



Survival Kit

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Candidate Pitches

- You should have at least **three memorized** pitches:
 1. The answer to the question: What do you do?
 2. The answer to the question: What are you looking for?
 3. The answer to the question: Tell me about your self?
- What do you do?
 - + This can be asked most anywhere, by most anyone. Often at social gatherings.
 - + Length 30 seconds or less.
 - + First, tell the person your functional expertise. Nothing fancy. EG: I am a senior software engineer or I am a marketing manager.
 - + Second, tell them something that distinguishes you from other software engineers. EG: For the last 18 months I have been working on some leading edge storage technology software but unfortunately the company ran into some second round financing problems so I am looking for another challenging assignment. Do you know anyone who works with software or in storage technology? (Less than 60 words, less than 30 seconds)
- What are you looking for?
 - + Typically asked at a networking meeting or right after the "what do you do?"
 - + This can be 60 to 90 seconds.
 - + First, tell them you have a strong background in "a, b or c" You don't need to give them multiple strengths upfront. If your answer is compelling, they will ask, what else you have done?
 - + Second, a performance example.

- + Third, what environments have you excelled in?
- + Last, a couple of your target companies.
- + Your pitch might sound something like this:

“Mary, I have a strong background in launching consumer products internationally, especially in Latin America and Europe. I have managed over 20 launches with 90% of them becoming one or two in their markets. I particularly enjoy and seem to excel in environments that are performance based but don’t take themselves so seriously that you can’t have any fun. A few of my target companies are (name a couple) they both have a strong international presence.” (Less than 60 seconds)

After Mary’s response you would always ask: “Do you know anyone in consumer products or international marketing?”

- Tell me about yourself?

I have two suggested approaches to this one:

1. The Five O’Clock Club approach, outlined on pages 28-40, in their excellent book titled, **Mastering The Job Interview And Winning The Money Game**. It is geared to communicating to the hiring manager that you are **competent and interested** in the area in which they are interviewing you for.
2. The classic biography format, outlined below, which many executive recruiters like because it combines personal and professional information in your answer.

Please note: You are not legally required to tell them anything personal and should let your judgment be the controlling factor.

The bio format:

- + As we know, “tell me about yourself” is often one of the first questions a recruiter or hiring manager asks.
- + Your response can be a brief bio that allows the questioner to get a feel for you on a personal and professional level. The bio format also leads to the, “it’s a small world” phenomena and therefore, potentially, creates a more personal connection.
- + I find it easiest to do chronologically.
- + Mine sounds like this:

“I was born in Detroit but grew up in Corning, NY where my Dad worked for Corning Glass. Went to Denison University, a small coed college in the Midwest where I majored in Political Science. First job out of college was in retailing. I joined the Dayton-Hudson Company in Detroit, and then after 5 years joined Xerox, when they were at the top of their game! Started as a sales rep then moved into Human Resources. Was with them for fifteen years and loved every minute. Left to become a VP of HR at a nuclear defense contractor, UNC in Uncasville, CT. And for the next ten years was fortunate to be able to head up HR in a number of entrepreneurial companies. For the last 16 years I have been in a small management-consulting firm I co-founded where I specialize in recruiting, management training and career coaching. (60 seconds)

- + **Caution.** Don't worry about pitching your skills and accomplishments during your bio. They will ask plenty of follow on questions that will allow you to do that. For my bio the usual questions are:
 - ++ Why did you join Dayton-Hudson? What did you do for them? Why did you leave?
 - ++ What kinds of jobs did you have at Xerox?
 - ++ What were the other companies where you led HR?

- **PAR** model. The best way I have found to frame your accomplishments in the interview is to use the **PAR** model. It is **results** based, it keeps you focused and it is easy for the interviewer to immediately see you are a problem solver.
 - P =** The **problems** you faced in each of your jobs.
 - A =** What **actions** you and your team took to solve the problem.
 - R =** The **results** with as strong a quantification as possible. An **R** Example: Our costs dropped 26%.

