

WHAT IS IT?

An elevator speech is an overview of an idea for a product, service or project. The name reflects the fact that an elevator speech can be delivered in the time span of an elevator ride, which is approximately 30 seconds. The idea of an "elevator speech" is to have a prepared presentation that grabs attention and says a lot in a few words.

An effective elevator speech comes in handy when you are attending an event, conference or some other type of meeting with networking opportunities. Have you ever noticed that one of the first questions people ask is "and what do you do?" Your usual canned response is - Oh - I am teacher, or I am a business owner, or I am retired. However, if you turn your message around and start with an answer such as "I am dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service" - don't you think their ears will perk up and they will want to know more?

So what comes next? This is where your pitch, or elevator speech, comes in. Let's be honest- many of us may freeze up or fumble as we search for the words to explain all the awesome work we do as an organization. Here are some tips to help you to engage potential members or supporters when they ask "What exactly is GFWC?"

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

- 1) Who am I? Are you a Club member, Club or State Officer or Committee member? Introduce yourself that way, such as "I am Nancy Ames, GFWC Maine President- elect and a member of the Semper Fidelis Club here in town."
- 2) What am I trying to accomplish? Make it personal - GFWC motivates us all in different ways, so think about what makes you excited to be a member. There are several aspects to choose from, including service projects, fundraising, community involvement, or social interaction. If you believe strongly in what you are conveying and are sincere, it will make your pitch more effective. Keep it short and to the point. "Our Club is involved in projects around our community to improve the lives of others. A recent project we did was to sponsor a 3 mile walk around our town to bring awareness to Alzheimer's. We simply asked anyone who was interested in walking to show up in purple & donate \$10. We raised over \$700 for the Alzheimer's Association of Maine.
3. End with an Action or your "Hook" - This will give you an opening to either continue the conversation or get the potential member's contact information. A great example is to ask "If you could improve one thing in your community, what would it be?" Making the question personal will hopefully encourage a meaningful conversation. Does your Club have business cards or brochures with your Club's contact information? Invite them to a meeting or an upcoming project or fundraising event. Ask them for their contact information.

Keep in mind the basic elements of an effective elevator speech:

1. Be concise - use as few words as possible
2. Be clear - An effective elevator speech is one that can be understood by your parents, grandparents and the kid next door. Make sure your audience understands what you are talking about and what's in it for them.
3. Be informative - As much as possible, an effective elevator speech is specific & tangible. Talk about leadership accomplishments and goals.
4. Be engaging - This should be a conversation starter, not a monologue. You want to spark the interest of your audience, not bore them.
5. Finish with a request - At the end of your pitch, you must ask for something. Do you want to invite them to a meeting, make a donation for an event, work with them on a project?

And then finally - Practice, practice, practice! This is probably the most important factor of all, because when someone asks you "What is GFWC?" and you fumble and freeze, the opportunity to recruit a new member or supporter may be lost. Use a family member, a mirror, or give your speech to the casserole in the oven - whatever works for you. Practicing will ensure that the next time you get an opportunity to speak about GFWC you will be prepared to rise to the occasion!