

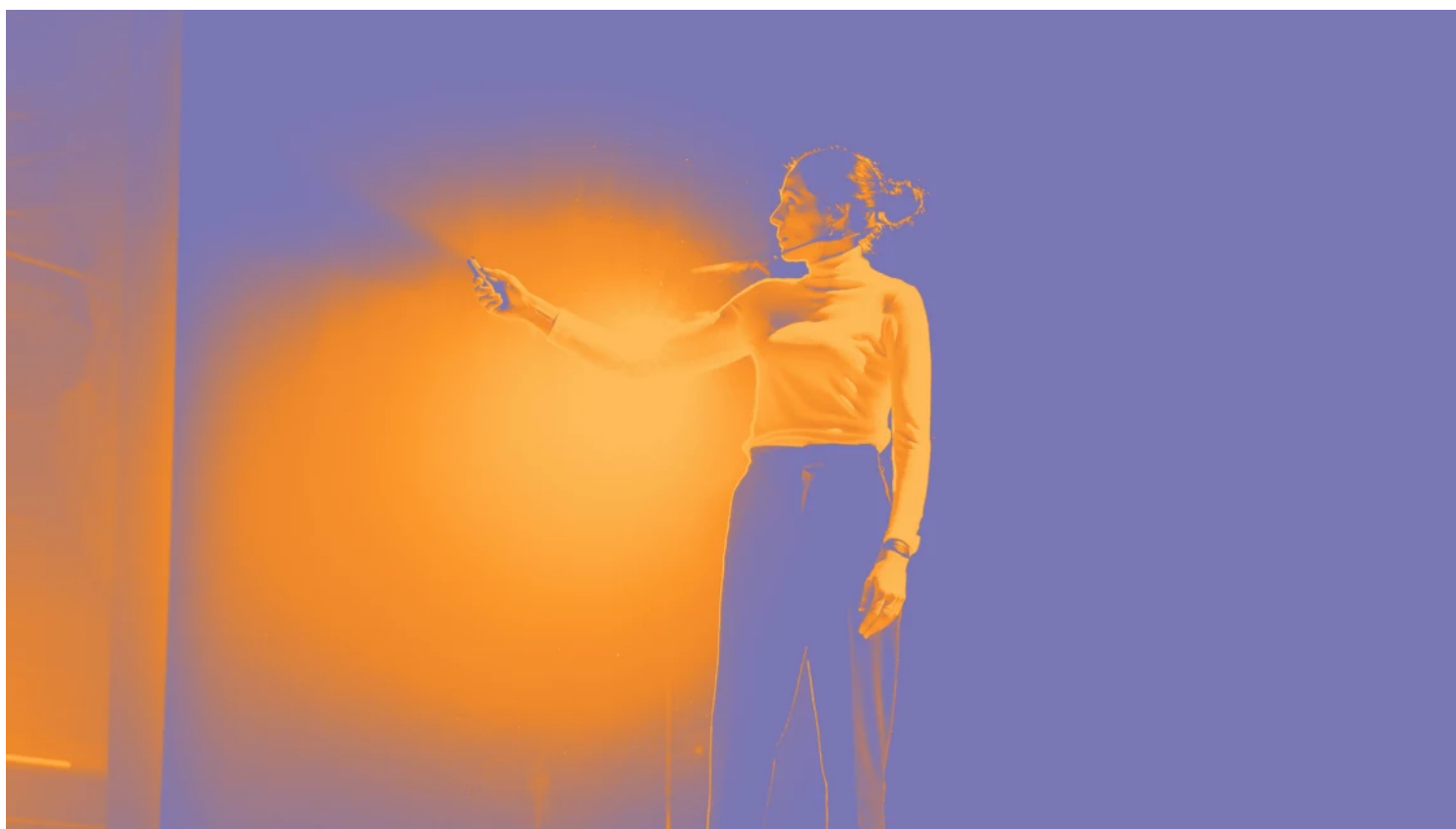


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08-02-21 | 10:00 AM | ELEVATOR PITCH

How to pitch yourself in 2 minutes or less—and nail your dream job

This executive placement expert advises to hone a personal narrative that captures your career story at its most concise and memorable level.



[Source photo: gorodenkoff/iStock]





4 THINGS TO READ

Which category of jobseeker do you fall into?

- **The historian.** Shares every bullet point on her three-page, 25+ year resume, overwhelming hiring managers with details.
- **The opportunist.** Emphasizes so much willingness to do “anything and everything,” that there’s no figuring out the right fit for him.
- **The generalist.** Downplays her true skills with generic accomplishments like “building great teams” and “achieving corporate goals;” leaves no lasting impression.
- **The reactionary.** Needs a therapist and lets emotion about his last employer drive the conversation until the interviewer is screaming for the exit.

