

TELL 'EM AND SELL 'EM: Be Clear About the Work You Want

Picture this: You've been laid off and are launching your job search. This is all new to you, and you want to be certain that you do not miss any potential opportunities.

You're at a networking event and someone asks, "What type of work are you looking for?" You pause for a minute and decide to throw out the biggest net possible (gotta catch ALL those potential opportunities, right?) and you say, "I am open to working for an organization that provides opportunity for advancement. I am a go-getter, a fast learner and will be an asset to any company."

Are you kidding me? How would anyone be able to help you with that generic information? Just about anyone on the planet could say that. The fact is – you are not going to find your next opportunity unless you can articulate, very clearly and concisely, what you bring to the table. If you cannot state your value and the competencies you are known for to the person you are conversing with, he or she will not be able to help. Those are the simple facts. As we all have heard over and over again, unemployment numbers are *up*, the number of organizations laying people off is *up* and the amount of open positions is *down*.

It sounds like a disaster. However, there *are* job openings and there *are* companies hiring. The key to landing one of those openings is differentiating yourself from all the other people competing for the position.

You MUST be able to very clearly tell those companies who are hiring why they should hire YOU. Because if you don't, no one else will.

I am now on a new quest to tell anyone who will listen to me that in order to find work that is meaningful and uses your skill sets, you have to state your worth, own it and believe in it. I was recently at a Job Fair in San Francisco. I was startled to see how many people came to the PeopleThink booth and could not articulate the type of work they were looking for. I was stunned time and time again as I asked what I thought was a very simple question, "What type of work are you looking for?" I heard things like, "I am a people person and like working with people" – "I come from the IT world and want to work with computers" – "I have sold most of my life and want to continue with my selling career." Now, please tell me – how is *that* differentiating yourself from the other people who are 3-deep at the booth?

How does *that* make you stand out from your competition? The fact is – **it doesn't.**

Let's start from the beginning...you must be able to clearly and concisely articulate what you bring to the table and the type of job you are

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looking for. Think about your professional identity. We've all heard about having an "Elevator Pitch," or 30-Second Infomercial, or Communication Strategy. I actually like to call it the "Let's Tawk Strategy." It tells the listener, very quickly and very succinctly, who you are and what you are looking for.

Your Elevator Pitch might change based on who you are talking to, so you need to practice multiple ways of presenting "who you are."

When creating your Elevator Pitch, think about:

- ◆ The target audience for your pitch
- ◆ What they are interested in hearing (what jobs are they recruiting for)
- ◆ Who your likely competitors are
- ◆ What you bring to the table that your competitors do not

Remember...**"help them to help you."** Be as clear and articulate as possible.

Yes, I have said that for the third time in this article. Yes, I mean it!!! Brag a little bit...show 'em what you're made of...

You may also want to consider getting business cards made with your name and contact information. (www.vistaprint.com does them for free).

Add a tag line about what you do and you've got a mini resume! One more tool to market yourself.

Please...oh please...listen to me...don't show up at the next job fair and tell me that you "like working with people."

Instead, give me your elevator pitch, hand me a card and then, let's "tawk!" If you want a new job opportunity...tell people what you want...be proud of your accomplishments and be clear and concise.

Help them to help you...

Use this format to draft your professional introduction.

Of course, put it in your own words so it sounds like you, and truly represents who you are and what you want:

I am a (professional/level) _____ with expertise in (key functions and capabilities) _____. My strengths include (unique professional qualities) _____. I have worked for/with (types of organizations and industries).

Here is an example:

I'm an independent web designer who specializes in developing websites for small companies and entrepreneurs. I have a great deal of experience in the area of search engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising. My background includes 10 years of progressive experience in the Marketing department of a large high-tech firm.

Use this template to put together your own 30-Second Elevator Pitch, practicing it often, refining it based on the feedback you receive. Expand it to 2 minutes, then 5 minutes so you are prepared for that elevator ride to the top of a very tall building. Practice it with friends and family, practice it in front of a mirror, practice it until it is an instinctive response to "what type of work are you looking for?"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Karen Colligan is the founder and principal of PeopleThink™ and author of the popular *The Great Real Guide™*. Karen has a BS in Organizational Behavior from the University of San Francisco, and is a graduate of the Coach Training Program at Coach University.