

Over 30 years, I have worked with thousands of entrepreneurs and salespeople. I can tell you that most never take the time to create the perfect 20-second elevator pitch. The most common mistakes are a lack of clarity, conviction and no sense of how fast 20 seconds goes.

2. **Make it sticky.** When you move into your pitch, make sure that the first thing your audience hears is sticky. The easiest way to do this is to make a giant claim where your unique value proposition is clearly stated. Start your pitch by describing what your organization does and do it in one sentence that sticks. Here's an example: "We help businesses increase sales by 15 percent through identifying missed opportunities." That is sticky, pointed and memorable.

Having trouble coming up with a sticky point? Ask yourself: "What is the one thing I want this person to remember when this pitch ends?" Your claim should generate interest or suggest who in the company would be best to contact. Your elevator pitch must hit very hard and be sharp and pointed so your audience remembers it.

3. **Determine the decision maker.** In any pitch, you want to know who the decision maker is. This is especially true with the perfect elevator pitch. There is no reason to pitch any further without knowing who can make a decision. Immediately following the big claim, ask, "Are you the person that could make a decision to invest \$40,000 to increase sales by 15 percent?"

4. **Get it right.** What you need to do now is practice. Time yourself and video yourself and pay attention to how fast you're speaking, your mannerisms, eye contact, attitude, etc. Practice the pitch until it becomes natural and easy to deliver in 20 seconds. I once delivered an elevator pitch while boarding an airplane. In 20 seconds, I created so much interest that the person moved seats and we spent the next five hours creating a plan for