

## WORK SAMPLE: BLOG POST

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### Take the Terror Out of Talking About Your Business

The world is filled with people who need your goods or services. They're out there, swarming around in airports and train stations. They're ordering lattes in corner coffee shops, drumming their fingers on tables at weddings and seminars, and stepping into office building elevators.

God forbid one of them should drum up a conversation with you.

In theory, you want more opportunities to sell yourself, because you want more business. But in practice, talking about your business can be uncomfortable. Even terrifying.

But it doesn't have to be. You can end the torture today and feel completely at ease every time someone asks, "So, what do you do?"

What you need is an elevator pitch – a 1-2 minute explanation of what you do that makes the listener want to know more. Short enough to deliver in the length of an elevator ride, but compelling enough to make them want to do business with you on the spot -- or at least tell a friend about you.

What you *don't* need is to read yet another article about the elevator pitch, then cast the information aside in favor of checking the hockey scores or scanning your Facebook news feed for another puppy photo.

This time, you've got to do it. Take a few minutes out of your day to put *something* down on paper – even if it's imperfect. These things can be tweaked over time. But once you take that first step toward creating an elevator pitch, it'll be like getting an injection of small talk mastery. You'll never fear being asked about your business ever again. In fact, you'll welcome it.

Anyone can shrug and mumble, "I'm a tax accountant," "I'm a marketing person," or "I sell insurance." Accurate, maybe, but *yaaaaawn*. Chances are, a lot of people do what you do. So how can you stand out? And perhaps more importantly, how can you get your listener jazzed about giving you business?

Keep these steps in mind as you scribble out a draft:

1. **Know exactly what you want.** How do you want this person to help you? Think in specifics. Do you want him to tell all the working mothers he knows about you? Do you want five minutes in front of an executive to pitch your new product? The more clearly you envision your preferred outcome, the more likely you are to get it.

2. **Make them say, “Wow”.** Open your pitch with an explanation of the problems your business helps solve – but do it in a way that evokes emotion.

For example, instead of saying, “I’m a CPA,” you might say, “I help individuals and small businesses pay up to 65% less in taxes. Last year, Canadians missed about \$3,000,000,000 in deductions. I’m like the tax bloodhound. I find the savings other accountants miss.”

Wow! Really? I want *this* guy to do my taxes!

3. **Flaunt your feathers.** Communicate your “unique selling proposition” – that is, what makes you, your business, your product or idea *unique*.

Here’s an example: “My patented software translates up to 50,000 pages of English to French in under two seconds with zero errors. Most translation software takes up to three hours to do the same, and it still requires a human to proofread for mistakes.” Viva la difference!

4. **Pull them into the pool.** Next, make your listener part of the conversation by asking an open-ended question (a question that can’t be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”).

The inventor selling his compact fire escape ladders might ask, “I’m curious – what kind of fire escape plan does your family have?” The recruiter might ask, “What does your company do when someone resigns suddenly?”

5. **Sound natural.** Once all of the above components come together, you’ll want to read your pitch out loud, for two reasons. First, to make sure it’s no longer than two minutes long. If it is, pare it down to the most important points. Keep it short and sweet.

Second, be sure it makes sense and sounds natural coming out of your mouth. Try different variations until it feels authentic.

The most important step of all is to *start*. In your lifetime, you might use 100 different versions of your elevator pitch – and that’s O.K.! Start your first draft now and give yourself the confidence and ease you deserve.