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NEXT STEP

THE QUICK AND DIRTY GUIDE TO WRITING AN ELEVATOR PITCH

Whether it's an interview, a networking event, or just a casual conversation with someone you've just met, that "Tell me about yourself/what do you do?" question never gets any easier. No matter the name, as Idealistcareers.org puts it, "Elevator pitches will always be a necessary evil of the job hunt." They can give direction to the rest of an interview, and if you pull it off just right, they are an excellent way to show off some stellar time management skills.

As it goes, elevator pitches should to-the-point and not more than 30 seconds. Your skills or value proposition should be crystal clear. And last but not least, your elevator pitch should include your goal – what you're looking for out of all this.

To break it down, there are three main steps in prepping a personal elevator pitch. Once you have the key points down, it is easy to customise your pitch to suit your every networking/job-hunting need.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR SKILL SET

What you do is the basis of your elevator pitch. While throwing around impressive-sounding job-specific terminology is unnecessary, you must be able to pinpoint and communicate what you are capable of.

List out your professional achievements, transferable job skills, responsibilities, and in case you're still in university, your major and other co-curricular activities.

What are you good at it? Prioritise the items you have come up with in

terms of significance and go with the skills you are you really adept at. If you don't know how to start, try terms like: 'Excel in,' 'Accomplished,' 'Savvy,' 'Expertise,' 'Proficiency,' etc.

STEP 2: PROVIDE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

After you have stated your skill set, you need to back it up. You can't just say your area of expertise or interest is 'Graphic design' and leave it at that. However, if you follow up with: "I specialise in website graphics" or "I work mostly with logos and branding," you give the other person a clearer understanding of what you do.

If you're working with a more abstract skill such as communications, a possible supporting statement could be: "I have a knack for persuasive storytelling." Or "You are a great team player because you can see both sides of an argument."

Play with terms like 'Talented at,' 'Effective,' 'Pendant', and choose what sounds the best or the most appropriate.

If you're absolutely not sure what your strength is, think back to some of the feedback you've received. Or look at job descriptions for different jobs in your field and pick one that really attracts you. Ask yourself what really drew you to this role and jot that down, for example, "The opportunity to do _____ is what really attracts me." Fill in the blank.

Being able to clearly and concisely deliver your value proposition not only makes you more believable, it also helps a potential employer or collaborator picture where you might



fit into the project or company or industry.

STEP 3: STATE YOUR GOAL

If you're making an elevator pitch, you need to know where you're headed with it. The endpoint is that you want something. Is it a job? Is it to gain experience? Is it to pick up a new skill? The person at the other end needs to know how they can help you.

Frame your goals with phrases like: 'Gain exposure in,' 'Hoping to find a role in,' 'Recommendations as to how I can improve in,' 'Opportunities to develop,' 'Looking to write on,' etc.

You can't be afraid to ask for what

you want. Think of it this way: what you seek is seeking you. You are essentially a solution to a problem that the recruiter needs solved.

STEP 4: EXPLAIN YOUR REASONS

What really keeps you moving ahead? Compensation is not the motivation – it is the by-product. Because at the end of the day, why you do what you do is more than that. Studies have shown that decision-making is actually deeply rooted in emotions. That's why you need to be able to explain what inspires you and motivates you to take action.

Consider who you want to help or inspire; who benefits from your work

or who you cater to; and why you enjoy the work you do. Use words like: 'Because,' 'I believe,' 'I want to inspire,' 'I am inspired by,' 'I owe it to,' 'On behalf of.'

Whether or not you're aiming for humility with your statement of motivation, remember that it must come from your heart. Insincerity is easy to pick up on, and predictable, run-of-the-mill answers will impress nobody. This is your chance to really differentiate yourself. So take some time with this last step and be sure to add a distinctive personal touch.

WHAT YOUR PITCH SHOULD RESEMBLE

Now your elevator pitch is not going

to be anywhere near as long-winded as it might seem at the end of this article. So let's put all the four steps together and see what an actual speech might look like.

You're at a personal branding event and you bump into a fellow attendee. You ask her what she does:

"I'm currently working as an HR Manager at ABC Limited. My supervisors frequently praise me for being able to consider multiple perspectives and negotiate conflicts. I'm looking for advice on how I can further cultivate my expertise because my ultimate aim is to help organisations develop more ethical and inclusive cultures."

You're at an alumni and students workshop for business students and you run into a participant. You ask him what he does:

"I'm currently studying at NEW University. My teachers say my forte is my ability to make the conceptual practice and I'm interested in joining in an entry-level position at an NGO. Because non-profit programs and fellowships were a crucial part of my development, it's important for me to give back and help others develop to their highest potential."

And there you have it. Now it's your turn to construct your very own elevator pitch. Follow the four steps and come back to the pitch once in a while to improve on what you have.

