

Developing an Elevator Pitch

So with all of this talk about personal brand, it's time to pull all of your thoughts together and come up with one concise statement about yourself. It's called an "elevator pitch."

Could you introduce yourself, your qualifications and your career aspirations in an elevator ride, or in less than 30 seconds? Your elevator pitch is an overview of your personal brand—who you are and what makes you stand out. Think about it as a summary of your selling points. It's crucial that you develop your pitch for two reasons:

1) so you have a solid idea of how you will present yourself to others online, and 2) because you need a short and sweet answer when someone says, "Tell me about yourself." People don't want to hear about everything you've ever accomplished; that's when people lose interest.

The audience of your elevator pitch will be anyone who might help you further your job search. This might be a potential employer or someone you meet at a networking event.

Here's a sample elevator pitch:

"Hi. How are you? My name is Joe Smith. I just graduated from San Diego State University with a degree in accounting. I've been serious about financial-related topics since my freshman year. For the past two years, I've been closely following financial news, meeting with people in the industry to understand their jobs, and am currently the Chief Investment Officer for a school club. In my internship at Deloitte, I have developed a strong attention to detail and have met every deadline given to me with enthusiasm. My goal is to get hired full-time at an accounting firm. It would be great if we could discuss my goals further at a future date."

This pitch shows that Joe understands something about the financial industry. He gives specific examples that demonstrate a continued interest in finance. He has practical experience through an internship, dedicates extra-curricular time to expanding his knowledge, and has a strong sense of what he wants to do with his degree.

Draft your elevator pitch here:

Creating a Cover Letter

Are cover letters necessary?

The increasing popularity of e-mailed, Web-based, and faxed resumes have people wondering if cover letters remain a relevant tool in today's job search. Generally, a cover letter should accompany each resume. The cover letter allows you to demonstrate your ability to write and offers the first statement of why you should be hired.

What is the best way to e-mail a cover letter?

If an employer requests that you send your cover letter and resume through e-mail, you can:

- 1) send your cover letter and resume as attachments (e.g., Microsoft Word documents),
- 2) copy your cover letter into the body of your e-mail message and attach your resume, or
- 3) cut and paste your cover letter and resume into the body of your e-mail message (which eliminates your formatting).

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

YOUR NAME
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
E-mail Address

Date

Name
Title
Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms./Mr. Name:

OPENING PARAGRAPH: State that you are applying for a specific position and how you learned of the position, using a contact name when possible. Personalize the letter by saying why you want to work for this organization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): Succinctly outline the qualifications that make you a strong candidate. Relate your qualifications to the needs of the current job opening. Specific examples can demonstrate your skills and experiences.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Discuss your next action step. Repeat your interest in the position and indicate when you will contact the employer to follow up. Thank the employer for reviewing your resume.

Sincerely,

Your name typed

Whenever possible, cite a specific person. It may take research to learn the contact's name, correct spelling and title.

Tailor your letter to the position description and the employer's needs. Focus on strengths that define you as a candidate.

Remember to sign your name here.

Use the same heading that you use for your resume.

Use a colon here.

Conduct a spell check and review your resume carefully for errors.

Choose quality paper that matches your resume.



**SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Career Services
Division of Student Affairs

Career Services
Student Services East - 1200
(619) 594 - 6851
<http://career.sdsu.edu>

Sample Internship Description and Cover Letter

Event Planning Intern: The intern works with the Director to plan and execute events and educational programs. Responsibilities include arranging facilities and catering, promoting events to members and to the community, coordinating with speakers and panel experts, and compiling event evaluations. Duties will be approximately 70% project-oriented and 30% clerical. Office duties include working with an organizational database, completing mailings to members, and providing general assistance.

Carina Career
123 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182 ■ 619/555-1234 ■ ccareer@sdsu.edu

Current Date

Mr. Michael G. Smith
Community Development Organization
1000 5th Avenue, Suite 7020
San Diego, CA 92103

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Community Development Organization recently posted a listing for an Event Planning Intern on its Web site. After reviewing the requirements for the position and learning more about your organization, I am very interested in applying for this internship.

