

WHAT IS YOUR 30-SECOND ELEVATOR PITCH?

Hi everyone. What is your 30-second elevator pitch for your practice? Do you even have one? What do you say when people ask, "What do you do?" Would you care to share yours here?

I am working on mine but would love to hear other pitches for two reasons: 1) so I can hear more examples of an elevator pitch as a solo practitioner; and 2) so I can know more about who on here is doing what type of law and where (is there some type of directory somewhere for this solo practitioner section?).

Interesting elevator pitch links:

<http://www.elevatorpitchessentials.com/essays/ElevatorPitch.html>

<http://www.tobeanentrepreneur.com/blog/how-to-write-a-winning-elevator-pitch/>

[http://www.sitepoint.com/blogs/2009/03/24/why-you-need-a-powerful-elevator-pitch/\[has](http://www.sitepoint.com/blogs/2009/03/24/why-you-need-a-powerful-elevator-pitch/[has)

example]

<http://www.jeffhendricksondesign.com/how-to-give-a-good-elevator-pitch-example/>

The Nine C's of an Effective Elevator Pitch

1. Concise
2. Clear
3. Compelling
4. Credible
5. Conceptual
6. Concrete
7. Customized
8. Consistent
9. Conversational

Salene R. M. Kraemer

When I was starting my business (all of two years ago), my Dad always used to say to me "in business, if you can't say what you do and who you are in a single sentence, you have already lost people". This is something I've been working on, and I think it just might be true. What say you?

Chris Vaughn-Martel, Massachusetts

I agree with Christopher, 30 seconds is a bit much unless you are fundraising.

Mine is simple: "I am a lawyer who helps people keep their homes."

Ducchi Quan, Virginia

Okay, so vet this for me...

For Laymen - "Im a general practioner that focuses on the needs of individuals and small businesses"

For other attorneys - "Im new. I do a general practice at the moment, but only take referrals in the areas of X and Y."

Duane Dawson

I think you are casting your net to broadly for fear of losing business because you excluded something from your description (or, at least that was my thinking when I used such general terms.)

I think you need to pick something specific and memorable---think branding. "Hi! I'm DD and I do due diligence like it ain't never been done before." Or, "I help families who've lost a loved one that didn't have a will," rather than "I administer intestate estates".

Give us three areas that you practice in and watch what the sezzer nation can do when unleashed and focused.

James M. McMullan, Alabama

Okay. Since I am newly licensed I dont really have a focus yet. The areas I am the most competent in (from practicums and internships in law school) are criminal motion work and general civil litigation.

At the moment, the goal is take family work, and maybe some CH 7s to build the practice, and as soon as is feasible transition into a criminal defense/civil plaintiffs type practice.

At this point, I really sort of *am* afraid of losing business. If I cant handle it, I can refer it out.

Duane Dawson

I think you lost me at "general practitioner" -- practitioner? Bad word no matter who you are talking to. You want to do family law and bankruptcy? Tell people that. "I am opening a new office -- I do divorce and bankruptcy." You are awesome because lots of attorneys do not do those areas and their clients NEED someone who does and attorneys love to make referrals and look all smart and connected, like a fixer or something. Give out your card, smile and say, "Next time your client asks your for a referral, give them my name!"

I don't differentiate much between attorneys and non-attorneys when I talk to people -- why punish people like that?

Me: "I am a consumer attorney -- mostly I sue debt collectors for harassment. I also sue those debt settlement companies for fraud because they take people's money and don't do anything. You know all those radio and late night television commercials for 'special programs' to only pay 60% of your debt? That's a lie, there's no special program and I sue those companies for lying to people."

Listener: "I don't understand, how do the companies even exist?"

Me: "I don't understand either, complain to Jerry Brown about it, in the meantime, I'm suing them and getting people's money back."

That's pretty much how the conversation goes most of the time. Well, unless halfway through, after I say "debt collectors for harassment", a light goes on in their eyes and they start nodding. Then I say, "Oh, you know somebody going through that? Here, take 2 cards -- give them one and keep one because I bet someone else you know may need me too."

-- Amy Kleinpeter, California

Good for you Amy. How have those cases gone against the debt settlement companies? What causes of action do you use? State or fed court?

Craig McLaughlin, California

"If you have to ask, you can't afford me."

Mike Blake

I say, "I'm an employment lawyer. I represent employees who've had problems at work or who've been fired unfairly, and some small businesses that want to do the right thing regarding their workers." Also, like Amy, I ALWAYS give more than 1 card, often saying, "Here's a couple of cards -- feel free to pass them out if you know someone who might need my help."

Kathleen Dillon Hunt, Washington

"My name is Steve O'Donnell and I protect ideas."

