

Implementation Tips for USAID Partners

Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global CSO Community

External Relations 2 | 2018

Definitions

Elevator Speech or Pitch—A brief, persuasive introduction to your program/organization that is no longer than 60 seconds. By design and delivery, it conveys the value of what you do and prompts the listener to want to learn more.

Pitching—Presenting the mission and purpose of your program/organization in a manner that is clear, concise, convincing and compelling to your audience.

References

There are many resources online (at least 1000 YouTube videos) that explain and present elevator speeches.

[Elevator Pitch 101
The \(Perfect\) Elevator Pitch](#)

Connecting with Prospective Partners and Funders

Q. What does your CSO do? Why should donors and others care?

A. Can you answer these questions at a moment's notice? Can you deliver the answers so anyone can understand? If not, you need to develop a "pitch" that conveys your mission and purpose in a flash.

Yes, it takes time to nurture a relationship with prospective partners and donors, but situations also arise where you have a minute or less to make an impression; there just isn't time to deliver a full case statement. For example, you walk into an event and see a potential funder or run into a vendor who heads a local trade association. You sit next to a prospective partner at a church function or football match. In the brief exchange with these people, you realize that they could be very helpful to your organization... if only they knew about your good work.

A "pitch" is a brief, persuasive introduction to your program—a kind of first taste that leaves the listener wanting more. (Sometimes this is called an elevator pitch or speech. It is a quick, compelling summary of what your organization makes or does that takes no more time to present than an elevator ride, from 30 to 60 seconds.)

Pitching is an essential skill that can be learned. The following presents the basic components of a pitch and provides some tips on delivering one effectively.

What are the Basic Elements of a Pitch?

A pitch is not meant to be a detailed discussion of your entire organization—its strengths, weaknesses, staffing, future vision—but rather, a concise, purposeful statement that highlights the value of your program. Make sure the pitch is relevant to the intended audience. For example, a potential partner likely has different interests than a potential funder.

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.”

- Thomas Jefferson

The 9 “Cs” Of An “Elevator Pitch”

Concise—An effective elevator pitch contains as few words as possible but no fewer.

Clear—Rather than being filled with acronyms and long words, an effective elevator pitch can be understood by your grandparents, your spouse and your children.

Compelling—An effective elevator pitch explains the problem your solution solves.

Credible—An effective elevator pitch explains why you are qualified to see the problem and to build your solution.

Conceptual—An effective elevator pitch stays at a fairly high level and does not go into too much unnecessary detail.

Concrete—As much as is possible, an effective elevator pitch is also specific and tangible.

Customized—An effective elevator pitch addresses the specific interests and concerns of the audience.

Consistent—Every version of an effective elevator pitch conveys the same basic message.

Conversational—Rather than arriving to close the deal, the goal of an elevator pitch is to set the hook; to start a dialogue with the audience.

Source: Chris O’Leary, 2008.

Successful pitches are short, to the point.

A pitch should answer four key questions (not necessarily in this order):

1. Who are we and who are the people/population we serve?
2. What do we do? What is unique about us?
3. Why should the listener fund/work/partner with us?
4. What are we seeking?

- **Who are we and who are the people/population we serve?**

You cannot be all things to all people; neither can your speech. Keep the audience in mind as you describe in clear, precise language who you serve.

- **What do we do? What is unique about us?**

In one, short sentence, describe your organization’s core service. Think critically about what separates your organization from others working in the same field. For example, your organization may be the only one in the community that employs retired nurses or relies mostly on youth volunteers or reaches a critically underserved population.

- **Why should someone fund/work/partner with us?**

Know your target and his or her needs. Another way of phrasing this question is: What is it that this person needs or wants that my organization alone can provide?

There may be many other organizations that do similar work with similar populations—explain why your organization is a better choice than the others. In business terms, what is your organization’s competitive advantage? Remember, not everyone listening will respond the same way. Choose those things you know are of most interest to your listener—what your organization can do for him or her.

- **What are we seeking?**

In crafting your pitch, keep in mind the purpose of your conversation and what you want to achieve. For example, when speaking with a potential donor, your goal might be to request a meeting where you can share more about your programming and why your organization should receive funding. With this goal in mind, you might end your pitch with: “This is just some of what our organization accomplishes (or hopes to accomplish). I would appreciate meeting with you to discuss this further... what is the best way to contact you?”

Keep your pitch short and engaging—tell your listener what is unique about your organization without getting bogged down in details.

For More Information

For this or other issues of *Implementation Tips*, please visit www.NGOConnect.net. The Web site is a dynamic and interactive portal dedicated to connecting and strengthening CSOs, networks and CSO support organizations worldwide.

Funding for this publication was provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, under the Strengthening Civil Society (SCS) Global Leader Award. Its contents, managed by SCS Global, do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.

© 2018 by FHI 360. This publication may be photocopied or adapted for noncommercial use only, without prior permission, provided credit is given to FHI 360, SCS Global and USAID.

