

## Always On - The Elevator Speech (2006)

By Tony Jeary

Simply put, Always On is a philosophy that master presenters adhere to in order to be prepared for unplanned presentation opportunities. It's the idea that we can, and should be prepared for those unscheduled situations where effective delivery of our messages must be done on an extemporaneous or impromptu basis. There are two major components to the Always On philosophy – being “Presentation Ready” for ad hoc presentation opportunities and recognizing those opportunities when they come along. This article is about one type of standard unplanned presentations material called the “Elevator Speech.”

### What

The classic “elevator speech” is essentially a standard answer, crafted in advance, to the “Who are you and what do you do?” question. The name comes from the idea that you need something ready to say when you have a chance encounter with someone you need to connect with on an elevator, and have just 15 to 45 seconds to deliver your message.

It begins with a brief description of what you do and the organization you work for, and often includes points or examples of special aspects of your offerings – how you uniquely provide value to clients or customers. It typically closes with a mechanism that provides a link to future contacts.

Effective elevator speeches, while not literally memorized word for word, are well rehearsed so as to sound completely natural and spontaneous. They need to be sufficiently flexible to permit on-the-fly adjustment to the person you are talking to.

### Why

Being well-prepared for opportunities involving recurring questions, like the elevator scenario, is a basic in the master presenter's repertoire. It's also a good opportunity to practice techniques that will work for opportunities involving more complicated questions wherein you don't have complete answers worked out in advance.

As indicated in our last article, we truly believe that *Life Is a Series of Presentations* and most of life's presentations are impromptu. The master presenter possesses the skills to leverage opportunities offered by being at the right place at the right time with the right audience. Being “Always On” means having the ability to say the right thing, in the right way; at the right moment, and in a manner that helps people to care about what we have to say.

### How

Here are some basic tips on preparation of elevator speeches. Once again, these recommendations won't look a lot different than our advice on scheduled presentations, but simply emphasize the key aspects of a very specific type of impromptu opportunity. To be your best (a master presenter) you need to put some extra effort in upfront in doing your homework (see below).

### Preparation Tips for the “Elevator Speech”

**1. DEFINE Your Presentation Universe for the Elevator Speech!** Tie down the following five design and context factors before you begin writing your speech. Good definitions here will limit the range of situations you need to be ready for.

- Your Audience Universe: This is the “who” part. Do you need to be ready for potential clients or customers, senior management in your own organization or, for job shoppers, a contact in another organization?

- Your Content or Subject Matter: With the “who” defined above, you now need to fill in the “what”, the range of topics that you plan to be prepared for each audience.
- Your Objective(s): These get to the point of the chance encounter and define what you want to accomplish. An objective could be as simple as establishing name recognition in a positive way, or as difficult as getting a “yes” on a request for a future interview or sales call.
- Your Desired Image Or Style: Think about short descriptive words that you want left as impressions (e.g. smart, aggressive, deliberate, cool, humorous, etc.), and then build a larger picture of the style and image cues you can use to portray these characteristics with your target audiences.
- Your Key Message: These are the key points that you want to make with your target audience(s) and form the foundation for the words you'll use. Often you'll want your key message to involve a hook of some kind, so people are intrigued and want more.

**2. Develop Your 3-D Outline™.** Collect and organize your thoughts about topics, objectives and key messages on paper. Keep in mind that you typically will have less than a minute to deliver your key points. Ruthlessly edit to get your content down to a size that can be delivered without even a hint of being rushed.

Don't forget to work carefully with the Why column of the 3-D to assure that each piece of your material connects to an objective you've identified and with the How column to assure that your planned methods contribute to the image and style you want to portray...Interactive is best – don't get too long winded.

**3. Write Your Script.** Literally write down the three to six sentences you want to use. Again, edit so that each word carries value and each phrase rolls easily off the tongue. Here's a simple example:

*"Hi, I'm Tony Jeary, I write books and help people present better." Then I pause and a new contact will ask "about what?" I then say something like "On presentations strategy; most of my books are about presentation effectiveness". Then I lead in tactfully with "In fact, I have a new book coming out in January, published by Simon & Schuster, called Life is a Series of Presentations. Beyond a snappy book title, I truly believe that Life really is a Series of Presentations and that both individuals and companies can achieve dramatically better results through improved presentation skills." I then let them respond and then move on with something like (while I'm pulling out my card) "I personally coach some of the brightest CEOs from the biggest companies in the world, and I often speak on my books at special events." Then I hand over my card, ask for theirs. Then I mention that we have a cool website and look for a way I can email them something of value free – I'm always looking for ways to give value up front.*

**4. Rehearse, Rehearse and Rehearse.** Practice in front of a mirror, with your associates, your spouse, with anyone who will listen and give you feedback. This type of presentation must not have any hints that it is “canned” or “memorized” and must be paced to come off as smooth, natural and unrushed. Let me emphasize that it's important to be real – definitely be ready, but be real.

**5. Deliver with confidence.** When the opportunity emerges, deliver it with vigor and confidence.

## Benefits

A good elevator speech is a mainstay for almost everyone. We all like to be liked, and at a minimum, a good elevator routine helps us leave favorable impressions. On the upside, the good elevator speech might just be the entry ticket to the client you've always wanted to call on or the firm you've wanted to interview with. This preparation can make a positive difference on your credibility, your reputation and your future opportunities.

**Action Plan**

- Start now by defining the Presentation Universe you want to be prepared for to be Always On in the context of elevator speeches.
- Follow the steps in the tips section above to build your own speech.
- Evaluate how it works in the first few uses, and modify as needed to make it best fit you.

Tony Jeary is the personal coach to CEOs and presidents from Ford, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and EDS. His company, Tony Jeary High-Performance Resources (TJHPR), offers special sessions (private coaching, speaking and strategic planning ) based on the principles of "Presentation Mastery."

©2007 Presentation-Pointers.com