

Sell the Product - You!

By Linda Ginac, Career Counselor

As a potential job candidate, you need good communication skills to get an offer. Many people have limited experience interviewing and feel uncomfortable bragging about their achievements. Despite what we have been taught growing up, the interview is the place to sell yourself with pride. To do well in an interview, you not only need to articulate your unique value, achievements, accomplishments, strengths and talents -- you must also use effective body language to build a good report with the interviewers.

Know Your Achievements

Before you can sell the product, you must know the product. Just as you would ask a salesperson about the features and benefits for the product you are about to purchase, you will be asked about your unique offering during the interview. Begin by creating a list of achievement statements that give specific examples of tasks that you accomplished in a specific job. The following examples illustrate the difference between responsibilities versus achievement statements:

- **Responsibility:** Responsible for financial product sales in Texas region.
- **Achievement Statement:** Achieved 255% increase in market share over five years resulting in \$ 78.1million in loan volume.

- **Responsibility:** Designed and implemented programs for new Product Sales through Distribution Partners such College Publishers.
- **Achievement Statement:** Spearheaded business relationships and customized product implementations with strategic partners including AOL, Amazon and Microsoft, resulting in a \$4M channel for digital and print products.

Craft the Pitch

Once you've created your achievement list, review each statement and begin to think about your collective experience across the span of your career. The goal is to identify a small set of specific skills that have contributed to your success in life and at work.

With this information, you will start to craft your opening pitch. This pitch is often used to answer the statement, "Tell me about yourself."

When I conduct interview training with professionals, this is the question that most people struggle with. People start pitching haphazardly about themselves, talking about everything from employee aspirations and work history to educational achievements and personal issues, an all in random order.

Answering this type of question sets the framework for the interview, so it is important that you get it right. Below is an example of a client's before and after opening pitch to help you evaluate and recast your pitch:

Before: I work for a computer technology company in Austin and have been there for three years. I am a partnership sales person and really like my job. The company has been good to me, but I'm looking for a more challenging job. Before the technology company, I worked as a sales associate for a technology company. They offered neat products, but the company couldn't get their act together, and my customers were always angry about late shipments. I also spent three years working as a sales associate for an internet service provider. It was during the Internet rush, so making sales was easy. I graduated at the top of my class from UT with a 3.8 GPA. I have a degree in Business Administration.

After: For the past five years I have been in the computer industry working on creating large corporate partnerships. Two years ago, I began selling into Fortune 50 accounts and sold over \$20 million in contracts in companies such as Dell and Hewlett Packard. During this time, I devised a product concept that enabled my company to generate \$5 million in new product sales. Throughout my career, I've mentored rising stars and have taught them how to improve their selling capabilities. I pride myself on my ability to solve complex problems for my clients and closing deals using effective persuasion skills. I am goal-oriented and achievement-driven but also seek to live a balanced life. I am excited about the opportunity to interview for the position of Sales Director, I can apply my unique skills to help grow the company.

Practice and Observe

Next, learn how to communicate these achievements effectively. It is one thing to read your statement on a piece of paper and quite another to say it naturally with ease and believability. I can't stress enough how important it is to practice, practice, practice. Use a video recorder to observe yourself, focusing on tone, pitch, body language and communication style. When you see yourself on media it is easier to identify mistakes and correct them. When working with clients, I recommend the following advice:

- Speak at a moderate pace and with conviction in your voice.
- Place emphasis on key words such as "achievement-driven" and do this sparingly.
- Look the interviewer in one eye for 3-4 seconds and switch to the other eye for 3-4 seconds and continue the cycle.
- Mirror the interviewer's body language 30 seconds after they've obtained a resting position.
- Eliminate head tilts, hair twirling, nose rubbing, pen tapping, eye twitching and finger pulls.
- Smile with your face and voice.

Land the Job

Mastering the art of selling yourself takes discipline, persistence and lots of practice. You need to become the expert in telling your career story because employers won't pull it out of you. In today's tight labor market, you are the only one qualified to market the unique product called you.

If you've landed interviews but are not receiving offers, you may need to improve your communications skills. Get expert advice to learn how to best market your achievements. Don't let poor communications skills stand in the way of landing your next job. Good Luck!

Linda Ginac is a certified coach and career counselor. With more than 13 years experience in career counseling, marketing and staff development, Ginac owns and directs a private practice, [The Ginac Group, Inc](#) located in Austin, Tx. Ginac offers a variety of career management services to businesses and individuals **[insert comma]** including **[for clarity, you may want to put a colon here]** individual and group coaching, career change and job transition, individual and group assessment and diversity career planning.