

## Your Elevator Speech

What makes one job seeker more attractive than others in a competitive job market? One clear answer is marketing, or more specifically “branding.” Career branding can demonstrate your value and help you rise above the competition. Learning how to build and use your career brand with maximum effectiveness is critical in today’s economy.

In marketing terms, branding can best be described as a promise. It’s a promise that a product or service is unique, special and something that will provide great value to the intended audience; it’s a promise that the product or service is better than the competition.

When you walk into a store, what makes you purchase one product over another? A number of things may influence your choices, including but not limited to: product quality, packaging, pricing and name recognition or image. All of these are related to marketing, and more precisely “branding.”

Successful companies like Disney, Hallmark and L.L. Bean have mastered the art of branding. They are successful, in large part, due to their outstanding ability to market themselves as special and unique. They have also demonstrated an ability to back it up. For example, Disney is known for its quality entertainment for the whole family. It provides a place “where dreams do come true.” Hallmark gives a voice to people’s feelings, and espouses the values of creativity, innovation, quality and caring. L.L. Bean promises 100% satisfaction. If you are not completely satisfied with their product, you can return it at any time, for any reason, and receive a refund. This guarantee is an important part of their brand.

The concept of branding is essential to career success, whether you’re looking for a job or trying to advance your career at your present place of employment. It’s your ability to establish yourself as uniquely qualified for a position. It’s your ability to clearly show the value you will bring, the difference you will make and what sets you apart from the competition.

A key element of career branding is the “elevator speech.” Imagine you just stepped into an elevator with one other person. This other person just happened to be an employer who was hiring for a job of great interest to you. In the time it will take to get from the first to the tenth floor what would you say to that employer to convince them that you may be the best candidate for the position; or at least worthy of a formal interview for the position.

Simply put, the elevator speech is a brief (30 - 60 second), dynamic and customized branding statement that focuses on what sets you apart from others. When companies are marketing a product, they focus on their unique selling proposition – the one or two things that make that product different from any other. The elevator speech is your unique selling proposition. It is used primarily in networking situations.

Consider these critical components of your elevator speech:

### **Introduction**

*Hi, my name is John Smith. I'm an MBA candidate, with a concentration in finance, at Clarkson University. Prior to Clarkson, I attended Siena College where I received a bachelor's degree in finance and graduated at the top of my class.*

### **Career Goals**

*I chose finance as a career because I have been extremely interested in investments and the stock market ever since high school. I'll be graduating in June and am excited about finding a challenging position in investing.*

### **Unique Selling Proposition**

*I read the Wall Street Journal every day to stay on top of what's happening with the markets. I've even started to invest my own money and have realized a 33% increase over the past four years, in what has certainly been a challenging economy and stock market.*

*My strong interest and desire can best be expressed through my 3.98 G.P.A. in this challenging academic program, as well as my role as President of the student chapter of the American Finance Association. I've also completed two professional internships in Finance, totaling 400 hours, and have been commended by my internship supervisors for my strong work ethic and highly analytical mind.*

### **Request for Help/Closing**

*I was wondering if you had any advice, suggestions or contacts that you think would be helpful in launching my career in finance. I'm excited about taking this next step in my career, and would sincerely appreciate any help you could offer.*

Now, let's put all of the components together into a cohesive branding statement:

*Hi, my name is John Smith. I'm an MBA candidate, with a concentration in finance, at Clarkson University. Prior to this, I attended Siena College where I received a bachelor's degree in finance and graduated at the top of my class.*

*I chose finance as a career because I have been extremely interested in investments and the stock market ever since high school. I'll be graduating in June and am excited about finding a challenging position in investing.*

*I read the Wall Street Journal every day to stay on top of what's happening with the markets. I've even started to invest my own money and have realized a 33% increase over the past four years, in what has certainly been a challenging economy.*

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*I was wondering if you had any advice, suggestions or contacts that you think would be helpful in launching my career in finance. I'm excited about taking this next step in my career, and would sincerely appreciate any help you could offer.*

If you haven't done so already, start to develop your elevator speech today. In doing so, you'll be well on your way to creating a career brand that will attract the attention of your intended audience.