Additional tips for improving your pitch

- **Tell a story.** A pitch should be like telling a story; it should intrigue your audience and keep them captivated for 30 to 90 seconds. Don't simply share facts; make sure you engage your audience and hold their attention.
- **Consider your "hook."** A "hook" is an interesting aspect that engages the listener and prompts him or her to ask questions. For example, you might start with a statement like, "Last year my organization saved 4,000 lives." Or, "My CSO is changing the way children view school." Or, "Our approach to HIV prevention has touched 15,000 children's lives across South Africa." Your hook should catch the listener's attention and make him or her want to hear more about your organization.
- **Know your audience.** Your pitch should explain why your audience should care about what you do. Think about what an individual donor might want to hear versus a potential partner. Think about what information might change, depending on the audience.
- **Always be prepared.** Practice your pitch until it sounds conversational, not stiff. Consider rehearsing it in front of a mirror, or in front of colleagues or friends until it sounds natural, not memorized. Remember, you have only one chance to make a good first impression.
- **Always follow up.** After you have delivered your pitch and reached your goal, make sure you follow through. If you requested a business card, then email the contact immediately to set up the meeting and bring up details you discussed so they can recall the discussion.

Sample Pitch for a Chance Meeting with a Business Owner

Set up: Mary Smith, Executive Director of MY CSO, while shopping at the local market, runs into the head of a small business

Target: Well-known business owner

Immediate goal: Start a conversation that will lead to a meeting

End goal: Partner and place trainees in business

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS	RATIONALE
<p>Hello, my name is Mary Smith with MY CSO. For the last three years we've changed the lives of hundreds of HIV-positive teenagers who live in OUR TOWN.</p> <p>We provide counseling, schooling and job training for young people who once were unemployable and often turned to begging.</p> <p>Our funding comes from USAID and the local department of health.</p>	<p>Tell your story and use a "hook." Introduce unique aspect of mission—works with teenagers.</p> <p>Know your audience when describing what organization does— trains capable workers.</p> <p>Keep it simple. Do not use jargon (for example, OVC or sustainable solutions).</p> <p>Breathe. Listen. Look for nonverbal cues, adapt as necessary.</p>
<p>I have some interesting ideas for your business that I'd like to discuss at a more convenient time. What is the best way to schedule a meeting?</p>	<p>Aim for an immediate goal, but keep the end goal in mind.</p> <p>Now is not the time or place for a long conversation. Aim to start a dialogue that will lead to a meeting, not to place a trainee.</p>
<p>How may I contact you? By phone or email? May I have a business/visit card?</p>	<p>Ask for contact information—a phone number or email address.</p>
<p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Always be courteous.</p>
<p>We all meet so many people every day, to help you remember our organization, I wanted you to know that three of our trained seamstresses designed and made all the uniforms for the local ABC primary school.</p>	<p>Before parting, mention something hard to forget that reinforces the organization's mission and accomplishments.</p>
<p>Here is my card. I will follow up in a few days. It was a pleasure meeting you.</p>	<p>Before handing over your card, write a short note on the reverse—for example, "trainees made ABC school uniforms"—as a reminder to the recipient.</p>

Sample Pitch for a Chance Meeting with a Reporter

Set up: Mary Smith, Executive Director of MY CSO, while attending a local council meeting runs into a reporter for local media.

Target: Local newspaper, radio or TV station or website.

Immediate goal: Start a conversation that may lead to a feature story.

End goal: Positive media coverage.

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS	RATIONALE
<p>Hello, my name is Mary Smith with MY CSO. For the last three years we've changed the lives of hundreds of HIV-positive teenagers who live in OUR TOWN.</p> <p>We provide counseling, schooling and job training for young people who once were unemployable and often turned to begging.</p> <p>Perhaps you have heard of "Our Town United"... That is our afterschool football club—one of the ways we work with hard-to-reach young men.</p>	<p>Tell your story and use a "hook." Introduce unique aspect of mission—works with teenagers.</p> <p>Know your audience when describing what organization does— looks for interesting local news.</p> <p>Keep it simple. Do not use jargon (for example, OVC or sustainable solutions). Tell your story and use a "hook." Introduce unique aspect of mission—works with teenagers.</p> <p>Breathe. Listen. Look for nonverbal cues, adapt as necessary.</p>
<p>The team has won three of four games this season. But that's not all, they have also learned about how to make good decisions on and off the field, especially about how to prevent HIV. For a change, here is a good news story about our youth.</p>	<p>Aim for an immediate goal, but keep the end goal in mind. Since this is not the time or place for a long conversation, aim to start a dialogue that will lead to a meeting.</p>
<p>How may I contact you? By phone or email? May I have a business/visit card?</p>	<p>Ask for contact information—a phone number or email address.</p>
<p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Always be courteous.</p>
<p>Before you go...we are so excited that [Name of local soccer hero] has agreed to coach the team. I hope you will consider coming to practice to see how we combine soccer and HIV prevention so you can share this story with your readers (or listeners, or viewers).</p>	<p>Before parting, mention something hard to forget that reinforces something about the organization's mission and accomplishments.</p> <p>If the reporter says he doesn't cover health, sports or human-interest stories, ask for the name of a colleague who does, then, follow up by contacting him/her.</p>
<p>Here is my card. I will follow up in a few days. It was a pleasure meeting you.</p>	<p>Write a short note on the reverse— for example, "soccer and HIV prevention"—as a reminder to the recipient.</p>

