



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

January 2010 – Issue 37

Leave Them Wanting to Know More

by John Hadley

Have you ever run into someone at an SOA reception or other networking event who proceeded to ramble on for five minutes about the details of what he did? Did that get you interested in learning more?

This is one reason why a fundamental tenet of effective marketing is “*Leave them wanting to know more!*” Yet so few of us remember to do this ...

This is a powerful concept to keep in mind in everything you do. This should be how you approach status reports to your superiors, PowerPoint presentations, project descriptions at team meetings, discussions with your staff, self-appraisals, chance encounters with senior executives, client interactions, ‘needs assessments’ with prospects, panel discussions and workshops at SOA meetings, and of course, all networking meetings and events.

It is particularly important for anyone in or considering a career search to ask the following questions:

- Does your résumé suffer from “death by duties” syndrome, where you spend a lot of time talking about the duties you performed in each role, instead of boiling those descriptions down to the concise, compelling, accomplishment-and-result bullet points that get a hiring manager excited?
- Are your cover letters attempts to tell your history, or marketing pieces designed to create curiosity about what you can add to a company’s operations?
- Do you always make sure you use all 30 seconds of your elevator pitch at a networking event, or have you learned to focus on answering “*Why Should I Want To Pay Your Salary?*” and nothing else?
- Have you timed all of your accomplishment stories to make sure you can relate them in no longer than 60 seconds?
- Have you developed a powerful “HERO Story” with which to open your interviews, carefully constructed to include some key results that provide the ‘hooks’ to engage the listener? (For more on the HERO Story concept, see www.JHACareers.com/HEROStory.htm.)



Remember that a hiring manager who is interested and engaged will want to know more, and then will invite you to tell more. On the other hand, one whose senses have been dulled by your long explanations will never be curious enough to ask for more.

Also keep in mind that as much as I am judging your ability to produce results by the stories you tell, I am assessing your leadership and communication skills by the **WAY** you relate the stories. You shine through your ability to get quickly to the essence of the story, and to distinguish and present only the critical points that I will most want to know.

If I ask for an example of your project management skills, and you immediately launch into a long, detailed description of all of the steps you took to direct the implementation of a year-long project, you will have answered my question. **But if you instead tell a concise story with the key challenges, the most critical steps you took, and a powerful result, you will get me excited.** I can then probe on the points in which I am most interested.

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How you communicate a story tells me a lot about your current and future potential:

- Your skill at boiling down a story to its essence, and separating the wheat from the chaff.
- How much I can expect of your ability to negotiate effectively with my peers vs. continually having to reserve those efforts for myself.
- Whether I can rely on you to make powerful presentations to senior executives

Also think about this ...

If your typical accomplishment story is two to four minutes long, how many are you going to get the chance to work into a typical networking meeting or interview? On the other hand, if you boil them

down to the most powerful points that grab the listener's attention, AND they are shorter, you've achieved a double-whammy → more powerful statements, and time to share more of them!

SO JUST REMEMBER: **LESS IS MORE.**

Create the hooks in your presentations that keep the listener at the level of maximum engagement, and provide interesting jumping off points for further questions. Instead of worrying if you've told people enough, put your attention to always leaving them wanting to know more! ●

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