***Elevator Pitch Marketing***

One method of marketing a pitch to a perspective organization is the “*elevator pitch*.” In our situation of contacting organizations to conduct public education courses, the *elevator pitch* is a very brief description of the course, why it is valuable, and a call to action, that can be delivered in a minute or two (i.e., in a short elevator ride). Every Auxiliarist should be able to deliver an elevator pitch for recruiting members into the Auxiliary. For example, “The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed, civilian, volunteer part of the Coast Guard. It performs many of the same missions as the Coast Guard except military and direct law enforcement. The primary mission of the Auxiliary is recreational boating safety—keeping people safe on the water. We all volunteer our time to assist the Coast Guard in fulfilling its civil functions. We aren’t paid, but we receive great satisfaction knowing we help save lives and protect the environment. The only requirements to join are a desire to serve, be at least 17 years old (with parental permission), be a citizen of the United States, and be able to pass a criminal background check. If you would like more information about the Auxiliary, I can arrange a time to meet. I’ll follow up with you in a day or two to schedule a time and place.”

You will notice that the elevator pitch did several things:

* Described the Auxiliary
* Established its value
* Contained a call to action
* Invited me to follow up

These are the core elements of any successful pitch. That last element is what is most often overlooked. People don’t want to appear pushy; however, if you leave it up to the prospect to choose to take action, they might never do so.

A sample of the elevator pitch can be the example used for the new Boats ‘N Kids session. It first describes the youth education program: “The Coast Guard Auxiliary offers a 25-minute interactive session on boating and water safety suitable for small and large groups of children in grades K-8. The seminar teaches the basics of how to be safe on a boat and around the water including the importance of life jackets and what to do in an emergency.”

It then transitions to a value proposition: “It teaches proven skills and knowledge that can save a life.”

It contains a call to action and invites a follow-up on the Auxiliary’s initiative: “If you are interested in having trained instructors come and give this short course, we can likely schedule it in the next few weeks. I’ll call you on … to talk more and set up a time.”

Such a pitch can be used for any Auxiliary course. This basic pitch can obviously be improved with local color and possibly an example of a boating emergency. This pitch is only an example to get you started in developing your own pitch that you are comfortable in delivering. Just make sure it is not too long. Also avoid the hackneyed, “But wait there’s more…”

Remember your ABCs: *Always Be Closing*. Use each contact with your prospect to close on another contact, until you are sure that you can close the youth education event. The email or letter closes the prospect on a phone call. The phone call closes the prospect on a meeting. The meeting closes the prospect on holding an education class, which is your end goal in the outreach phase of public education.