

Elevator pitches

johnwilkes@google.com

2016-07-28, updated 2018-07

[go/johnwilkes-elevator-pitches](https://www.google.com/go/johnwilkes-elevator-pitches)

Four sentences

What is the problem?

Why is the problem a problem?

A positive startling statement

The consequences of the positive startling statement



What is the problem?

We can't ...

It is too hard to <do something>

It costs too much to ...

~~We want to ...~~

~~I built ...~~

Provide context/background, too.

Remember: 1 sentence.

(Probably the hardest one to craft.)



Why is the problem a problem?

Audience: the person on the street, john's mother, a politician

Typically:

- money (costs or profit)
- somebody gets hurt



A positive startling statement

If I remember nothing else about your pitch, what do you want me to know?

- What do you do?
- How do you do it?

Don't be vague; don't be waffly; don't “summarize” or “simplify”

- your audience can generalize; they can't make up concrete details for you



Consequences of the startling statement

It needs to **solve** the problem identified in statement 1.

Tip: don't make your problem "world hunger"



Four sentences

1. What is the problem?
2. Why is the problem a problem?
3. A positive startling statement
4. The consequences of the positive startling statement

Resources:

- **The four sentence abstract**, Kent Beck. In *How to get a paper accepted at OOPSLA, 1993*, <http://goo.gl/Qs5um5>
- **Creating an effective poster**, John Wilkes.
<http://goo.gl/HUVffd>

Tip: don't ever do this – instead, end on a slide that summarizes the key ideas of your talk.

Thank you!

