Goal: To give people an opportunity to find their own words to articulate the case for supporting your organization and to better understand what makes a case compelling.

Rationale: Most of us don’t spend enough time getting comfortable with how we talk about the organization. Each time we practice our case for support – why we care – it gets stronger and more natural.

Specifics

Audience: Development committee, board, volunteer group, or development staff.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes (30 for extended version).

Number of Participants: This exercise is effective with groups of any size. For five or fewer, do not break out into smaller groups.

Participant Preparation: No preparation from participants is required.

Room Set Up: A room with flexible seating so people can form groups of three.

Material: Flip charts/easel and markers, stopwatch, and bell or other noisemaker.

The Exercise

Facilitator: The facilitator is responsible for setting up the exercise, giving clear instructions, managing the debriefing, and providing a summary of key points at the end.

Introduction: “This is an exercise that will help you figure out what you want to talk about when you discuss the organization with your friends, colleagues, and other potential donors.”
Instructions

1. Ask people to divide into groups of three.
   a. If there is one person left, add that person to a group of three. If two, add each to a group of three.
   b. Each group should choose a scribe who will also report during debriefing.

2. In each group:
   a. Ask each person to make a one-minute presentation about your organization to the others in their group.
   b. Each minute the facilitator will ring the bell to signal the group must move on to the next presentation. (NOTE: if you have an uneven number of people you might need to allow for a fourth minute for some groups)
   c. After all three (or four) people have given their mini-presentations, ask the groups to spend five minutes talking about what they found compelling in each presentation and why.
   d. The scribe should write these points down.

Extended Version:

   e. Ask each person to make their one-minute presentation again, with the facilitator again ringing the bell between each group.
   f. Ask the groups to again spend five minutes discussing what they found compelling and why, and the scribe should again write these points down.
   g. Discuss whether any common themes arose and what everyone learned.
Debrief
Bring everyone back together and ask for the scribes to provide feedback, making a list of things that made the presentations compelling. Then have a general discussion with the group about common themes that emerged and what individual participants learned from the exercise.

Conclusion: Everyone has their own story that comes from their experience. Talking with potential donors entails telling your personal story – not some “elevator speech” everyone recites. That story gets richer and easier to tell the more it’s practiced.