

Session 2: October 5

Communication: How do you sell your value proposition?

First of all - welcome back! I really enjoyed speaking with you all last month about purpose and finding your direction. Just to recap the last session:

- It is imperative that you know what your purpose and direction are in order to find the right next career move and job. If you are aimless or open to anything, it will be difficult for employers to know where to put you or how to utilize you in their own companies
- Once you know your purpose or why - it will be easier to focus on opportunities that feed that purpose.
- Once you know the specific direction you want to take, you can then evaluate your skill set determine:
 - What skills, experiences, and education you need for the career you are pursuing
 - Where your gaps are and how to address them
 - How to communicate your value proposition

In that session we talked a little about communication and selling your value proposition. There are two places to do this - one is verbal and one is written.

Verbal Communication - Making an impact

Communicating that focus (Elevator pitch) - Let's start here as this is typically one of your first opportunities to make a lasting impression.

- What is an Elevator Pitch? Essentially it is **a short summary about yourself and what you do, in the time it takes to ride an elevator.** You have to be able to deliver and convince in that time frame. That is the famous 30 second "elevator pitch".
 - An effective Elevator Pitch supports who you are and what you bring to the table and grabs the attention of your audience, making them want to know more.
- In order to get to this point, it is helpful to write down a sample pitch and then work on it, refining to something that is clear, easy to articulate and is something that feels genuine to you - so it comes easily off your lips.

Get your thoughts on paper:

1. Start with who you are.
 - Write what is important to who you are or what you believe in or your purpose/why.
 - What is your passion?
2. Write about what you do (or are learning) and how you do it.
 - What do you enjoy most?
 - What are your strengths?
3. Explain the results of your work and what makes you unique.
 - What accomplishments/outstanding results have you had?
 - What made you stand out in your last applicable experiences (work or school)?
 - Why did you have success in these past experiences or what did you learn?
 - How have you used your strengths and experiences in the past for success?
 - How would you use your strengths and past experiences to add value in this career/job?

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4. Take time to review what you have written and think about how this describes you.
 - What essentials can you pull from this to give a clear message of who you are?
 - From questions 2 and 3 you may distill multiple answers into sound bites that work for different roles/jobs as well.
 - Example - maybe you have a strong experience working in education but also have a strong non-profit experience and are pursuing opportunities in both. You may have a different elevator pitch for each.
5. Now practice
 - Record yourself and listen back
 - Ask a trusted and forthright friend to listen to you
 - Assess the following:
 - Did you get your intended message across?
 - Did you speak clearly?
 - Did you come across as authentic? Did it sound mechanical? Did it sound as though you were reciting something memorized or did it easily flow off your tongue?
 - Was your message delivered in a measured way - not too rushed and not too slow - while also completed within 30 seconds?
 - Did it grab your attention or that of your friend?
 - Does your passion show through?
 - If it does not feel right, you may have to tweak the words you are using to be more of what feels right - or - You may have to practice more...

Resume writing and content (including LinkedIn & cover pages)

- What makes a good resume? The best resume gets the attention of your reader and makes them want to know more about you. With that said, it is not as easy as it sounds.
- First opportunity to make an impression in many instances with a recruiter or hiring manager. Most hiring managers and recruiters only look at a resume for 5 or 6 seconds before they decide to move on or keep reading. Most of that depends on whether or not they see what they are looking for.
- A strong resume can make you stand out.
- A poorly written one can rule you out in that first 6 seconds.
- What makes a great resume?
 - Clear concise messages - does the resume quickly capture your story?
 - Clear and accurate account of your job and education history
 - Clear evidence of relevant skills and experiences
 - Evidence of tangible results (use numbers and metrics where possible)
 - Attention to details
 - Optimized text
 - Think beyond your job duties. ...
 - Use the right language to stand out.

Let's talk about each element quickly

- Clear concise messages - does the resume quickly capture your story?
 - Summary or Objective - very top of page
 - Format - easy to read/graphics/photos/bullet points

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- Clear and accurate account of your job and education history
 - Order from most recent to oldest
 - Make sure the company names, locations, titles, and dates are listed and accurate
 - Include your education with school names, degrees, areas of focus and graduation dates
- Clear evidence of relevant skills and experiences
 - List your main responsibility(ies) as they relevant to the job at hand
 - This may need to be adjusted for each job you pursue
- Evidence of tangible results (use numbers and metrics where possible)
 - These give your achievements and will gain the most attention
 - Do not tell the whole story in the resume - just give the results. You will have opportunity in the interview to tell the stories
- Attention to details
 - Grammar and spelling must be spot on. Errors here can rule you out immediately. If you are sloppy here - people will be concerned about your level of accuracy and quality in the job.
- Optimized text
 - Try to make your message as clear as possible without the use of extra superfluous language
 - Over descriptive resumes may sound great - but often come across as disingenuous - inauthentic
 - Make every word count and have meaning
- Think beyond your job duties
 - What soft skills do you bring to the table?
 - What jobs gave you the opportunity to use these skills?
 - If they do not fit under a job or they fit under all, where else can we add them on the resume?
 - Are you published or do you have patents?
 - Have you been active in industry organizations?
 - Are you active in non-profit or charity work? Do you volunteer anywhere?
 - Have you received awards or scholarships?
 - Do you have any relevant certifications?
- Use the right language to stand out.
 - Match your language to the job where you are able
 - Avoid acronyms if possible
 - Do not get too technical - recruiters will not know what to do with that
 - Include a list of systems or programs specific to the industry or job that you have knowledge of and experience with.
- Make sure everything matches in LinkedIn and that your dates will match what an employment check will verify.