



The Elevator Talk

Making a good impression

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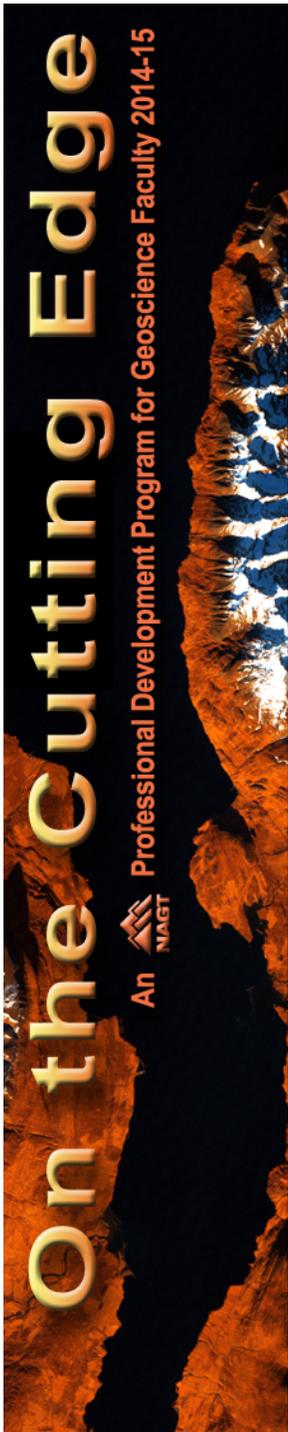
With prior material for Rachel O'Brien, Heather Macdonald and Carolyn Gale

Why do we hate elevators?

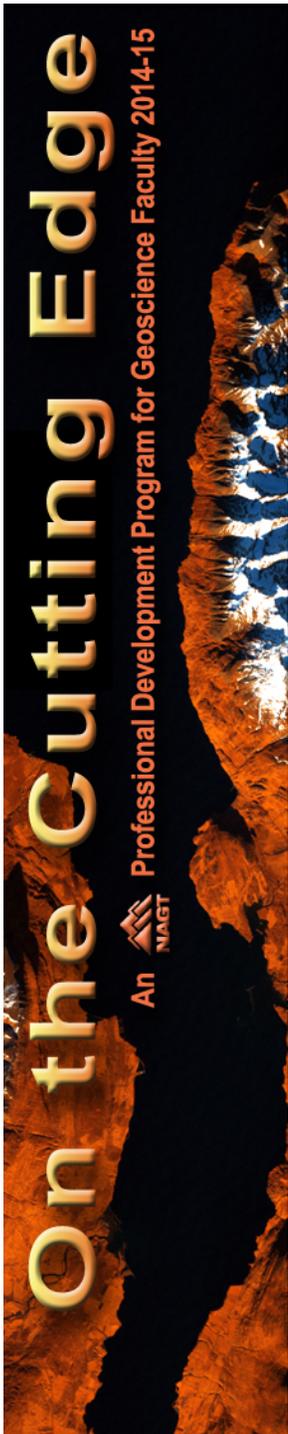
- ❖ Can you explain what you do to a stranger before the elevator ride ends?



<http://www.constructionweekonline.com/pictures/Burj-Khalifa.jpg>



- ❖ At an academic interview, you will be asked **over and over** by undergrads, grad students, faculty, hard of hearing half-awake emeritus professors, the search committee, the Dean, at a noisy restaurant with food in your mouth, while walking between buildings in a blinding blizzard, in a stuffy conference room, walking up 6 flights of stairs, on the ride from the airport, and yes, an elevator:
 - ❖ Tell me a little bit about what you're working on
- ❖ Silence is not an acceptable answer



Therefore, let's:

- ❖ Talk about telling a good story in an uncomfortable space (10-15 minutes)
- ❖ Practice doing so (15-20 minutes)
- ❖ Discussing our fears (10 minutes)

How do you tell a good story?

- ❖ Randy Olson, Don't Be Such a Scientist
 - ❖ Focus on the emotional arc
 - ❖ Good stories have a beginning, middle, and end
 - ❖ We have a tendency to tell A, A, A stories, but most narratives are A, B, T

A A A ?

- ❖ And, And, And
- ❖ Scientists have a tendency to drone, focus on details, construct a linear storyline.

A B T?

- ❖ And, But, Therefore
- ❖ Tell a story in 5 seconds
- ❖ “But” as a source of tension
- ❖ Josh Schimel, Writing Science
 - ❖ Make it STICKY: Short, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional, Stories
 - ❖ Use OCAR: Opening, Challenge, Action, Resolution

What do you need to convey?

- ❖ What's your field?
- ❖ What do we already know?
- ❖ What is your question?
- ❖ Why does it matter?
- ❖ What's a really cool thing you found by answering your question?
- ❖ How did you figure that out?
- ❖ How does it change what we knew?

Consider your audience

- ❖ Colleagues in your discipline
 - ❖ Academic search committee
- ❖ Colleagues outside your discipline
- ❖ Funding agency program managers
- ❖ A Dean or Provost
- ❖ Students (grad or undergrad)
- ❖ Your relatives (remember Aunt Tillie!)

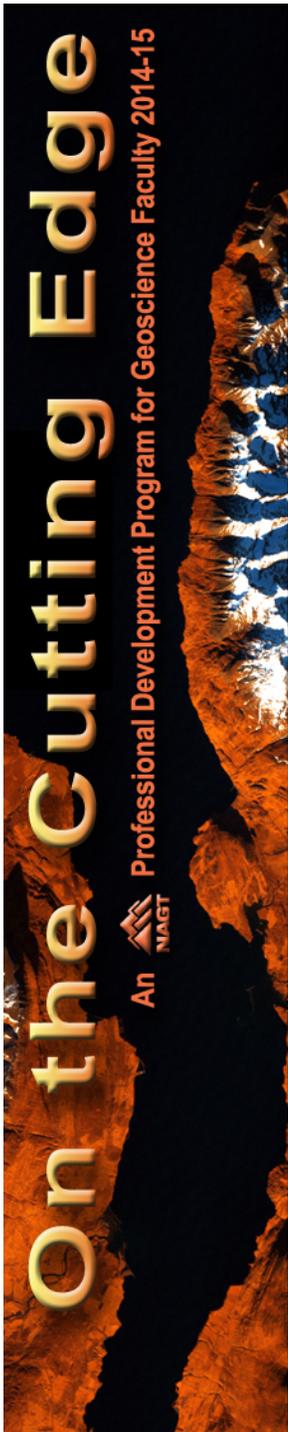
- ❖ Details vs. Bottom line

DNUEAAJ

- ❖ Do not use excessive acronyms and jargon
- ❖ Short sentences, first person
- ❖ Communicate passion and excitement
- ❖ Explain relevance or significance

Say it, don't spray it

- ❖ Eye contact
- ❖ Smile, posture
- ❖ Vary tone of voice
- ❖ Don't talk with your mouth full, fly unzipped, or shoes untied
- ❖ Don't overthink or over-rehearse it, though



Your turn

- ❖ Groups of 8-10, take turns
- ❖ Spend a few minutes to frame an elevator talk
- ❖ Audience: Academic Dean in your college, at an academic job interview, a scientist, not in your field
- ❖ Question: Tell me about your recent research (1 minute)
- ❖ Elevator type: Pullman, just the two of you, hot
 - ❖ In this case, stairs outside
- ❖ Spend 15 minutes going through everyone
- ❖ Come to consensus on favorite ideas or moments to share with larger group