Many of us inadvertently fall into one (or more) of these stereotypes when asked to introduce our skills, experience and career goals. And, especially for executive jobseekers, those traps could kill your chances. Recruiters, hiring managers and networking contacts need a clear picture of your unique strengths and ideal role—and all in just a few short sentences.

Enter the professional narrative.

YOUR CAREER STORY IN TWO MINUTES OR LESS

A professional narrative captures your career story at its most concise and memorable level. Ideally, that’s about two minutes in conversation, and less than 200 words when written. It’s a power-packed paragraph that when done right, clearly differentiates you in the job market, identifies your target role and keeps you top of mind.

The professional narrative forms the foundation of a successful executive job search. That’s because it addresses the most important questions for career transition.

Specifically:

- Who are you as a senior leader?
- What do you do best?
- Where do you add value to an organization?
- What is your ideal next step?



AVOID CLICHÉS AND FORGETTABLE PHRASES; FOCUS ON SPECIFICS

Here's an example of the transformation:

Original summary: *“I started my career in brand management about 20 years ago in California, after getting my MBA from Stanford. I also have a B.A. in business from UCLA. I bounced around for a bit and had really good opportunities to travel and build some wonderful teams. Then about six years ago I moved back to the Midwest. I joined a startup, really scrappy organization, and this time I had far more responsibility for product development. I’m good at making things work better, putting strategies together, and leading teams. I’m ready to take my leadership to the next level—maybe a chief marketing officer role—where I can have a significant impact on the business.”*

Revised professional narrative: *“As an energetic, consumer-led brand marketer and general manager, I develop strategies that unlock marketplace success. Leveraging my experience in strategic and new product development, P&L ownership, and cross-functional team management, I quickly assess business conditions and apply proven best practices. I am recognized for developing insightful strategies that are rooted in deep consumer knowledge, flawlessly executed and able to garner winning results. In my next role, I will leverage my passion and skills as a senior member of a marketing team driving superior performance. I will apply my leadership at both strategic and operational levels to create new opportunities for growth.”*

Where the original version lacked a hook to grab attention, the winning professional narrative shows personality from the start. It emphasizes specific accomplishments and demonstrates the candidate's strengths, instead of centering on overused clichés, rambling career history and forgettable descriptions.

A great professional narrative also takes a forward-looking approach, rather than relying on a list of past accomplishments, titles or years of experience. It focuses on a precise next role that the audience can picture immediately, while emphasizing the impact a candidate can make for the new organization—rather than what the jobseeker expects from their next employer.

This clarity makes it easy for others to spot opportunities and facilitate networking introductions. It also uses a recruiter or hiring manager's limited time wisely.

PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVE VERSUS PERSONAL BRAND

Personal branding gets a lot of buzz with jobseekers, and it's common to mistake a personal brand as “enough” to support your job search. While there's a definite intersection between what you stand for as an individual and your career aspirations, these are two distinct elements. The main difference is that a personal brand applies in many situations and stays constant across your life; a professional narrative speaks to a clear goal (your next job) and focuses more narrowly on your work identity.

In either case, senior leaders often waste space calling out skills and experiences that are baseline expectations, rather than true personal differentiators. For example, at a C-suite or vice president level, we expect robust leadership abilities and proven team-building.



ENLIST OUTSIDE HELP TO ASSESS YOUR STRENGTHS OBJECTIVELY

Creating the ideal career story can be challenging, especially when working alone. It's difficult to step back and assess your own strengths objectively. Emotion can also derail your overview, especially if you're not in transition voluntarily.

These are all good reasons to tap others in your circle, or the outplacement and career transition experts at firms like [Navigate Forward](#). Ask these resources to help identify your top strengths. Jobseekers often overlook their best assets, simply because these traits come so easily.

Once you've crafted a winning professional narrative, use it often and consistently across your resume, bio and LinkedIn profile. It's also suitable for conversational introductions, cover letters and "about" statements in emails. This repetition of key themes will reinforce your message and help fast-track your next career opportunity.

Anne Sample is the CEO of [Navigate Forward](#), a boutique consulting firm that helps senior-level executives brand and package themselves to make meaningful transitions, both professionally and personally.

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08-02-21 | 5:00 AM | LEADERSHIP NOW

Leadership's cult of personality is dead. Here's what we should be doing instead

The VP of Innovation and Design at Qlik says that to succeed in moving forward, leaders must rely on the collective intelligence of others, bolstered by actionable insights to enable data-driven decision-making.



[Source photos: [Steve Jurvetson/Flickr](#); [Daniel Oberhaus, 2019 /Flickr](#); [Matthew Yohe/Wikimedia Commons](#)]





THINKLE READ

Many people believe there will never be another Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, or Jeff Bezos because they embody a rare mix of vision and high energy that can't be replicated. In truth, however, the idea of a "singular genius" is a myth. Their prowess did not come from a solo wellspring. It was developed by and flourished with the power of collective intelligence. There are many people behind these and other prominent thought leaders who speak at conferences, dominate social media and collectively gain the world's attention (for better or worse).

