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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning, Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

Legal Marketing: Perfecting Your Elevator Speech

As you start (or continue) your journey into legal marketing, one of the most important tools you can have in your pocket is the “elevator speech.” Named because it should take between 30-60 seconds (or the length of a short elevator ride), it’s built on the idea of being prepared should, by chance, your dream prospect step into an elevator with you. People have little time to figure out just what you do and, more importantly, why you’re good at it, so a great elevator speech is the best way to make a powerful first impression. Aside from the hypothetical elevator ride, having a short pitch gives you a strong base to explain to friends, neighbors, colleagues and others exactly what sets you apart from the other millions of attorneys out there. If people don’t know what you do and why you excel at it... they surely can’t bring (or send!) you business.

So what makes a great elevator speech and how do you go about preparing yours?

Here are my top tips:

Be clear and concise. Stay away from industry specific language or intricate explanations—when you only have a minute it’s a waste of your time. Focus on strong language that can get your points across in the shortest possible way. If you get too technical or start employing legal jargon you’ll lose your listener right from the get-go.

Use powerful and exciting language. If you’re not excited about what you do, why should anyone else be? What motivates you? What’s your greatest achievement as an attorney? What makes you passionate about what you do? Think about those

things and the words will flow naturally.

Give them a visual. Have a great story that illustrates what you do? Tell it! Giving people a visual to remember will help them be clear about your work when you walk away. A memorable story can go farther than any generic marketing speech. It will help them convey your points of differentiation to others and a good story (whether it makes them laugh, cry or drop their jaw in disbelief) will always draw out an emotional connection.

Have more than one. Not everyone can be approached in the same way. Your elevator speech for the CEO of a company you're trying to land as a client will be drastically different than the one you use on friends and family who want a better idea of what you do. As you craft your speech try different things. Be funny, be serious, be passionate, be straightforward. While all will have a similar feel, having two or three that can be used depending on the situation is always a great idea.

Let it evolve. Think of your elevator speech as a draft. Try it out, see what works and tweak it. Don't think of it as a final fit—as you become more comfortable with it let it naturally evolve and change. Change up words or stories and see what evokes the reactions you're looking for.

Practice, practice, practice. The only way to perfect your speech is to try it out. Test it out on everyone... your secretary, your partners, your significant other. Ask them for their input, they may have suggestions you haven't thought of. Have them time you and make sure you're under the minute mark. And listen closely to their feedback and questions, their comments may spark something new.

Always focus on the goal: what do you want to come from the pitch? You want to pique their curiosity; you want them to hand over their card and ask for a call; and you want to feel comfortable picking up the phone and making that call. Keep that in mind while writing, practicing and putting it to use. Remember to have a great hook, be clear but specific and always confident. Though it may seem uncomfortable at first, the more you use and develop your elevator speech, the more second nature it will become... and the more results you'll start to see!

