

Forget about the elevator speech

Written by Julie Desmond
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You have ten seconds. From the time I shake your hand to the time I'm looking for someone else to meet, you have me for ten seconds. No, this isn't about speed dating. This is about what to do every time you meet someone new.

Anyone. Anywhere. Anytime. Your future depends on it. Of course, everyone's in a rush today. Cars move fast, food moves fast, information moves fast, time flies. It seems like the only thing taking its time these days is springtime. When you get on board the fast train, you can fast track yourself to reaching your goals, whether your goals are a new job, a promotion, or something entirely different. Don't make me wait. Tell me what you need, so I can help you.

Ten seconds? That's not much, you say. Ten seconds? My story is bigger than that. My background is richer. My story is complicated, you say.

Math is complicated. 1000 piece puzzles are complicated. You are complicated. But your story doesn't have to be. It can't be. Your story has to be compelling, so that after ten seconds, I will ask you a question and give you ten more seconds.

It has to be memorable, so when I walk away, I'm thinking of helping you get what you want.

Consider these six statements: I'm starving. You win. I love you. Last call. All aboard. Elvis has left the building. Every one of these can be stated, heard and understood in under ten seconds. Are they less impactful than, for example, "Everyone has to walk to the steps and get on the train right now because the train will be leaving the station in a few minutes and anyone who is not in their seats when it's time will be left behind?" Suggestion: save your breath.

Your story only needs three parts: Small talk, Focus statement and Connecting question.

Small talk refers to the first thing that comes out of your mouth as you look someone in the eyes and shake hands. Usually, it's your name. Usually, there's a lot of subconscious appraising going on, so if you say your name early, you'll want to repeat it when you part ways. So, what's your name? Write it down.

Focus refers to the thing you're passionate about: computer programming, oil paints, race cars, baking. In a handful of words, what are you passionate about? Write it down.

Connecting questions do two things: they let someone know what you need from them, and they engage the other person. It's a way to say, "Tag. You're it." Your question should get them thinking, and responding to you. For example, if you are looking for work in programming, you might ask, "Do you know anyone who works in programming?" If the person says, "Yes," your response is to request a meeting: "Really? I'd give anything to meet your Uncle's neighbor's friend."

My ten seconds goes like this: "I'm Julie. I'm an employment recruiter. (Pause for effect). Do you know anyone who's looking for work?" I have said this so often, to so many people, that it's almost automatic. But it is sincere; I do want to talk with anyone who is looking for work, and I do follow up on all introductions. Spend five minutes creating your own ten second story, and

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you will get where you're going... fast.

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