At a time when enterprises are being bombarded by new challenges, businesses can't afford to rest on one leader's individual knowledge and opinion. According to a [report](#) by Gartner, 65% of the business decisions being made today are more complex than they were two years ago—more connected, more contextual, and more continuous. More than half (53%) of respondents also said that there is a higher expectation to explain or justify their decisions. One person alone cannot overcome these complexities.

Harnessing the power of groups to solve business problems will be one of the most powerful tools to drive innovation and growth in the enterprise. No one person can go it alone, regardless of their talent, creativity, or personality. To succeed moving forward, leaders must rely on the collective intelligence of others, bolstered by actionable insights to enable data-driven decision-making. This requires leaders to embrace diversity (of thought and people), reengineer business processes, and update data workflows to pull more people in.

POWERFUL COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE = DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (OF PEOPLE AND THOUGHT)

The evolving culture of the business community is leaning toward greater inclusion. Collective intelligence is not just about bringing people into the room—it's about bringing people into the organization, and many in are taking notice.

According to a [report](#) by Silicon Valley Bank, more than half of U.S. startups fail to have any women in the C-suite or on the board of directors. This can be especially problematic as these startups rise to become future tech giants. But there are signs of change starting to emerge among the most well-established players—particularly in the tech industry. Chief executives from Adobe, Cisco Systems, Intel, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise are among the Silicon Valley stalwarts that have [signed](#) the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge.

They are joined by tech giants from around the country. For example, Dell Technologies, is [dedicated](#) to hiring, developing, and retaining enough women to account for 50% of the firm's global workforce and increase its workforce of Black/African American and Hispanic team members to reach 25% of its U.S. workforce and 15% of U.S. people managers. This will enable the firm to build a stronger foundation for collective intelligence and develop a working environment in which decisions are made with the thoughts and talents of many individuals.

Diversity empowers businesses to do more *with* more—more concepts, solutions, and innovations—not less. Other businesses must follow suit with their own diversity initiatives to get the most out of their existing people and prospective employees. Diversity challenges every one of us to think smarter and



DIVERSE TEAMS AND LEADERS = HAPPIER CUSTOMERS

Diversity isn't only good for employees—it's also good for customers and ultimately the bottom line. Boston Consulting Group **found** that diverse management teams achieve EBITA margins that are nine percentage points higher than businesses with below-average diversity.

And in a **survey** of nearly 13,000 enterprises in 70 countries, the International Labour Organization found that more than half (53%) agreed that gender diversity initiatives improve business outcomes. Among those who track gender diversity, nearly three-quarters reported profit increases as high as 20%.

These are additional reminders of the power of diversity and the collective intelligence that it creates, providing organizations with the cognitive flexibility to persevere in today's challenging climate. Without diversity in all its forms, businesses are limited in what they can achieve. Instead of waiting for diversity to manifest on its own, companies must actively seek out and attract a variety of bright minds to keep pace with the speed of business.

REENGINEERED BUSINESS PROCESSES AND DATA WORKFLOWS PULL PEOPLE IN

Organizational challenges continue to increase in complexity. Between the fight to retain talent (3.6 million people **quit** in May alone), the rush to **keep up** with artificial intelligence (AI) deployments, and lower-than-expected **returns** on divestments, businesses may feel overwhelmed. The only way to overcome these and other obstacles is by drawing upon the collective intelligence of those within the firm.

Collective intelligence is one of the important accelerators of Active Intelligence, a state of continuous intelligence from real-time, up-to-date information. Ask questions, leverage data, combine with the input of other internal experts, and formulate a plan that works instead of relying on a single idea that was conjured up by one hopeful individual. Why do people want to leave? How can we best utilize AI? What data is needed to ensure we meet or exceed expectations?

Businesses must evaluate their current data processes and workflows to take advantage of their collective intelligence. By uncovering areas for improvement, they can reengineer their approach and bring more people into the conversation. But it's not about expanding team size. It's about ensuring diversity of thought that can guide enterprises through tough decisions and situations.

HARNESSING THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF GROUPS FOR GROWTH

The cult of personality that has been so pervasive in tech must be cast aside. By harnessing the power of a diverse group to solve organizational problems, enterprises can more effectively tackle their biggest challenges head-on with superior business results. Teamwork must be augmented by data, which empowers all of us to make smarter decisions and lead stronger organizations. A firm that embraces diversity and inclusion towards collective intelligence will benefit from a greater variety of voices and ideas, setting the stage for sustainable success.



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