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# SELLING YOURSELF

## Polish your pitch to stand out in crowd

### Practice succinctly describing who you are and what you've done

By Barbara Rose Chicago Tribune

Quick, in less than a minute, tell me who you are and what you do. What experiences do you bring to your work and how do you do your job better or differently than anybody else? In short, why should I hire or promote you, invest in you, buy from you or listen to your advice?

This drill produces an "elevator pitch," a message short enough to be delivered in the time it takes to ride from the ground floor to the executive suite. And we aren't talking Sears Tower here.

Crafting a 30- or 60-second message is a useful exercise because it forces you to take stock of what you offer and where you want to go. Writing it down and rehearsing it makes the spiel yours.

"Polishing your pitch is the cheapest and most effective way to get or keep a good job in a tough market," says communications coach Mary Civiello, a former television newscaster and author of "Communication Counts, Business Presentations for Busy People."

**MEANINGFUL MINUTE:** Civiello advises clients preparing lengthy presentations to start by distilling their messages into 60 seconds. Her basic formula goes like this: "Say who you are, what you do, and why you do it better."

When clients stumble over the third part she asks, "What do you contribute? Why is the world a better place because of what you do?" If that's a little too grandiose, consider what sets your performance apart. How is your contribution different from others?

Provide a quick anecdote, fact or analogy to illustrate your message.

For example, a woman who worked at a big hospital told Civiello she likes "helping people." That's the type of generic statement that flies by unheard. When Civiello pressed for an example, the woman recounted tracking down someone who spoke Urdu to translate for a patient whom no one could understand. That story brought her message alive.

"It makes you memorable when you tell those granular, detailed stories," she says.

**"ME IN 30 SECONDS":** Sherri Moss, a volunteer workshop leader at LDS Employment Resource Services in Naperville, Ill., recommends a similar tack when crafting "Me in 30 Seconds" statements.

"Mention something unique about yourself," Moss says. "It makes you memorable."

The 30-second statement is especially useful when an interviewer says, "Tell me a little about yourself."

The Naperville career center suggests a five-part structure: Give yourself a title that says what you do; refer to your experience; mention your education; offer something unique about yourself; tie it in with what you can do for the company or organization.