Crafting Your Elevator Pitch(es)

International Center
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Thanks to Chris Feak for sharing an earlier version of these workshop materials.

Agenda

○ Workshop goals

○ Iterative pitch design
  ○ Planning
  ○ Practice
  ○ Feedback
    Repeat

○ Resources
1. Workshop Goals

What is an elevator pitch?
An elevator pitch is...

◎ A professional self-introduction
◎ A response to “What do you do at U of M?” or “What are you studying?” or “Tell me about yourself/your research” or “What’s applied statistics?” or “So how’s your work going?”

2. Iterative Pitch Design
Sample self-intro pitches

So Pamela, what do you do?

I’m at the English Language Institute, where I teach academic and professional communication in courses, workshops, and individualized consultations. (19 words, ~10 seconds)

I have my dream job. I get to investigate and teach specialized language use for academic publishing, speaking, and community engagement and learn about all the cutting edge research that grad students are doing across the university. (37 words, ~20 seconds)

What differences do you notice between these two?

Let’s plan one.

What would be an appropriate question to ask another grad student (or faculty member) in your department this fall?

Questions we brainstormed included

●
Let’s do one.

Stand up, find someone with the same number on their card, introduce yourself by name if needed, or say hi socially, then one of you ask the question you wrote.

After the pitch...

What happened after your pitch?

- Did your listener ask follow-up questions?
  - Tell me more about the…
  - So like you mean that you … [paraphrase the process or impact]

- Did you ask your listener about their work?
  - How about you?
  - What will you be focusing on this fall?
Content (goals)

What are your elevator pitch goals?
What do you want your “pitch” to accomplish?
What do you want to share about your work and why it matters?
One way of thinking about content is to think about your goals in speaking about your work. Imagine the people you may encounter in classes, events, research groups, conferences, etc. this fall.
Content (topics)

Some common topics:
- What you do
- How you do it
- Why you do it
- Why it matters

What content will help you have the impact you seek?

What *do your listeners want* to know about you & your work?

Sharing your content

You have 3 minutes to prepare a draft pitch aligned with your goals. You can write notes (keywords/outline, not a script) on your index card.

Cross the room to find someone you’ve not yet spoken with today who has the same color card.

Reintroduce yourselves as needed. Inquire about each other’s work. (Use your note card as needed).

Each share where you are in your work/research within 5 minutes total.
Feedback

What impressed you about your partner’s pitch?

What impressed you about how your partner listened and responded to your pitch?

Organization & Audience

Some questions to consider:
- Who is listening?
- What do they know already?
- What do they want to know from you?
- What information flow might they expect?
“A cup or a cone?”

Non-specialists and experts

To Non-specialists

What do you do and why?
Details
How does this work connect to the world? Why should I care?

To Experts/Peers

Background
Details
More specific details
Results/implications
Kaposi’s sarcoma-associated herpesvirus (KSHV) is considered the etiologic agent of Kaposi’s sarcoma and several lymphoproliferative disorders. Recently, the KSHV genome was cloned into a bacterial artificial chromosome and used to construct a recombinant KSHV carrying a deletion of the viral interferon regulatory factor gene (F. C. Zhou, Y. J. Zhang, J. H. Deng, X. P. Wang, H. Y. Pan, E. Hettler, and S. J. Gao, J. Virol. 76:6185-6196, 2002).

The K8.1 glycoprotein is a structural component of the KSHV particle and is thought to facilitate virus entry by binding to heparan sulfate moieties on cell surfaces. To further address the role of K8.1 in virus infectivity, a K8.1-null recombinant virus (BAC36ΔK8.1) was constructed by deletion of most of the K8.1 open reading frame and insertion of a kanamycin resistance gene cassette within the K8.1 gene. Southern blotting and diagnostic PCR confirmed the presence of the engineered K8.1 gene deletion. Transfection of the wild-type genome (BAC36) and mutant genome (BAC36ΔK8.1) DNAs into 293 cells in the presence or absence of the complementing plasmid (pCDNAK8.1A), transiently expressing the K8.1A gene, produced infectious virions in the supernatants of transfected cells. These results demonstrated that the K8.1 glycoprotein is not required for KSHV entry into 293 cells.