Steve O'Donnell, Pennsylvania

Are you sure you want to let the sales genie out of the bottle? 😊 OK, here is mine:

I'm a business and IP lawyer for emerging growth companies in the tech and media industries, with deep expertise in social media/Web 2.0/consumer Internet businesses. Having built the in-house legal function from scratch as GC at a household name Internet company (eHarmony.com), I understand the needs and priorities of entrepreneurial growth companies. I can offer the sophistication of a large firm practice and the pragmatic business orientation of a veteran in-house lawyer, all with the personal touch and cost-effectiveness of a small firm.

Too wordy, perhaps -- probably more than 30 seconds -- but I'll keep going until the elevator doors open. 😊

Antone Johnson, California

I have more than one elevator speech since I have more than one practice area. So, depending on where I am and who I am talking to:

1. I represent teachers, songwriters, and families with special needs children.
- OR 2. I do legal planning for families who have children with disabilities.
- OR 3. I do Texas teacher law.
- OR 4. I am an attorney for songwriters.

That's it. But those short sentences elicit some type of response from the listener, and I then can go into more detail in a

conversational format based on what type of interest that person showed.

Pam Parker, Texas

I haven't used it, and probably won't, but in my own head I'm "the death lawyer". I even have a full-size scythe that I'd love to hang up in my office...

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

Ideas can't be protected.

Mike Blake

How about this one for estate planners:

I help families plan for the "what-ifs"

Or, building on Cynthia's:

I'm a "nothing is certain except" lawyer. Get their attention and then explain...

Dallas Lain, Wyoming

yeah, but it makes a good soundbite. I'll explain reduction to practice if they call or it's a long elevator ride.

Steve O'Donnell

I guess you can protect an idea with a trade secret.

Mike Blake

My elevator pitch: I do legal research and writing for other lawyers on a freelance basis.

Lisa Solomon, New York

"I do anything that you're willing to pay me for."

Brian C. Hagner, Wisconsin

"I do real estate law; my clients are buying and selling, or they are suing their neighbors or co-owners."

Rebecca K. Wiess, Washington

Gee, there aren't many elevators here. Though the longest elevator ride I ever took was 13 floors. I was trapped there with the Bank president who asked how my projects were going. I wasn't sure what my boss the Chief of Staff had told her so I mumbled for what seemed an eternity.

Now to answer the call of the question.

I say I practice Family Law (which most folks know what that means) and general civil litigation (which generally gets me a blank stare) I then add I sue the bastards who deserve it. My guess that's what they remember.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

Although not an attorney, I thought I'd share my elevator pitch:

StarrParalegals is a virtual paralegal service that offers exceptional, professional paralegal services to licensed, practicing attorneys that specialize in Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights, nationwide, whether they are in solo practice, law firms, or corporate legal departments.

Our services appeal to attorneys that are operating in a downsizing market while trying to decrease their overhead and maintain, or increase, the value of their billable dollars. StarrParalegals provides highly experienced, certified paralegals to these firms on a transactional basis, thereby avoiding the costs and expenses associated with full time employees.

Pamela J. Starr,

I am a RN and an attorney and I represent nurses before the State Nursing

Board; or

I am RN and an attorney and I advocate for nurses in licensure and professional practice matters.

LaTonia Denise Wright

these are great; i am going to make a master list.

Salene Kraemer

I think that there are more pitches from other Sezzers in the archives too.

1. I practice wills, trusts and probate law.
2. I practice preventive law - I prevent family turmoil and costly fees.
3. I act as a trusted advisor to the family and help you save money.
4. I represent people, dead or alive.
5. Estate planning is like fire insurance and it's a wise investment you may not need it, but in case you do, you will be glad that you got it.
6. Estate planning is easier than losing weight, trust me. Make it your new year's resolution.
7. When you buy lingerie, would you want to go to Walmart or Victoria's Secret? When you shop for an attorney, are you looking for a one-night stand or a long-term relationship? [I haven't used this yet anywhere]
8. Estate planning is a happy place. It beats handling probate or conservatorship or leaving turmoil for your family. It certainly beats having to fight out a guardianship proceeding because the parents did not have a will. It beats your family members having to guess at your medical decisions. It's a happy place because you are in control now. You're alive, you're healthy, you have assets, you have people you love and people who love you.
9. Estate planning is an act of love.
10. You all know that Michael Jackson died last year. Your estate plan may not be the Thriller of the week, like MJ's was, but to your beneficiaries, when you go to Neverland, your estate plan will very important. He was Off the Wall, but he knew that he was not Invincible. He told his ex-wife and his father to Beat It. You have a Pretty Young Thing to take care of. Heal the World, do an estate plan.

E.J. Hong, California

Here's mine:

"I'm a Spanish-speaking attorney in Orange, Chatham, and Durham counties. While I primarily do domestic/family matters, I can also handle other matters, too. I grew up in this area and really enjoy practicing here."

