Elevator speeches

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

Anyone looking for a job or starting a new career should have tools to help them be competitive in the current job market. While traditional tools, such as cover letters, résumés, and portfolios, may be some of the first things you develop to highlight your knowledge, background, interests, and skills, don't hesitate to consider other strategies to convey what you have achieved and where you want to go.

In the course of recruiting for a job, employers may receive hundreds of applications and sort through endless numbers of résumés. With that in mind, if you met the owner as you were dropping off a job application, what would you say in order to make yourself stand out from the crowd? Elevator speeches are no longer limited to entrepreneurs selling their latest ideas to investors. Job seekers can use this concept to provide a potential employer with a quick description of themselves that sets them apart from other applicants. Writing an elevator speech will not only prepare you if you have the chance to speak to a company official or hiring representative, but will also help you reflect upon your strongest qualities and how each applies to your career goals.

An ideal elevator speech to highlight your strengths to a potential employer is between 30 seconds and a minute long, is concise and to the point, and is a succinct summary of your résumé. Remember, in theory, it is a description of yourself that you could share in the time it would take to share an elevator ride with someone. Make it count.

Before writing your speech, it is important to identify the desired result. Imagine the ideal outcome and this will help when you are drafting and fine-tuning your speech. Is it to ask if there are any job openings at the company or organization? Is it to ask if you can meet about potential opportunities? Is it to exchange business cards? Is it to make a lasting impression so that you stand out amongst job candidates?

Begin with including your name, your field of interest, and desired position. Explain why you are a good fit for the company and why you would add value to the organization. Describe your background, education, and experience. Keep their attention by addressing the main questions on an employer's mind -- who are you, what type of job are you looking for, and why are you different than any of the other job candidates? Prioritize your main points. You may have less time than you prepared for and want to make sure that you highlight the most important things first.

At the end of your speech, you can ask if their company or organization has a need for someone with your experience, if there happens to be any openings in your area of interest, or if they are currently hiring. As a job seeker, you should always be prepared to provide a business card or a résumé after meeting someone.

Practice your speech with friends and family. Build your confidence and be comfortable with describing your qualifications and abilities. Even if you don't have the opportunity to present the speech to an employer directly, sharing your speech with contacts for networking purposes can also be effective in opening doors to opportunities. Drafting a speech will help you with your job search strategy and will be a valuable tool when marketing yourself throughout the process.

For additional information about interviewing, résumé tips, and resources available to job seekers, visit the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions at www.dws.state.nm.us and the New Mexico Workforce Connection at www.jobs.state.nm.us.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to www.dws.state.nm.us.

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