types of elevator pitches and it's difficult to foresee what kind of pitch you would be preparing, what kind of pitch would be making but what I have prepared is this standard set of vocabulary that could be used in any presentation, that would be dealing with different business subjects, be it an elevator pitch, be it a presentation that is composed of, that is supposed to be a little bit longer.

So the phrases are as follows - I've already used this expression, so I'll start with *deal with* because deal with works perfectly in working conditions vocabulary or working conditions language, which means that if you want to discuss what your main tasks are, what your main responsibility is, you would say I deal with. You can say what kind of people you deal with, what kind of projects you deal with, what



kind of problems you deal with. So this is something that you actually experience at work.

You can also use the expression like *work on a project* if your job is to convince them, your interlocutors to invest some money, let's say, or you want them to follow your project, to support your projects, and then you say that you work on on a project, that I guess that this expression to work on a project is this very immediate equivalent to Polish because we also have the same expression in Polish - I work on a project.

Talking about projects, you can say also that you *run a project* or that you *deliver a project* or that your *carry out a project*. So, there are lots of phrases, the word run is very productive here. Of course, the very basic meaning has nothing to do with projects. But in this figurative meaning you can *run a project*, you can *run an office*, you can *run a company*, you can even *run a country*. So if you are this head of a country, like you are the Prime Minister, for instance, you can say that you also run a country.

What is important when presenting yourself or when presenting some product, you would need to refer to experience. So the phrase to remember here is *have a lot of experience* in some field or you can say that you *have the same kind of experience* when you want to show the people who are listening to you that you are in the same shoes, so to say, and they have the same kind of experience. You can also say that you *have gained experience*. So the phrase here is *gain experience*. Gain, obtain, in other words, and the best way to gain experience is to keep doing a given job and that's how you get this experience.

What is very important in presentations, is to use this kind of language that would be powerful and that would make your presentation very factual. And what comes in handy here, the expressions that come in handy here are *in fact*. In fact, I am responsible for this and that, you can say, like I'm responsible for 50 people or 50 people work under me, or *as a matter of fact*. As a matter of fact, we are winning on the market and we occupy the first place, we are the leader on the market, why not? Yes, so please remember *in fact* and *as a matter of*.



I told you while describing this perfect, so to say, elevator pitch that the very handy thing you would need to do here is to refer to a statement that everybody can relate to. And to talk about a problem or some complex or complicated idea and then you would like to show that you can solve this problem. And in this way you show your interlocutors that you are the right person, the right person for the job because you know how to do it, you know how to solve the problem. So the phrase here, apart from *solve a problem* would be *bring in a solution* or *find a solution to the problem*. And please remember that there is a ,to' here, right. So you find a solution to the problem.

There are two other phrases - *responsible for* and *succeed in*. These are phrases, responsible for would actually be related to the first phrase like deal with, so when talking about yourself and when talking about your responsibilities, you say *I deal with many different people* or you can say that *I'm responsible for delivering the material on time* or you can say that *I succeed in making people very happy*, if you were that kind of person.

The last expression is *thrive under stress*. It does not relate directly to the job that you do but it shows that you are the right person for the job because this ability to thrive under stress is a key thing. The greatest people know how to survive the stress. They know how to keep on going despite the stress and this expression *thrive under stress* means that you actually like the stress that is involved because when there is this stress and most people hate stress, yes, they don't know how to live with it. They don't know how to work with it when there is a lot of stress involved at work. They simply stop working. They stop thinking clearly and there are also such individuals who thrive under stress. So when there is this stress involved, they actually can do more because the stress that is there provokes them to keep on working harder, to keep thinking. The stress makes them more creative, for instance. So if you say that you thrive under stress, you will make this very good impression.

Guys, I just hope that this short presentation of an elevator pitch is something that will come in handy. I also hope that the vocabulary that I've just



presented is something that you will make use of. You can make use of this vocabulary in elevator pitches, you can make use of this vocabulary in any other presentation.

Just remember - be positive, just remember to keep on talking about some catchy ideas. Do not bring in this boring statements that everybody knows but just use something innovative, use something that just surprises your interlocutors and when it comes to the language, just please remember that what you have to do, and in order to make this great impression on the people listening to you, you just have to use this proper, spotless language with proper grammar, with proper phrases, and then I'm sure you will be successful. Goodbye.



GLOSSARY

(to) overcome - pokonać

pitch - prezentacja

(to) encourage (sb to do sth) - zachęcać

(to) convince (sb to do sth) - przekonać

(to) call a spade a spade - nazywać rzeczy po imieniu

catchy - chwytliwy

engaging - ujmujący/ interesujący

concise - zwięzły/ krótki

compelling - przekonujący/ interesujący

credibility - wiarygodność

conceptual - pojęciowy

customized - zrobiony na zamówienie/ dostosowany do odbiorcy

consistent - spójny/ konsekwentny

conversational - gawędziarski/ konwersacyjny

thrive under stress - radzić sobie ze stresem/ presją