As a Junior Communications major at the San Diego State University, I possess many of the skills that you require for this internship. Last year, I volunteered on SDSU's Social Issues Conference committee, which provided me with excellent experience in planning a complex event. I assisted with scheduling rooms, ordering catering, working with outside vendors, as well as helping our keynote speaker with his travel arrangements and other needs.

In addition to possessing knowledge and experience related to event planning, I would bring excellent clerical skills to the Community Development Organization. For the past three years, I have worked at the front desk of the Registrar's office. In this position, I assist the SDSU community and am trusted to enter confidential and detailed information in the master database.

Thank you for considering my application. I would bring a strong work ethic and a genuine interest in event planning to your organization. I will call you next week to discuss the possibility of an interview to further discuss my qualifications. If you have any questions, please contact me at 619/555-1234.

Sincerely,

Carina Career

Carina Career

Sample Job Description and Cover Letter

Sales & Marketing Assistant: Use your leadership and excellent communication skills to serve our valued clients. Recruit, interview, market and build current and prospective client relationships. Tap into your sales potential, outstanding recruitment knowledge and superb account management skills when placing our contract employees. With dedication and hard work, you can move up the corporate ladder and advance into a leadership position. Visit our website at www.hightechfirm.com. Send all correspondence to Sally J. Harris, HR Director, High-Tech Firm, 3030 Build St., Suite 2301, Boston, MA 06045.

JOSEPH CAREER
1234 Montezuma Drive
San Diego, California 92182
(619) 555-5555
jcareer@sdsu.edu

Current Date

Ms. Sally J. Harris
Human Resources Director
High-Tech Firm
3030 Build Square, Suite 2301
Boston, MA 06045

Dear Ms. Harris:

I am writing to apply for the Sales and Marketing Assistant position that High-Tech Firm posted with SDSU Career Services. Paula McClain, an associate at your firm and a recent SDSU graduate, has encouraged me to apply.

Your advertisement states that hard-working individuals with excellent communication and organizational skills are the best candidates for this position. I am a hard worker with the education and internship experience needed to work effectively with your clients. As an intern with Go-Med, a high-tech medical supply company, I assessed client needs and promoted product lines. I learned the value of asking questions and listening to learn what clients want from a service provider.

I combine effective communication with strong organizational skills. Over the last four years, I have developed excellent time management practices by balancing the demands of part-time work, school, internships, and volunteer service. I look forward to applying all these skills in working as a sales assistant for your firm.

I would like to discuss how I might meet your needs in filling this position. I can be reached at (619) 555-5555 to arrange an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Career

Joseph J. Career

Analyzing a Job Posting for Key Needs

<p>Job Summary</p> <p>Location 84341</p> <p>Job Type Full-time</p> <p>Reference Code 831481809</p>	<p>Credit Union Field Marketing Specialist</p> <p>Organization: Anchor Federal Credit Union Network</p> <p>Education Required: College degree</p> <p>Experience Required: 1–3 years</p> <p>Position Description:</p> <p>Works with managers throughout the Anchor Federal Credit Union network to develop local marketing events to promote Credit Union membership. Coordinates all activities for each event, including supply distribution, prizes, and duration of campaign, budget, marketing support, and staffing. Responsible for tracking results and providing recommendations for future events. Also is responsible for collecting and maintaining data related to market conditions of each proposed site. Performs various other marketing and support functions when not traveling including general promotional development, membership surveys, collateral production and tracking, retiree package mailings, and other projects as assigned by the VP of Marketing.</p> <p>Position Requirements:</p> <p>Develops individual marketing activities to support branch growth and/or agency events. Travels to various locations throughout the country to organize events. Analyzes market conditions to ensure that the marketing activity is in line with the demographics of that particular region. Provides annual profile of demographics for each region. Oversees budget for each activity. Is responsible for reporting variances on a monthly basis. Works with outside vendors to solicit participation in marketing activities. Actively promotes the participation of both staff and monetary contributions from these outside sources. Works with VP and AVPs of branches to set priorities and establish goals for each event. Tracks results of each event and analyzes the success/shortfall of each. Distributes reports for review. Tracks marketing collateral inventory for branches and DMs. Ensures timely distribution and proper inventory controls. Develops mailings for account generation and retention. Develops ongoing mail programs to DMs and BCO managers for relationship development throughout the agency side of the business. Makes routine phone calls to HR managers, DMs, and BCO managers to establish event schedules, coordinate Financial Finesse seminars, and maintain relationships throughout the organization. Performs other duties as assigned.</p> <p>Position Attributes:</p> <p>*Candidate must be able to travel 25–30% domestically. *A minimum of 2 years of field marketing and sales experience. *Candidate must have presentation skills and experience.</p>
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<p>Abilities wanted</p> <p><i>Marketing:</i> local marketing events, market analysis, marketing reports (written and oral), sales letters and other mailings to generate membership, seminars.</p> <p><i>Relationship management:</i> work with branch managers to organize local events and set marketing strategies; staffing for events; maintain intra-organizational relationships and relationships with outside vendors.</p> <p><i>Communication:</i> distribute event schedules, disseminate marketing reports, encourage participation, make sales presentations.</p> <p>Attributes wanted</p> <p><i>Ambitious:</i> must be able to take initiative on organizing many events and meet deadlines.</p> <p><i>Creative:</i> must develop attractive and compelling marketing events and campaigns.</p> <p><i>Organized:</i> must be able to manage many simultaneous projects, events, and relationships.</p>
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TABLE 16.1

