

ideas

original perspectives on life and
business from leading thinkers

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power

“Work harder on being memorable! A great positioning statement and self introduction needs to be well-designed and delivered with impact.”

We are not what we do – but we do need to be able to answer the question, “What do you do?” in a way that makes us better known and creates more business. As a card-carrying introvert, I find the prospect of commercial networking about as attractive as having a root canal treatment. Still, I recognise that without customers, clients and attendees at my events, my business would dry up quicker than a well in the outback.

the power of positioning
MATT CHURCH

THE POWERFUL POSITIONING MATRIX

		FOCUS		
		you	it	them
ENERGY	high	obsession	uniqueness	purpose
	medium	category	analogy	problems
	low	history	examples	solutions

SO, WHAT TO DO?

For me, the pain was such that I searched for a way to take the effort out of the introduction process, and what I came up with was a practical model for creating powerful introductions. This nine-step positioning process achieves two things: first, it enables you to consistently answer the question, “What do you do?” with an appropriate level of detail. And second, it enables you to create a flexible positioning statement that can be creatively applied to any introduction situation.

CONSISTENT FLEXIBILITY!

It’s been said that we all need a good ‘elevator statement’, a succinct 30-second sales pitch or service positioner that creates awareness about what we do and how it is unique or valuable. And while I don’t remember a time when I successfully did business in an elevator, I do agree that we all need a way to answer the question, “What do you do?” so that we are positioned at the ‘top of mind’ should our customer ever face a situation where they need our products or services.

To approach the way we answer this question with a level of creativity, intelligence and purpose that is sadly lacking in most introductions, we need to think about the following:

The Focus Levels

As I started to explore the way people introduced themselves, I noticed patterns emerging. The first pattern that became clear was the focus of the introduction. The three options for focus are: to focus on YOU, to focus on IT, or to focus on THEM.

- YOU is obviously all about you, who you are, what you have done, and what you are into.
- IT is all about the activity, examples of how it has worked for someone, what it is like and maybe a few good stories about what it is that you do.
- THEM is all about the outcomes that your customers and clients achieve. You may ask questions, identify the key challenges they face or even get into solutions.

We are not what we do – but we do need to be able to answer the question, “What do you do?” in a way that makes us better known and creates more business.

When to use which?

While there are no hard and fast rules, I find that the more intimate the situation the more appropriate it is to answer the question with a focus on YOU. When you’re unsure of whether you are in front of a prospect or not, you may focus on the activity that you perform, the IT. If the person you are speaking to is a clear prospect, then you would focus on the outcome, the THEM.

Here are some examples of how you might change the focus based on the environment:

SITUATION	FOCUS	
Dinner party	Personal	YOU
Networking event	Activity	IT
Prospect’s boardroom	Outcomes	THEM

Of course, it may work to your advantage to juxtapose the focus – when you are versed in the nine positioning channels you can pick and choose your way around the grid as the situation dictates.

The Energy Levels

The second pattern that emerges in introduction situations is the energetic intensity of the introduction. There are three energy levels: LOW, MEDIUM and HIGH. Certain situations lend themselves to a more energetic and passionate introduction than others. Of course, some would argue that the higher the energy, the greater the impact on the other person – I don’t agree. Take the person sitting next to you on an eight-hour flight; I don’t know about you but I don’t want a ‘keen bean networking superstar’ in seat 24a wowing me with her high-energy elevator statement. In this situation, a LOW energy introduction that grows in intensity as my interest grows may be more effective.

THE NINE INTRODUCTIONS

Let's talk about you

History – Low Energy

This is kind of like a verbal résumé outlining where you have been and what you have done. Be sure to edit out the irrelevant stuff. We learn to write résumés when we are young and before we've done anything. As a result we tend to pad them out, making as much as possible out of little. Now that you are a little older you can drop the stuff that you did years ago, or at least just sketch out the details. Only say that which is useful.

"I grew up in Newcastle, moved to Sydney to study, graduated in the late eighties and went to work in a prison. I then worked for the Australian Council for Health and Lend Lease, wrote a few books and ended up here on the corporate speaking circuit."

Category – Medium Energy

This channel is intentionally lacking in creativity. This is a black-and-white answer to the question. I often use this one as a trial balloon to see how interested the person asking the question is. You would answer with a professional category.

"I am a chartered accountant in a boutique firm with six partners."

"I am the senior tax partner for a multinational professional services firm."

"I am a strategic communications consultant."

"I run the IT department for a major bank."

Obsession – High Energy

Here you get to talk about your passion. This is the time to get fired up and rant a little about what it is you believe.

