

Preparing An Optimistic Elevator Speech

An 'elevator speech' is a term taken from the early days of the internet explosion when web development companies needed venture capital. Finance firms were swamped with applications for money and the companies that won the cash were often those with a simple pitch. The best were those that could explain a business proposition to the occupants of an elevator in the time it took them to ride to their floor. In other words, an elevator speech that worked was able to describe and sell an idea in 30 seconds or less.

For an Optimist working to build a new club or capture a new member, an elevator speech is a short speech that may convey: (main points - possible topics)

1. What is an Optimist Club?
 - a. An Optimist Club is a voluntary organization of civic-minded men and women banded together for progressive thought and action in community service.
 - b. A group of volunteers working together to identify and positively act upon the needs of the local community and its youth.
2. What do we do?
 - a. Meeting the needs of young people in communities worldwide, Optimist Clubs have been "Bringing Out the Best in Kids" since 1919.
 - b. Optimist Clubs conduct positive service projects aimed at providing a helping hand to youth.
3. What do we offer the community and individual?
 - a. Community
 - i. aid and encourage the development of youth
 - ii. inspire respect for the law
 - iii. promote patriotism
 - iv. work for international accord
 - b. Individual
 - i. a sense of meaning in our lives
 - ii. a sense of community
 - iii. a sense of making a difference
4. What contributions does a club or member make?
 - a. Optimist Clubs conduct positive service projects aimed at providing a helping hand to youth.
5. Why should the listener join an Optimist Club?
 - a. Opportunities to provide hope and create a sense of meaning in our lives.
 - b. Opportunities to build a sense of community
 - c. Opportunities to turn information into knowledge
 - d. Opportunities to weave the innocence and wisdom of different generations.
 - e. Opportunities to find a better balance in our always 24/7/365
 - f. Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the needs of their community.

When conducting a NOW meeting, seeking new members, or working to build a new club, we Optimists need to say who we are, what we do, what we are interested in doing and what the mutual benefit is. By pulling a together few lines from the outline above and slight editing you can quickly prepare your speech, for example:

We are a group of volunteers working together to identify and positively act upon the needs of the local community and its youth. Optimist Clubs conduct positive service projects aimed at providing a helping hand to youth and aids and encourages their development. You can join in this opportunity to serve your community and its young people. As a volunteer with us, you will have the opportunity to provide hope and create a sense of giving back in your life and those of others.

We need to have a speech that we can quickly and effectively adapt to best meet the task and audience at hand. To do that effectively, we need to understand the task at hand and who we are talking to. The following table shows some possible tasks, likely audiences, and things that we might like to know in advance.

Task	Audience	Nice to know advance knowledge about the audience
Recruiting a new member you know	A friend, neighbor, co-worker, business acquaintance, etc.	Interests, previous or current community service activities, children
Recruiting someone referred	A potential member referred to you by another optimist	Interests, previous or current community service activities, children, how known by the referring optimist, is this the opening pitch or the close
Recruiting on a query	A potential member who expresses interest in you club at a service project or other event	The basic purpose of the query, additional interests, the community the person lives in
NCB: Prospecting for key people	Leaders in the community, persons with a vested interest in a particular community need	Job/Position, is there a potential need in community of particular interest, any knowledge of Optimist Clubs
NCB: Addressing the core group	The initial two to five persons interested in establishing an optimist club in their community	Is there a common interest among these people (e.g.. sports program,) what ties this group together, how serious and motivated are they now, who is the leader
NCB: Addressing the recruits	new charter members recruited by the core group	Why is a club is needed in this community (core group perspective)

Where does advance knowledge about an audience come from? As Optimists performing recruiting or NCB tasks, most of our advance knowledge will come through conversation. In fact, other than recruiting someone we already know or a referral where another optimist fills us in, we generally start in the dark.

When afforded the opportunity to talk about optimism, we often leap right in on expounding upon the benefits and the good things we do before we take the time to discover the things we should know in advance and prior to adapting and delivering our elevator speech. We need to be ready to respond quickly and effectively when opportunity knocks. What can we do?

1. Make small talk and establish rapport.
2. Ask a few questions
 - a. What peaked your interest in this project?
 - b. What precipitated your interest in our club?
 - c. How do you rate your local schools?
 - d. Are you volunteering in some capacity today?
3. Listen actively
 - a. Gather mental notes (write them down if an NCB effort)
 - b. Ask questions to clarify statements made
 - c. Observe body language
4. Tailor your speech
 - a. Adjust key elements based on the advance knowledge you have just gained
5. Deliver your speech emphasizing the benefits of joining that you now understand as being important to them
6. Invite them to a club meeting, service activity, NOW meeting or NCB organization meeting