Abilities and Attributes That Establish Credibility in the Job Application Process

	Abilities (Skills and/or Knowledge)	Attributes (Enduring Approaches to Work)		
Competence (Task)	Function-specific (e.g., marketing, finance) Company/industry Technology Analysis/research	Achievement-oriented Ambitious Analytical Assertive Creative Can-do attitude Curious	Decisive Detail-oriented Entrepreneurial Independent Inquisitive Passionate	Problem solver Resourceful Results-oriented Seeks challenges Takes initiative Visionary
Caring (Relationships)	Communication/interpersonal Teamwork Emotional intelligence Leadership Intercultural	Customer-oriented Diplomatic Empathetic Flexible Generous	Inspiring Loyal Motivational People-oriented Persuasive	Responsive Sensitive Supportive Team-oriented Tolerant
Character (Values)	Familiarity with corporate culture and values Dedication to the success of the company Knowledge of business ethics	Accountable Committed Constant Dedicated Dependable	Fair Hardworking Honest Open-minded Optimistic	Reliable Responsible Straightforward Trustworthy Unbiased

they indicate how well you'll fit into the company culture, how much effort and commitment you'll put into your work, and how you'll impact the work of others.

Employers consider your mix of attributes as they try to determine if you have the right *chemistry*—an intangible that human resource professionals say they weigh heavily in the decision to hire. Fifteen percent of HR professionals say it accounts for 75 percent or more of the decision. Nearly four in ten (39 percent) say it accounts for about 50 percent of the decision.²

One useful way of analyzing your *abilities* and *attributes* is in terms of credibility. To do so, consider the features of competence (ability to accomplish work tasks), caring (ability to maintain effective workplace relationships), and character (ability to uphold corporate norms and standards). Competence focuses on the technical skills to achieve work tasks. In Table 16.1, you can see examples of abilities and attributes associated with competence, caring, and character.

Understand the Needs of Your Potential Employers

When hiring you, employers are making a huge investment. They will make this investment only when you demonstrate that you meet *their* needs. You can learn how well you fit the needs of employers by conducting a thorough job search and carefully analyzing those positions that are most compatible with your abilities and attributes.

Completing a Thorough Job Search Process Looking for jobs takes a lot of time. It's not uncommon for the process—from finding a position announcement to application to offer—to take three to six months (or even longer in some industries). Your thorough search for the best potential positions at the initial stages can save you a lot of time and increase the likelihood you'll get a position that is in your long-term interests.

Use all the resources available to learn about your options and ensure that you apply for the jobs that are good fits for you. You likely have a career center located in your college or university. Spend some time talking to experts there and make a plan for

LO16.3 Evaluate the primary needs of employers for positions of interest.

