

The Importance of the Elevator Speech Whether or Not You're in an Elevator

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EAST GREENWICH, RI—So, how long does it take to get where you're going in an elevator and why does it matter? The typical elevator ride may only last 20 or 30 seconds. Yet, elevators are equal opportunity places. Everyone, up to the CEO of the healthcare organization, may be taking the elevator to get wherever they're going.

For healthcare call center managers and employees, it's can be a great opportunity to inform and enlighten, says Caroline Merriman. President of the East Greenwich, Rhode Island-based Corporate Health Group. "It doesn't have to be long," she says. "The idea is to put enough sizzle on table so that the person you're talking to will say 'tell me more about that.'"

The ideal interaction might be with a top executive such as the CEO, who then steps out of the elevator when you get out and starts walking with you saying they'd like to know more about the call center, she says.

"Your elevator speech should be three to five sentences," Merriman says. "Who you are, what you do and the value of that to the person you're talking to. It might be a different speech for leadership, your peers in the organization or to other employees or members of the public."

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Specifically the elevator speech is designed for much more than casual elevator conversation. Indeed, she says, most of its applications may be in settings not connected with elevators such as cocktail parties, community meetings like the Chamber of Commerce or meetings within the healthcare organization with other executives who may have a cursory or even no understanding of what the call center does.

"The elevator speech should not be canned, but fluid," she says. "I encourage people who haven't done it before to start by listing one to five things they do for their customer. Another list looks at the question: What does that person gain by doing business with the call center." From that, it should be relatively straightforward to construct the various short elevator descriptions of the call center for each of the potential audiences. ■