HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

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Elevator Pitch

career curriculum
INTEGRATION
CCI

Elevator Pitch Assignment and Class Activity:
Requires: 45-60 minutes of class time and 60 minutes of time prior to class

1. Prior to Class
• Using the elevator pitch resource sheet (attached), students should prepare a 1 minute written elevator speech.
• Students should bring 4 copies of their written elevator speech to class on the day of the scheduled activity.
• In addition to their elevator pitches, students can be required to bring their drafts and notes to show that they followed elements of the recommended process for creating their pitch.

2. Group Work in Class (20 min)
• Assign students to groups of 4.
• Students can start by discussing the process of creating their elevator pitches with their groups. How do they feel about their current draft? Was the process difficult or easy? Do they have any questions or issues?
• Each student will then read their elevator pitch out loud to their groups while the other group members read along. Following each reading the group members can write notes on their copy of the elevator pitch.
• After all four members have read their pitches and each group member has taken notes on the other three members' pitches, the group should discuss each of the pitches including strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for improvement.

3. Individual Work (10 min)
• Give students 10 minutes to incorporate suggestions from their group, rewriting their short pitches.

4. Sharing as a Class (20 min if only 1-2 people from each group shares)
• Option 1: Have anyone willing to share their pitch with the whole class do so, allowing for feedback from the class.
• Option 2: Have each group select one or two members to share their revised pitches with the rest of the class, allowing for feedback from the class.
• Option 3: Have every student share their pitch with the class over the remainder of this class session and any additional sessions necessary.

Writing Your Elevator Pitch:
Adapted from "The Perfect Elevator Pitch to Land a Job," by Nancy Collamer, Forbes.com

1. Clarify your job target.
So when you begin putting an elevator pitch together, nail down the best way to describe your field and the type of job you're pursuing. Until you can clearly explain the type of position you want, nobody can help you find it or hire you to do it.

2. Put it on paper.
Write down everything you would want a prospective employer to know about your skills, accomplishments and work experiences that are relevant to your target position. Then grab a red pen and mercilessly delete everything that's not critical to your pitch.

Keep editing until you've got the speech down to a few key bullet points or sentences. Your goal is to interest the listener in learning more, not to tell your whole life story. So remove extraneous details that detract from your core message.

3. Format it.
A good pitch should answer three questions: Who are you? What do you do? What are you looking for? That should take about 15-30 seconds. The next 15-30 seconds should add details about your unique selling proposition, special skills and specific ways you could help a potential employer.

4. Tailor the pitch to them, not you.
It's important to remember that the employers listening to your speech will be asking "what is in it for me?" So be sure to focus your message on their needs.

For example, this introduction: "I am a human resources professional with 10 years' experience working for consumer products companies." The pitch would be more powerful if you said, "I am a human resources professional with a strong track record in helping to identify and recruit top-level talent into management." Using benefit-focused terminology will help convince an interviewer that you have the experience, savvy and skills to get the job done at his or her business.

5. Eliminate industry jargon.
You need to make your pitch easy for anyone to understand, so avoid using acronyms and tech-speak that the average person or job interviewer might not understand. The last thing you want to do is make your listener feel stupid or uninformed.

6. Read your pitch out loud and then edit it again.
The language you write in is different than how you speak. Practice your pitch out loud and then edit your written pitch to sound more natural.

7. Prepare a few variations.
You might want to say things slightly differently to a potential business employer than you would to a professor you hope to work with. Also, sometimes you'll just have 15 seconds for a pitch (kind of a short elevator ride), other times you may have a minute or two.

Focus on mastering a few key talking points then work up ways to customize your speech for particular situations.