

MENTORING **SPARK**

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► NETWORKING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Students who have primarily spent their academic time “*in the weeds*,” or on a variety of projects may struggle to develop a concise, “30,000 foot” elevator pitch. They may also struggle to go beyond what they are *currently* doing to what they want to do next. It can also be frustrating to take a large amount of knowledge/experience and pare it down to a three-minute talk.

Now that students have tools to establish and organize their network (*Network Spark 1*), the next step is developing a **concise and accurate message**. The message should convey the “*so what*” question of the research, and why a prospect should want you in their network.

This **Spark** helps students think about the type of information to include, and has exercises to develop an elevator pitch.



LEVEL 1: ESTABLISHING A NETWORK

LEVEL 2: ELEVATOR PITCH

LEVEL 3: CAREER NETWORKING



FACULTY FYI

As a mentor, it is important to help ensure that students have an elevator pitch. Many graduate students need help identifying what information should be included in an elevator pitch, and what to leave out.

Ultimately their pitch represents not only them, but also you and your research area. So it's important for you to help them to craft an effective pitch — and to know it well enough to confidently deliver it.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Help students understand that networking takes time. Time is a valuable commodity, so as they network to others, students should be able to articulate, “What is in it for that person? Why should they want to help *you*?”
- Work with students on how elevator pitches can be tailored for different audiences.
- Provide students with examples of good elevator talks, and/or ask students who have already developed an elevator talk to give theirs.
- Help students think about the message they will deliver and what, if any, *unintentional* message may be heard (*such as a misrepresentation of research being conducted*).

CONTINUED ...

Practice again, and
then again.
“Rinse & repeat”!

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other Mentoring Spark tip sheets:





DIGGING DEEPER

- LinkedIn
- Examples from other graduate students or mentor
- Student support services department (*search your school's website, bearing in mind that your school may use a different name for this resource.*)
- Simon Sinek's **TED Talk** on **"Start With Why."**
- John Swale's **"Moves" framework** (*establish a territory, establish a niche, occupy a niche*).
- **Reflection Tool:** Ask to hear others' elevator pitches. Reflect on what resonated with you and why?

*Please visit the **RDI Mentoring Sparks** website for examples and links to these tools and resources!*



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. Have students ask others for their elevator pitches (*pick other graduate students or during a conference*). Have students listen for why that person is (*or is not*) someone they would want to work/collaborate with in the future – not because of the topic, but because of the perceived characteristics of the person giving the pitch.
2. **Draft a two- to three-minute elevator pitch:**
 - Ask others for a copy of their pitch; consider what is good about them and what is lacking.
 - Talks look different if you are early in your graduate journey (*research talk*) or closer to the end (*job talk*). Consider how in-depth your research plan should be, and how your research will benefit others.
 - What outcome do you want? To gain knowledge? To collaborate on a project? To get a job? Other?
 - Regardless of the type of talk, consider: **a) what is the issue, b) what is a potential solution, c) how you can contribute to a mutual improvement, d) any ask you have, e) requesting a follow-up. Thank them for their time!!**
 - Listen, listen, listen to their feedback, questions, and body language!
3. **Practice your pitch** with your peers, mentor, and/or advisor.
 - Don't just ask if it was good – ask for constructive feedback regarding what their takeaways were. Who did they think was the audience, what was the value to others, what was your ask, what is your interest.
 - Practice again, and then again: **"rinse & repeat"!**



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Help students think of the two- to three-minute talk as a **story** that flows, conveys sufficient detail related to the subject, why it matters, and why it is imperative that an elevator pitch provide a succinct message on the **mutual** benefits between the sender and receiver of information.
- Discuss the concept of leaving an audience wanting more information and suggesting a follow-on deeper conversation.
- Remind students that elevator "talks" are not just for in-person conversation: they can be used in writing, on LinkedIn, or on a website, etc.
- **GOAL Setting:** Develop a networking elevator pitch goal with the student.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student:** Ask yourself, "Did others hear what you intended them to hear?"
- **Faculty:** Help your students plan and schedule opportunities to give their elevator pitch.



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