Depending on who I'm talking with, I'll offer that my particular interest in family law is the intersection of family law with immigration and international law, or that I have experience in human resources and can handle employment issues as well. And, if they ask if I handle X,Y, or Z for Spanish-speaking clients, I'm ready to give them names of other Spanish-speaking attorneys in the area who do.

Sarah Carr, North Carolina

Just my opinion, but if you have to use commas when you write it. . . I don't want to be hear it in an elevator. If it takes more than two breaths to say it, I'll start pressing the button in the fruitless hope that it makes the elevator go faster. If it takes three breaths to say it, I'm much more likely to punch you than to hire you.

Steve O'Donnell

The topic was 30-second elevator speech. I use commas when I write because that's how one is supposed to write. Despite my commas in my elevator speech, it would still be rattled off in 5 seconds. So, if someone asked me what I do and got anxious after 5 seconds, then that's their problem, not mine. If you don't want to hear the answer, don't ask because if my talking makes your feel uneasy, either you weren't really genuinely interested in hearing my response or we won't be a good fit anyway.

It's nice to know you're more likely to punch me than hire me. Though, in all honesty, I'm not one to chat people up on elevators anyway, so I wouldn't offer this speech unless you asked, and then, see above.

Maybe it's the Southerner in me, but if ask someone what they do and they respond with just a 3-4 word phrase, I'm not likely to want to engage in any more conversation with that person, depending on their tone. In many cases, at least the way I see it, the "30-Second Elevator Speech" is an ice-breaker, a lead-in, an invitation for more dialogue or conversation, depending on the environment and situation. If the elevator speech doesn't get the other person asking more questions, then relationship building is not happening. Maybe it's different among the practice areas, but my

practice area depends on making people feel like I'm interested in them and their stories and they feel comfortable enough to share those stories with me.

Perhaps that post was not directed at me personally, but it seemed like it.

Sarah Carr, the quick-speaking comma user from the now-frozen South

My marketing mentor, Michael Port, says that he is on a mission to destroy the elevator pitch. Let me share why...

An elevator pitch is an unnatural form of communication. Nobody actually talks that way. It's not conversational - both in tone and in form.

Suppose someone is in the middle of an elevator speech and they say something interesting and you want to ask them about it. You pretty much have to sit there and wait for the monologue to end before you are allowed to speak. The only reason we suffer through an elevator speech is that we hope that the person will pay us back by listening to ours.

It's far better to engage in a dialog. Here's an example of how mine might go.

Q: What do you do?

A: You know how when someone passes away, the families sometimes fight over the stuff?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, I work with parents who are afraid their kids will blow their inheritance.

Q: So, what do you do for them?

A: It depends on what kinds of problems they face. I draft trusts, build companies to manage family assets, lots of stuff. Basically, I spend a lot of time listening to what they need, and then I do whatever it takes to get it for them.

Q: So, are you a lawyer, a financial advisor, or what?

A: I'm a lawyer, but I try not to let that get in the way.

You get the idea. But, the above conversation is pretty close to how it goes. Often, the person will respond to my statement by telling me about a friend or a family member who needs my stuff. The important part is to have a first answer that works well and then to know the likely questions you might get as follow ups.

No matter what, you just let the conversation go where it goes. If they drift off, then they didn't really care what you do, anyway.

Cheers,

David Hiersekorn, California

Nice example, David! Thanks!

Gene

I work with nonprofits ...

I'm a lawyer, but I spent the first half of my career in management ...
mostly small- to medium-sized public charities ...

Corporate and tax matters ... things like counseling boards, drafting
policies, working on mergers ...

...

Do you do any work with nonprofits?

Gene Takagi, California

I'd say that there's an art to having a conversation, yes, but 1) I have
used some of the "pitches" below in conversations and 2) networking meetings
in which you give your elevator pitch is not a conversation but a pitch.

E.J. Hong

Circonlex, we deal with the French so you don't have to.

seriously though or original pitch was "We make your documents global" which
is still more or less our game, helping you be credible in a multi-language,
multi-culture marketplace.

Bob Bell, France

I sue debt collectors. I help people save their home by defending
foreclosures, and I help people shed the weight of unaffordable debts
in bankruptcy. Then I sue more debt collectors.

Wendell Finner, Florida

Hey. What's your sign?

Mark Tanney

"We Do Business Brawls." Always starts a conversation going.

David Kaufman, Virginia

It seems like there are different definitions of pitch and purpose in this thread.

1. There's the what do you say when you're in conversation and someone asks what you do?
2. There's the what do you say when you're standing in a networking meeting and you have 30 seconds to educate people on what you do?
3. There's the slogan for the firm.

In general, I'd say that shorter is better for 1 and 3. Sometimes, you want to fill up the entire 30 seconds for #2.

So, for the original poster, I ask in what situation will you be using your 30-second pitch?

