**The JVC Northwest elevator pitch**

***Adapted from the Idealist.org Guide to Nonprofit Careers for First Time Job Seekers***

If you were in an elevator actually talking with a community member or potential organization partner, your normally quick elevator ride would seem even shorter as you tried to convey why you should collaborate or earn their trust and support.

However, if you have prepared and practiced a concise, persuasive statement conveying your best attributes in approximately 30 seconds, then that short ride would be more than enough time to articulate your value. You will use your elevator pitch for informational interviews, networking events, or chance meetings.

No matter where you are, you will want to be able to succinctly state who you are, what you are looking for, and how the person you’re speaking with could help you. If done well, 30-45 seconds is plenty of time to convey your need without losing your audience’s attention. Always try to be brief. This will leave more time for a conversation with your new contact around ways that you can help one another out.

**Here’s what you should include in your elevator pitch:**

1. Who are you?

2. What you’re looking for and why

3. A specific outcome

**Examples:**

1. **Who are you?**

“Hi, my name is Sofia.”

While it may seem obvious, be sure to state your name! State it clearly, slowly, and with confidence. Practice this beforehand several times. This is how the person you’re talking with will remember it. If you have business cards, handing one to the person will provide a visual reminder of your name, as well as a means to contact you in the future.

“I am a Jesuit Volunteer/AmeriCorps member here at [name of the organization where you serve]. I teach English, life skills, and U.S. culture to refugees who are new to living in the United States.”

After stating your name, mention something else specific that defines you at this point in your life. This year it makes complete sense (in most cases) to identify yourself as both a Jesuit Volunteer and an AmeriCorps member, and describe what your service entails. The trick here is to be as specific as you can without boring the listener with unnecessary details.

Speak slowly, as *JesuitVolunteerAmeriCorpsMember* is a mouthful and may be completely unfamiliar to some people. Be prepared to offer a brief intro to JVC Northwest:

“Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest places recent college grads like me into full-time service in organizations throughout the Pacific Northwest. We are funded through a federal AmeriCorps grant which allows Americans to serve domestically, similar to Peace Corps.”

**2. What you’re looking for and why**

Be specific! The bulk of your elevator pitch should explain exactly what you are looking for and why. Have at least a general idea of what you’re looking for, whether it is a job, advice, or a referral for someone to contact in a particular organization.

“I am here at this training both to learn more about how to teach effectively as well as to find a community of professionals who serve a similar population, so that we can be resources for each other this year.”

Clearly explaining what you are looking for can be tricky if you have not prepared. Spend the most time practicing this part of your pitch to make sure it is direct, concise, and polished.

**3. A specific outcome**

Do you want information about other organizations that support refugees, online communities of practice, or specific advice?

If you know what you want to get out of the conversation, you can find a way to subtly work it in to the end of your elevator pitch and allow the person to offer it. Of course, be aware that a specific request can put the person you’re speaking with on the spot, and if they can’t help you with your exact request, the conversation may end there. *Open-ended requests will likely lead to a fruitful conversation.*

“I would love to know about any other organizations in the area that work with refugees or even professional groups here for ESL instructors.”

Open the door for conversation without demanding anything.

Often, you will get a response such as, “Oh, I know exactly the person you should talk with. Let me get you their contact information.” This way, you get what you’re looking for while allowing the people you’re speaking with to determine how they can help you.

Here’s how to develop and practice your elevator pitch:

**Write it out:**

You should write your pitch out first and then practice saying it until it feels natural.

You can also begin by speaking what you think you want to say and writing it down as you go; once your words are down on paper, you can polish them. Either way, be sure to work on both the spoken and written versions of your pitch. The written version is to make sure that you’re saying exactly what you want to say as you want it to be heard, and can also be useful for email introductions and written requests for informational interviews. The spoken version is what your audience will hear and it is essential that you are able to say a close approximation of the essential details you have on paper (without sounding like you are reciting a list from memory).

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**Practice it out loud:**

Once you’ve practiced it in front of the mirror and you feel like the wording sounds natural and concise, find some friends or family members who will give you honest feedback on all aspects of the pitch. Ask everyone who listens to provide you with at least one aspect to improve, as well as one aspect that works well. Have your practice audience pay attention to your content, clarity, tone, and pace, as well as to your body language and poise.