Web Sites and Cool Info

- Great site for helping you hone your pitch. www.15secondpitch.com. They have one of the best templates for helping you get your speech brief and punchy. You have to sign up to get access to the template but they do not send you any annoying emails after you sign up. You can also view over 18k other pitches, some are excellent and some are awful. I found many were just fun to read.

- Finding **most anything!**
 - + **Google it first!** The most wonderful aspect of Google is you can just type in a simple sentence like, "IT jobs in Minneapolis" or "trends in fiber optics" or "latest news on Xerox" and you will have a wealth of info at your finger tips for that all important interview or networking meeting.
 - + Also the easiest way to find a company's **home page** is to type the name into **Google**.

- A few really slick **job search engines** that aggregate from multiple sites:
 - + **Indeed** is a search engine for jobs. It sweeps multiple job boards, newspapers and company websites. So in one simple search you have free access to millions of employment opportunities from over 500 websites including Career Builder, Monster, Hot Jobs and Career Mole, as well as the top 200 newspapers, hundreds of associations and company career pages. They add new sites every day. <http://www.indeed.com/>
 - + **JOBcentral**, <http://jobcentral.com/>, is a national labor exchange provided as a public service by leading U.S. employers. One of the best features is you can search for opportunities by state.

- + **America's Job Bank:** www.ajb.org allows you to search by state and then any city within the state.
- Broad Based Industry and Functional Info
 - + www.virtualpet.com/industry/mfg/mfg.htm
 - + There are **nine pages** (if you print them out) of industry portals including some international. A few examples: Aviation, Aerospace, Agriculture, Amusement, Automotive, Biotechnology, Chemical, Defense, Electronics, Energy, Food, Freight, Logistics, Shipping, Maritime, Hotel, Manufacturing, Medical, Mining, Paper, Software, Toy, Travel, Water and Wire.
 - + These **portals give you access** to industry associations, publications, forums, research tools and papers. **Has a excellent tutorial on how to do thorough research.**
 - + <http://www.corporateinformation.com/>
 - + Provides some good free company profile data.
 - + Also has a fee based option.
 - + www.business.com
 - + All functional areas and their subsets.
 - + Associations by functional area.
 - + Some employment opportunities by functional area.
 - + News and reference materials.
 - + www.ceoexpress.com
 - + A terrific aggregate site with portals to most anything imaginable, including all the worlds best newspapers, business magazines, business news feeds, company research, small business resources, legislative, government agencies, and reference sites.
 - + www.cia.gov
 - + The CIA site is a terrific resource for finding out the details on other countries. It covers the basics like population and the economy but also includes details like current political environment, and climate. There are also maps for each country. [Also a great resources for kids doing homework.]
 - + <http://www.ipl.org/> (The Internet Public Library)
 - + Founded by the University of Michigan School of Information and hosted by Drexel University's College of Information Science and Technology.
 - + Excellent research site.
 - + Has links to world wide phone and business directories.
 - + Has good non-business links for kids and teens.
 - + www.vault.com
 - + Is fee based but tons of great info including employee surveys for many companies which is a great way to assess the culture and potential problems.

- + Has a great “company water cooler” feature where you can check out what folks are saying “off the record” about a company.
- Financials
 - + Have you checked the current financials? A excellent one stop shop for public companies is www.sec.gov You have instant access to Annual Reports [10-K], Quarterly Reports [10-Q] and the [8-K] which is the “current report” companies must file with the SEC to announce major events that shareholders should know about.
- People
 - + **Social networking phenomenon**. Even if you don’t use this technique you need to become knowledgeable ASAP. For example Facebook.com had over 1B visits in January. Twitter is now being used by many top companies to tap into instant consumer feedback. You will absolutely date yourself if you are not articulate on the business uses of social networking.
 - + www.LinkedIn.com Speaking of social networking! One of the best on line resources available today. This is an entire subject in itself. If you aren’t familiar with all it’s benefits make it your top priority. It is one of the first places search firms and many company recruiters tap into when they are beginning a search. **Most important:** make sure you have a professional profile on there with at least six professional recommendations including past bosses and work diligently to expand the size of your professional LinkedIn contacts.
 - + www.yahoo.com
 - + Click on “Yahoo! Finance.” It is at the top of the page just above the first “search” box on the page.
 - + Enter ticker symbol of company interested in.
 - + Click on “Profile.”
 - + The “Profile” shows key executives and “insiders.”
 - + Zoom Information Inc. (formerly Eliyon Technologies) features **more than 46 million people** and 1.5 million company summaries. Searching on people is free.
<http://about.zoominfo.com/PublicSite/>
 - + **TIP:** When looking for someone always “Google” them first.
- Compensation Information