"I know that CEOs should spend less time preparing speeches and more time running businesses. Too many great leaders fail to think before they speak. If they simply got their ideas down more effectively they would make a greater impact when they spoke."

Now, let's talk about the activity

Examples – Low Energy

Choose an appropriate client case study, an example of someone you have been working with lately. The risk with this of course is that you choose an example that bears absolutely no relevance to the person in front of you, or one that may jeopardise your chances of working with their organisation. For example, if you were selling to a particular bank it may not help your case to discuss the work you have done for a competitor.

"One client we worked with recently had a problem getting their internal sales team to move from a product-based selling process into a relationship-based environment. Over six months we moved the incentive schemes and culture from having a focus on transactions to having a focus on relationships. They noticed a 40 per cent positive shift in client retention, and this looks like impacting the profit positively by another \$250,000 this quarter alone."

Analogy – Medium Energy

This channel is particularly useful if you sell an intangible service or a new category of product or service. You draw a comparison between an already established concept and what you do.

"We are like a sports management company for information experts."

Uniqueness – High Energy

Here, you try to set yourself apart from others in your field. This is where you get to state your unique selling proposition and make a distinction between yourself and others. Whatever the masses are doing, try to position some part of what you do as contrary or opposed to this.

"While I am a lawyer, I am also a chartered accountant. This means we can handle all parts of the deal for you. We find this saves our clients time and money."

Finally, let's talk about the outcome

Solutions – Low Energy

This is similar to a case study or example, but here you actually state the benefits you create for others. It's often easy to ask a question that explains why you have created a certain solution.

"Do you find that you are spending too much time stuck in the day-to-day running of your business? We have created a personal effectiveness system that allows most people to get more done in less time. Our average client finds an extra three days' productivity per month when using our system."

Problems – Medium Energy

A problem is best described as the day-to-day internal dialogue your target has around what they do. When you start speaking about what's on their mind they truly engage with your products and services.

"The biggest problems in any law firm are keeping good staff, and moving from a fee-for-service model to a value-based advice model. Our business addresses these problems and creates a future-proof environment for any mid-sized law firm to grow."

Purpose – High Energy

This is where you express the client's reason for being in a way that shows you are aligned. You express how what you do is a perfect fit for their purpose.

"Here at 'Cocktail Capers' we realise that you should have as much fun at your own party as you would at someone else's. That's why we take care of everything from start to finish. You get to feel like you can just go to sleep at the end of the evening and know that when you wake up the next morning it's as if the party was held somewhere else."

A FINAL WORD ON FLEXIBILITY

There's no doubt that there are more ways that we could introduce ourselves, these nine channels are simply a starter's guide. I do know that I can only remember three things, so by working in each of the three focus levels I can easily recall the three energy choices. And if you're short on time, just use the three mid-level approaches for a use-anywhere introduction: Category + Analogy + Problems.

SOME WORKED UP EXAMPLES

Each of these examples demonstrate the use of all nine of the introduction techniques.

FIRST STEP COMMUNICATIONS (WEB DESIGN BUSINESS)

- (History) "I have a computer science degree."
- (Category) "I'm a web designer."
- (Obsession) "I love creating websites that make money, rather than cost money."
- (Example) "One client invested \$5,000 with us and made over \$100,000."
- (Analogy) "Think of us as a hardware store rather than a carpenter – we give you the tools and the guidance, and you create the products."
- (Uniqueness) "That's what makes us different. In fact, we don't even do web 'design', because the design will change over time for your business."
- (Solutions) "We solve that by giving you simple tools to update your site yourself."
- (Problem) "You see, that's a problem that many businesses have – their business changes but their website stays the same. And it's too expensive and too difficult to change your site yourself."
- (Purpose) "Because, after all, your business is not about web design; it's about..."

THOUGHT LEADERS LIMITED (MANAGEMENT COMPANY)

- (History) "Our team have all published books, run speaking businesses or been coaches."
- (Category) "We all came together to create a management company."
- (Obsession) "We are obsessed with leveraging expertise and helping clever people to become commercially smart about what they do."
- (Example) "One of our clients increased their billings from \$180,000 per annum to more than \$1.2 million in under 36 months."
- (Analogy) "We operate like a sports management company for clever people."
- (Uniqueness) "I guess the fact that we have all been there and done what our clients wish to achieve is what makes us stand out."
- (Solutions) "We help experts capture, package and deliver what they know so that they can make more money from it."
- (Problems) "Most people undervalue what they know and are so close to their expertise that they don't have the clarity to see what other ways they can leverage what they know."
- (Purpose) "The point is that we want people who know a lot to be recognised and valued for what they provide." 🙌