But the same experts can serve up a cup
Let’s watch an example from Professor Raphael Luna.

https://youtu.be/wd9t-K52bMk?t=38 (45 second pitch)

Thanks to Chris Feak at ELI for locating this example.
How would you improve upon this one? How would you go about improving upon the original?

https://youtu.be/wd9t-K52bMk?t=38 (45 second pitch)

What was your reaction to the brick-making factory metaphor?

Audience

If your listener/s is/are not very knowledgeable, a metaphor can help bridge what they do know (e.g. a factory where workers and machines make bricks) to what they don’t know (e.g. your specialist area.)

What metaphor could you use? Can use a metaphor, an analogy, an example application, depending on your content, your goals, and audience knowledge.
3-part information sequences

- Problem - Theoretical approach - Applied contribution
- Challenge-Action-Results
- Motivation-Explanation-Impact
- Context-Problem-Solution
- Story-Intervention-New Outcome

How to find out what your listener knows?

**Strategies:**
-
Plan & share your audience-aware content

Choose one of the information flow models to use (cup, cone, 3-part sequence).

Make a few keyword notes on a notecard.

Go find someone you don’t know well. Find out what they know about your area.

Try out your information sequence tailored to your listener’s background knowledge. How’s the fit?

Feedback

This time, note down some feedback for yourself. What do you want to remember from this exchange?
Next Steps

Today we have looked at

- goals
- content
- audience
- information flow
- conversational strategies

How will you use your experience in this workshop?

What will you do next?

Create a short to-do list for yourself.

3.

Resources
Useful resources

Concise American Psychological Association advice to graduate students on creating elevator pitches

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi41U9ahyoE
Before and after elevator pitch example with Vanessa Van Edwards: movement, hand gestures, story

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82unpCQRQHQ
Lowering your overall vocal pitch in your elevator pitch by taking a big breath (also with Vanessa Van Edwards), to sound more authoritative

http://90secondthesis.rice.edu/resources/
Lots of winning Rice University elevator pitch contestants, slides, and advice

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N03L6OaxeE
TEDx Talk about turning around the elevator pitch--getting the other person to reveal lots about themselves, and then using what they've shared as openings to identify connections and bridges. Michelle Golden. "The Elevator Speech is out of order."

https://www.sph.umn.edu/current/careers/students/resources/networking/elevator-pitch-bumper-sticker/
A Minnesota SPH website with sample “bumper sticker” personal slogans to describe your work in a short and memorable sentence.

Let’s pause to touch base about the English Language Institute (ELI).

What other English for Academic Purposes resources can the ELI offer you?
ELI’s range of academic & professional English courses

SPEAKING FLUENTLY (6)

WRITING (4)

& LISTENING (1)

PRONUNCIATION (3)

READING, VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR (2)

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LANGUAGE & CULTURE (2)

ELI Courses

- 1-2 credits
- register in Wolverine Access
- first year through PhD contexts

ELI Clinics

- Speaking
- Writing
- GSI

ELI Conversation Circles

(conversational fluency)

http://lsa.umich.edu/eli
Academic Advising

- **Individual advising sessions**
  - 15-20 Minutes
  - Includes an informal needs assessment
- Students receive an ELI Advising Plan
  - Current and future course recommendations
  - Other resources (clinics, workshops, etc)
- Follow-up sessions encouraged
  - End of first Term
  - Anytime during time at UM
- Sign up: http://lsa.umich.edu/eli

ELI on the Web

- [http://lsa.umich.edu/eli](http://lsa.umich.edu/eli)

ELI on Social Media

- [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/umichenglishlanguageinstitute/)
- [twitter](https://twitter.com/umich_eli)
ELI Contacts

- ELI Director: Angelo Pitillo, apitillo@umich.edu
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Thanks!

Questions?

Photo sourced by Chris Feak, ELI.
Credits

◎ Presentation template by SlidesCarnival

◎ Thank you to Chris Feak at ELI for generously sharing her 2015 workshop materials, including Rafael Luna’s expert and novice content.