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7 tricks to be more memorable



Everybody talks about the importance of networking. But what's the point if the next time you meet someone, all the person thinks is "who?" Here are seven tricks to stand out:

Get psyched

Last week Next Step did an article on pre-presentation music to get pumped up. But your pre-event routine can involve anything from songs, to movie clips, to unforgettable photographs. Make a list of things that get you going so that you never have to step into an event cold.

Present interesting answers

It's easy to fall back on an answer like "I'm good. And you?" when asked how you're doing. Think of something positive, different or humorous to say. And rather than saying you work in accounting, be

the "it guy" for your industry. Offer a few lines on what you do best and what makes you valuable.

Ask about something other than work

Instead of using the typical "What do you do?" question as a conversation starter, ask someone what they love to do besides work. Smile, listen and see the other person come alive.

Get snazzy

Ever wonder why Miley Cyrus dresses the way she does on the red carpet? Dressing up is a great way to make a statement and ignite curiosity. Now you don't have to wear something too crazy. A cool pair of socks or an interesting tie can be all it takes to spark a conversation and leave a lasting impression.

Duck out when you're still going strong

If you see someone eye-surfing or yawn, or if conversation starts to dwindle, it's time to move on. It's best if you can manage it smoothly. So stay alert for all signs of boredom in the other party.

Shoot an on-the-spot introductory email

It might seem a little awkward at first, but at the end of a conversation, take your phone out and ask the other person to enter their email address. Send them a quick line and voila, you're connected.

Back to basics

Don't forget about the fundamentals of making a good first impression. Always remember people's names, smile, make eye contact, be sincere and open. Brush up on the basics before you make that first step.

AMIYA HALDER

Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

WHY WHITEBOARDS ARE STILL HOT STUFF FOR THINKING

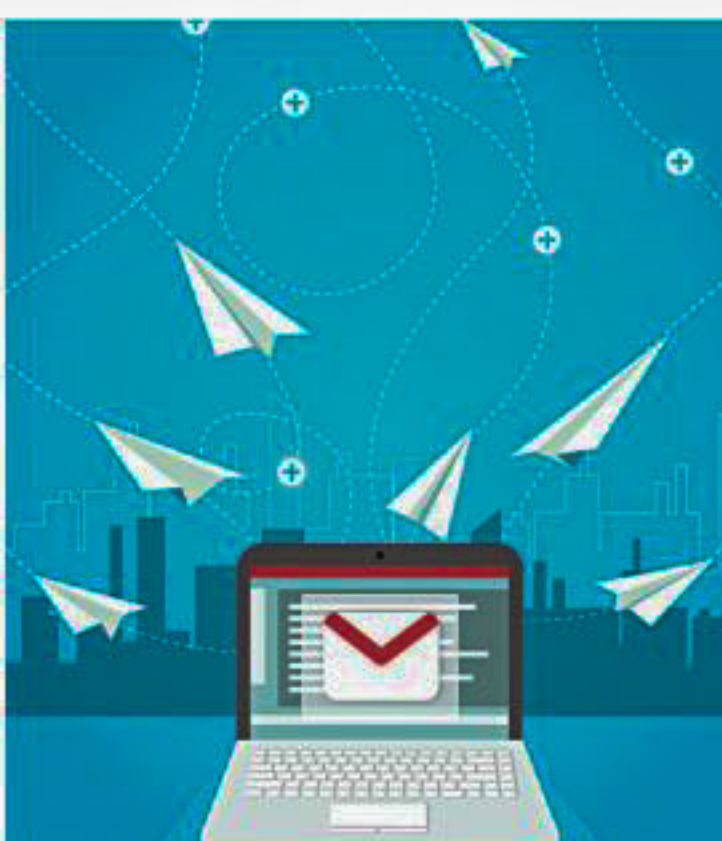
Some things simply cannot be replicated in the digital realm. Things like a burger or a whiteboard. Especially a whiteboard. It offers multiple benefits over a digital device simply by being a permanent, often large, in-your-face fixture around the work area. Messages will always be hovering around in your mental space, meaning important things are where they will be most easily noticed. The whiteboard serves as both a memo as well as a creative tool for those artistically inclined to make light of co-workers. This week, we highlight the benefits of this old-school tool that still plays a huge part in even the most high tech office spaces.



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The one word you should never use to start an email



If there's one thing that will put any email recipient off, it's immediately starting the email with "I."

At least that's what Jonathan M. Tisch, co-chairman of the board of the Loews Corporation and chairman of its subsidiary Loews Hotels & Resorts, says.

"My boss told me that whenever you're writing a letter — and now it applies to emails today — never start a paragraph with the word 'I,' because that immediately sends a message that you are more important than the person that you're

communicating with," Tisch explains to Bryant.

Today, he continues to apply this rule to all his email correspondence, and encourages others to do so as well.

"When you start to train your thinking about how to not use 'I,' you become a better writer, and it teaches you how to really think through an issue," he explains. "What are you really trying to say and how are you going to say it without starting the paragraph with the word 'I!'"