

The elevator pitch defines your success

You know the drill. You are waiting for an elevator, any elevator. The door opens; you walk in, face the door, press the button and stare at the door. Everyone does the same thing. Comedians have made acts out of the goofy behavior that happens in elevators. Something else also happens. It doesn't have to do with human behavior or the people in an elevator; but the time that elapses in an elevator ride. It is called the elevator pitch.

If you are starting up a business and you are trying to get a person to invest into your new startup company, sometimes you are only going to get the amount of time as an elevator ride to state what you are trying to do, in a succinct enough way to capture their attention. Once you have stated "why" you are doing your start up in this elevator pitch, then and only then, will you get the chance (if the person is interested) to share more of "how" and "what" you will do. Simply put, an "Elevator Pitch" is a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced description about your company that your mother should be able to understand in the time it would take to ride up an elevator.

So why do you need an elevator pitch for your Small Group Ministry? You are not seeking investors. Your ministry isn't a startup. So why develop an elevator pitch? You may not be seeking investors for money, but you are seeking a different type of investor. The investor may be who you report to. Maybe it's your Lead Pastor. Maybe it's your next leader or Community Leader who helps you with the infrastructure. In small group ministry you are always using relational capital to get your ministry to the next phase.

What gets people interested in your ministry is your explanation to them. Most people start with "what" you want them to do or "how" you are going to accomplish your goal. But starting with "what" you have to offer or "how" you are going to accomplish your goal is the wrong place to start. Where you need to start is "why" you are doing your ministry. The "why" is your elevator pitch. If you can't explain to people in a concise way, why in the world would they be willing to give you any part of their 168 hour week? Rick Warren gave me great advice when I came on staff of Saddleback Church 15 years ago. He said, if you can't describe or draw you ministry on a napkin, it's too complex.

We love the plans and details in ministry. We create the manuals and wow people with all our training or long range plans. We think people will soak that up, but in reality, it turns them away. If you want to build an army you need to be simple and clear. The details are needed, be not in the recruiting. So, what are the keys in developing your small group ministry "elevator pitch"?

1. Keep it short. Be succinct. An adult's attention span is eight seconds, so be sure to give just enough information (and more importantly perhaps the right information) so that after only hearing a sentence or two, someone knows why you do what you do with your life.

2. Have it tied to your "calling". The objective of the first ten or fifteen seconds is to have your potential leadership want to listen to the next forty-five or fifty seconds differently, more intently than they would have otherwise.

3. Pitch your heart, not your ministry. The reality is another ministry doesn't matter that much to busy people. First of all, the ministry is about changed lives, so start with yours. Secondly, ministries and needs are relatively abundant. Instead of talking about your ministry, show your heart - the "why" you love your ministry - rather than some intangible concept or a future goal.

4. Don't forget the ministry. It's easy to get so caught up in the details of your heart and call that you neglect to mention what you need. What is the vision, as an example? People don't give to need, they give to vision.

5. Don't overwhelm with technical or statistical terminology. While being able to tout one or two amazing and memorable phrases or figures can be useful, don't fill your conversation with numbers or jargon.

6. Practice. Rehearse your "elevator pitch" so that when the opportunity to give it comes, you can deliver it smoothly. Remember, you only want people who are interested in your "why".

7. Revise. As your small group ministry moves through various stages, be sure to update and refresh your "ask". When seeking to build a strong small group ministry, remember it can be just as important to listen as it is to talk.

So, what's my small group ministry elevator pitch? "Want to help your legacy be a difference maker?"

Interested?