E.J. Hong

That's a great example/alternative. Really gets the other person into the game, as it were. You're not telling them a narrative, however short it may be, you're answering questions they raise. I'm going to try and incorporate this in my practice.

The only suggestion I would make is to not dismiss your profession. One of the few things I remember from my mass IL bar admission many moons ago was the judge's defense of the practice of law - he implored us not to stand idly by in the face of lawyer jokes, however good natured. It was probably the biggest thing that stuck with me from that day. No need for us to further such well trodden jokes and dismissals of our profession.

Ducchi Quan

Honestly, I don't talk to people in elevators! Who talks to strangers in elevators?

I think anyone who asks "what do you do" but cannot listen for 10 seconds probably is not going to remember what anyone says, unless maybe it is "Did you ever hear of that lawyer who works from his hot dog stand? I practice law from my stripper pole" or something similarly ridiculous.

JMO...

-- Amy Kleinpeter

And I talk to people in elevators regularly - and everywhere else there are people. Conversation has to flow naturally. I don't volunteer that I'm attorney, but I'm ready when they ask what I do. About 10% then ask for a card. Since the majority of people own property, most anyone could become one of my real estate clients. For example, I got a whole cluster of clients connected through the parking lot attendant. If I had a practice where the potential client base was much more restricted, this would not be as useful as a marketing technique.

Rebecca K. Wiess

I know, probably hard to fathom, but, yes---I talk on elevators (but usually without so many commas, Steve-O.) As a matter of fact, there is just something about those doors slamming shut that sends my gab gland into hyper-drive and I am awash in thoughts and feelings of small-talk. Wife attributes it to an excess supply of folksiness; I never noticed it myself: I thought everybody always walked around with glazed eyes.

Surely I am not the only "lift locutioner", am I?

Jimmy Mac

James M. McMullan, Alabama

I think it depends on your area of the world.

Here, every one will say good day and have a nice day but nothing else in the elevator, guaranteed. It's very mechanical.

In New Orleans, conversations about random topics with complete strangers is guaranteed just about anywhere including and not limited to elevators.

Bob Bell, France

Mine takes less than 30 seconds.

"Hi, my name is Jeffrey Bloom. If you are indigent and get arrested in Brooklyn, NY, I might be assigned to represent you. Have a great day....and remember not to make any statements to the police!" 😊

Jeffrey C. Bloom, New York

An elevator speech isn't necessarily literal. It could be a convo with somebody you are traveling with or run into at the grocery store. I think elevator speeches are an important part of marketing.

Cari B. Rincker, New York

Very true re: these different definitions.

I will be using pitch in many places, but next week I will need it for situation #2, in a networking meeting.

Salene Kraemer

Sorry - I must have missed your intro to Solosez. Are you new? You do business law I see from your website. I would make the pitch short using short sentences and using plain English. Also, use words that will catch the audience's attention. What is their pain/need and how can you help? If you want to write up something, we'll shred it too death for you (I mean, give you loving, constructive suggestions). Don't be afraid of us.

E.J. Hong

Hi, I help people with immigration law and other connected issues. There might be adoptions needed so a step-child can move with the family to another country, or an international business transaction that might have cultural sensitivities. Currently, I am working on the sale of a business by an owner moving over seas. I have another client fighting deportation attempts and am representing him in immigration court.

Diane Stamler Oraif, Alabama

My 30 second elevator pitch:

I am a holistic problem solver for individuals and families. I can assist with wills, family law issues, education, and municipal law claims. It is my role to take people at emotionally challenging junctures in their lives and help them to see clearly what their non-emotionally rocked selves of the future would have wanted them to do, and also to reduce their anxiety while doing it.

Lynda L. Hinkle, New Jersey

Point well taken. But, when I say that, it doesn't come across as derogatory or even dismissive. Sometimes, it's hard to convey inflection and emphasis in an email.

I tend to bury the fact that I'm a lawyer for a couple of reasons. I've been told on more than one occasion that I speak very authoritatively. It's just something in the tone of my voice. I don't intend to come across as "the boss." But, I've noticed that - given my natural tone - if I also say that I'm a lawyer, people throw up their defenses too soon. So, for that reason, I hold back for a little bit.

Also, I don't practice law the way that most folks do. If you watched a typical day in my life, you might not even be able to tell that I'm a lawyer. But, I'm solving my clients problems the whole time. So, when I say that I try not to let my lawyer-ness get in the way, I'm dead serious.

But, back to your point, every single component of our message needs to be intentional and perfectly consistent with our image. In my case, I need to play down the lawyer thing in order to overcome another natural weakness. I wouldn't recommend it for everyone.

Cheers,

David Hiersekorn

"I do family and criminal laws, all too often, together." It always gets a laugh.

Micah G. Guilfoil, Kentucky