Three sites I recommend: • www.glassdoor.com • www.salary.com
• [www.salary expert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com)
- Job Search Guidance
 - + www.fiveoclockclub.com
 - + America’s premier career coaching and outplacement network for professionals, managers, and executives.

- + A **must join** organization if you are serious about landing a job in the shortest possible time. Their weekly sessions will put you on track and keep you focused until you land. The good news is you don't have to drive to the weekly sessions! They are run telephonically.
- + www.execunet.com
 - + Another **must join** organization if you are at the \$150k + level.
 - + Has up to date postings by function of hundreds of senior level positions around the country.
 - + Has terrific, real world, articles and research portals to guide executives in their search process.
- + www.rileyguide.com
 - + Articles, advice and links to resources that will help you manage your job campaign. Very comprehensive.
 - + Providing free career and employment information since 1994.
- Public and College Libraries
 - + While the Internet research is key this is still a great place to begin.
 - + Research Librarians have become experts on where to find good info both in print and on-line relative to job search.
 - + Also check out your college library. Most of them allow you on-line access to their research data bases.
 - + **Best research data base**, in my opinion is **Hoovers** with more than 28 million public and private companies and 36 million people.

Before You Go On The Interview Suggest A Quick Review Of The Following:

Appearance

- Dumb stuff, but are your shoes shined and is your hair neat?
- Do you know the dress code?
 - + If yes, go one notch above. (e.g., If it is khakis and a polo shirt wear dress slacks and a dress shirt. For women, a dress and blouse.) Don't over do it. Being too dressy you risk looking like a "corporate suit." Leave the Rolex and the Porsche at home.
 - + If no, call and ask. My benchmark is, how does the hiring manager dress? If HR tells you business casual be sure to ask what their definition of business casual is and again dress a notch above.
- Is your wardrobe dated?
 - + It is not a major investment to have a couple of nice outfits. Again, don't over do it. While it is fun to wear high-end clothing from time to time it is also a risk. It will turn off just as many as it turns on unless you are in the fashion

business. The same thing applies to your jewelry. Best guideline with jewelry [including watches], makeup, perfume and aftershave is, **under do it!**

Enthusiasm

- This is hard to coach without a camera or seeing you in action but here are a couple of guidelines:
 - + **Above all**, be yourself because after you are hired they are going to see the real you. As Nathaniel Hawthorne said, “no man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true.”
 - + Think about some of the most successful interviews you have had. What was your mindset at the time? How did you behave in those interviews? How was your confidence? Now practice thinking and feeling the same way for the next one.
 - + From the moment you get out of your car start saying and acting like this is going to be a great interview!
 - + Greet the receptionist or guard with a smile.
 - + Smile at people in the halls and elevator. Some may be a future boss, peer or subordinate!
 - + When you shake hands remind yourself it needs to be firm but not a knuckle buster. Above all, **smile and thank them** for the opportunity to meet.
 - + Watch your posture. Sit up straight and toward the front of the chair.
 - + **Last and most convincing** will be how you talk about their company and management team as a result of the excellent research you have done prior to the interview. And **the quality of the questions you ask.**

Have you also done the following?