TABLE 16.4

Using Action Words to Emphasize Accomplishments

Less Effective	More Effective
Responsible for marketing efforts for younger members.	Developed and ran marketing campaigns targeting young professionals and university students that resulted in approximately 55 new members in the past year.
Without an action word, this statement sounds unnecessarily weak and passive.	By starting with strong action words, this statement illustrates a sense of goal setting and achievement.
Answered phones.	Greeted clients and scheduled appointments in person and by phone.
Although this statement starts with an action word, it emphasizes a menial, nonskilled effort.	This action word immediately draws attention to Haniz's focus on her customer orientation and value for a business.
Kept track of tanning products.	Took inventory of all items sold in the store.
This statement emphasizes a duty without any reference to the business importance of the task.	This statement illustrates a sense of purpose in accomplishing an important business task.

Rather, they focus on menial duties and do not focus on professional outcomes. Read through some of the less effective and more effective statements in Table 16.4 and notice how action verbs can bolster your credibility.

Quantify Accomplishments Where Possible

Your potential employers want to know how valuable your contributions have been in your prior jobs. So, where possible, describe key contributions and how they impacted the bottom line. Often, even when you can't say for certain how much you impacted financial results, you can provide numbers that show the significance of your work. Notice the contrasts between less effective and more effective examples in Table 16.5 and how quantification strengthens the more effective statements.

TABLE 16.5

Quantifying Accomplishments

Less Effective	More Effective
Supervised other tellers in the teller department.	Supervised six tellers—responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of unit.
Without a quantity, potential employers might assume a rather inconsequential set of supervision duties.	With a number of tellers noted, potential employers see that the applicant has supervised a team.
In charge of effort to support local breast cancer awareness event.	Organized a group of 83 members to participate in a local breast cancer walkathon.
Without quantification and an action word to begin this statement, this phrase emphasizes responsibilities rather than accomplishments.	By quantifying the performance (recruiting 83 members), this accomplishment stands out as exceptional.

TABLE 16.6

Positioning Your Most Important Contributions First

Less Effective	More Effective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeted clients and scheduled appointments in person and by phone • Assisted with purchasing of medical supplies and processing of client orders • Managed financial bookkeeping for the company using QuickBooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed financial bookkeeping for the company using QuickBooks • Assisted with purchasing of medical supplies and processing of client orders • Greeted clients and scheduled appointments in person and by phone
<p>This list emphasizes customer skills and de-emphasizes financial bookkeeping skills. If the goal is to display financial abilities, then the list is not effective.</p>	<p>This list emphasizes financial abilities with less emphasis on purchasing and customer service.</p>

Position Your Most Important Contributions First

The order in which you place your accomplishments and other supporting details shows how you prioritize them. The supporting details you place first or second under each heading in your résumé form the deepest impressions about your abilities and attributes. Furthermore, because most potential employers skim, they may only see the first one or two supporting details for each heading. So, strategically arrange this information to highlight your best features (see Table 16.6).

Remove Irrelevant Details

Writing résumés and cover letters requires the discipline to tell a story of how your key abilities and attributes will provide value to an employer. You should generally avoid details about your personal life, especially those that some people may find objectionable or unprofessional (e.g., politics or religion). Other information—although technically OK on a résumé—should be provided only if it helps develop your narrative. Generally, avoid listing personal interests and hobbies unless this information takes up little space and accentuates your key abilities and attributes (see Table 16.7).

TABLE 16.7

Removing Unnecessary Details

Less Effective	More Effective
<p><i>Community Activities and Accomplishments</i> Volunteer, VITA, Columbia, SC (giving up my Saturdays in support of a good cause) Church Choir (my church choir contains professional-level talent and tours internationally) Member of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions Volunteer Gymnastics Coach, Columbia, SC Varsity Basketball Overall MVP (2005–2006), Team Captain (2005–2006)</p>	<p>PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES Member, National Association of Federal Credit Unions, Arlington, VA, 2010 to present Volunteer Tax Consultant, Volunteer Tax Assistance Program (VITA), Columbia, SC, 2008 to present Volunteer Coach, Elite Gymnastics Summer Camp, Columbia, SC, 2003 to 2007 (summers)</p>
<p>This list contains several unnecessary pieces of information. The references to the church choir and high school sports are interesting; however, in limited space, they do little to highlight Haniz's key abilities and attributes.</p>	<p>This condensed list better frames the activities in a professional light and in terms of Haniz's key abilities and attributes. She retains one sports item (gymnastics coach) to show her leadership abilities and commitment to the community.</p>