- Have you memorized your response to the classic “tell me about yourself” question? Some call it the “2 minute pitch” but please don’t take that literally. For most of us, our eyes begin to roll after 15 seconds!
- Have you done deep research on the company using all the tools on the web?
- Have you checked within the last 24 hours for any new news about the company, the industry and the key competitors? The internet makes this a piece of cake. This will also put you ahead of 95% of your competition....unless they also happen to be a client of mine (; -)
- Have you got the correct spelling for the names of all the people you are going to meet? Do you have their titles? Are they written where you can easily see them?

- Do you have a comprehensive list of questions to ask? What are the best questions to ask? Google it! Here's what you ask Google: "best questions to ask during an interview." The first six listings will give you enough suggestions that you will be able to build a killer list.

Watch Your Body Language

- We have all read about how body language is as important and many say more important than our words. Here is a quick list of what you should pay attention to.

Face. A nice relaxed smile, not a "Cheshire Cat" grin. It can not be overstated that the first impression we make is most often with our smile.

Eyes. Make and maintain eye contact. Sounds like a no brainer but studies show this is the one people have the most trouble with yet it is, **by far**, the most important.

If this is a challenge for you start by watching their mouth. It has a couple of advantages. One is it impossible for someone to discern you are not making eye contact and it forces you to pay attention to what they are saying.

Voice. If you have a loud voice, like me, consciously turn the volume down and if you have a soft voice turn it up a notch.

Hands and Arms. Key word to remember here is, **relaxed**. Also think back on your Mom or Aunt Mary. Remember their admonitions? "Stop pointing," "stop fidgeting," and "don't crack your knuckles." It was a pain to hear back then but it is really important to keep in mind for the interview or an important networking meeting.

If you talk with your hands try to keep them in your lap or holding something like your pad, a pen or a cup.

Posture. Back to Mom and Aunt Mary, how many times did they tell us to "sit up straight?" Also do not cross your legs too much especially if you are wearing a dress. If you are offered to sit on a sofa go for a chair instead. If you have to sit on the sofa sit on the edge so you can be sitting up straight with your feet firmly on the floor.

Body Language Summary

The good news is, all of these can be practiced in a mock interview. I strongly recommend you do several mock interviews, not only to get feedback on your body language but also to hone your interviewing skills. TIP: Peers are the best and toughest audience for practicing.

Interview Check List Summary

- If you have done the above, your confidence level going into the interview will improve **four fold!**
- And **you will be perceived** as upbeat, knowledgeable and competent.

Bibliography

Please note: There are 1000's of well written books about job changing and resume writing but, in my opinion, these are the best of the best.

- The Five O'Clock Club series by Kate Wendleton. Available on www.fiveoclockclub.com . There are five books in her series that are a must: Targeting A Great Career, The Targeted Resume, Mastering The Job Interview And Winning the Money Game, and Shortcut Your Search: The Best Way to Get Meetings.

For executives: You can order **For Executives Only**, *Applying Business Techniques To Your Job Search* by Bill Belknap (yes, me!) and Helene Seiler. In less than 200 pages we cover everything you need to know to run a successful job campaign.

- What Color Is Your Parachute by Richard Boles. Great reference book with one of the most comprehensive career evaluation exercises out there. It is called The Flower Exercise, not the best name, but it is the best exercise for developing your "ideal" job. Web site: www.jobhuntersbible.com
- **On networking:** Dig Your Well Before You Are Thirsty by Harvey Mackay, Make Your Contacts Count by Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon, Never Eat Alone by Keith Ferrazzi and Little Black Book of Connections by Jeffrey Gitomer are the best I have read.
- Rites Of Passage by John Lucht. Geared to the \$100k + executive. Web site: www.ritesite.com/Main/aboutBook.cfm

Three excellent books on "on boarding." As you know the first few months are critical to your long-term success and survival.

1. The New Leader's 100 Day Action Plan by Bradt, Check and Pedraza.
2. You're In Charge...Now What? by Thomas Neff and James Citrin.
3. The First 90 Days by Michael Watkins.

Good Luck!