



# NAWDP Advantage

**April  
2016**

Volume 29 • No. 4

Perfecting Your Elevator Pitch ..... 1

Member Profile.....1

Registration Form.....2

Promoting Employment and Economic Advancement .....4

Preparing Immigrants to Reach Their Career Potential .....5

Opportunity Occupations are Becoming more Accessible.....6

Workplace Stability for Employee Retention and Performance .....7

## Perfecting Your Elevator Pitch to Land a Job

By Al Smith

Under every rock, there's another snake that claims that a candidate must have an "elevator speech."

Unfortunately, the vast majority of elevator speeches that I have been forced to endure are long enough to last the time it takes to get to the top of Toronto's CN Tower. (I can't tell you how many times at career events, when asked to give an elevator speech, people first stumble, muttering "hamin-hamin-hamina" and then start reciting their resume). Eyes roll back in respective heads and sleep beckons. Since I believe in sharing every method for find a job, even questionable ones, let's discuss the elements of an effective elevator pitch; as opposed to a speech.

The speed limit in most of the country is 55 miles per hour. You should maintain the speed limit...or, in this case, pitch limit to about 55 seconds.

An elevator pitch should contain the following:

- Your name (see, this isn't so hard)
- What you do (be specific)
- What you bring to the table for a company (This isn't about you!)
- Why you would be an asset to a company (Your value proposition)

Some people insist that you need to include a list of companies that you are interested in, but it has been my experience that candidates only mention

Continued on page 3

### NAWDP Member Profile

#### Workforce Development Professionals are everywhere!



**Terrance Bowens**  
**Workshop Facilitator**  
**NAWDP New & Emerging Professional Cadre 2016**

**San Diego Metro Region Career Centers**  
**San Diego, CA**

in youth development. I was interested in making the transition to working with adults and that's when I found workforce development. It was a perfect way to connect my previous experience to working with adult job seekers. Within the first 30 days, I knew workforce development is where I needed to be and I've been around ever since.

#### **What is the most exciting thing about being a workforce development professional?**

The thing that excites me the most is coming up with strategies to better help job seekers find work. As the ways people look for work change, it is exciting to see what's trending, what no longer works, engaging social media, and better techniques to landing a great job. That is what makes our service relevant and gives us staying power in today's economy. We have to keep the job seekers at the forefront so they continue to see value in our service. I love coming up with ways to

Continued on page 3

**NAWDP**  
National Association  
of Workforce  
Development  
Professionals

# WORKPLACE STABILITY FOR EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND PERFORMANCE

by Ruth Weirich

Workplace Stability, a new professional development training for business leaders, adapts aha! Process's Bridges Out of Poverty concepts to help employers strengthen the workforce and build more prosperous and stable communities. This work brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, productivity, and the bottom line.

With businesses we talk about stability. Stability of employees and creating stability for themselves as a business. This creates the opportunity to look at stability and how it is affected by economic class. We review mental models (pictures or stories) that help us understand poverty and what resources look like, and we talk about the ability to do without resources. We also discuss the hidden rules (unspoken cues and habits of the group) and the language experience of individuals coming from daily instability.

Employers do a lot to stabilize us. They offer us vacation, 401(k), paid time off, holidays, maternity leave, and all of those things stabilize us. Not everybody gets those benefits, though, and so we're looking at ways to talk with employers about stability that will stabilize our employees and improve retention and profits.

The reality is that there is a contrast between the stability at work and the instability of many entry-level employees' environments. We generally have concrete thinkers as entry-level, low-wage employees who are coping with daily instability, and we usually find longer-term, abstract thinkers in higher-wage positions. So we have this juxtaposition of less predictable and more predictable. (On the other hand, I've worked with some pretty unpredictable managers, so we might be able to debate that one!) We have the tyranny of the moment on one hand and long-view planning on the other, which leads to either reactive problem solving (for many of our entry-level employees living in the tyranny of the moment) or proactive problem solving (for professionals in long-term stability). Each group is solving problems, they're just doing it differently. And when you're living in daily instability, the math doesn't work. It doesn't matter how many hours you work at minimum wage, it just won't

pay for minimal accepted living expenses, so it isn't sustainable.

That's in stark contrast to the business, which is working from financial stability. People coming from daily instability have a lot to bring to the table. They're passionate, they're thinkers, they're problem solvers, they have will power, they're strong, they're persistent. The key is in creating a workplace culture that best uses those talents.

What does it look like to an employer when someone lives in daily instability? A group of hospital executives we work with in Schenectady, New York, decided they would ride a city bus in to a scheduled appointment at the hospital. What happened? They missed the appointment. They had to take multiple bus lines, one bus broke down, and they had to walk for a period of time without a sidewalk. As a result of that experience, they added walk-in days at the hospital's clinic. What does that do? It helps stabilize the instability.

How long does it take you to do laundry when you're living in daily instability? In stability, you throw a load in, you go and fix dinner, you throw another load in, you take your child to baseball practice. When you're in instability, you may have to get on the bus, maybe with your children, go to the Laundromat, wait for a couple washers and then driers, and then you have to pay for it too; it's expensive. And then you have to hurry so you don't miss the bus home.

Language can be a huge barrier for people coming into the workplace as low-wage employees.

Businesses can use this knowledge to retool our onboarding and our training—we can even take it back to our applications, our step sheets, our directions. So with businesses we talk about the language features of daily instability: casual register, circular story structure, and the importance of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is a language in which we all need fluency. Building common language in the workplace is an important focus of the work we do with businesses.

Our employees often engage in destabilizing problem solving. Chief among these problems is high-interest

payday loans and paycheck advances. So one stabilizing strategy is to develop and implement a small-dollar loan program as an employee benefit that helps build resources and encourage stability. When we work with business leaders, we ask: What can you do differently in the benefits, the policies, and the management to help stabilize the environments of your employees? How can you think outside the box? And one of the best outside-the-box developments is the creation of a resource network for employees.

A group of employers comes together and works to provide retention services, work supports, and training opportunities for entry-level employees. They keep employees on the job, and it reduces the demand for HR. Often the resource network model includes a resource specialist. Each company purchases shares of that person's time, and the resource specialist spends anywhere from a few hours to 20 or more within the businesses working on stabilizing issues with employees. This kind of support keeps the employees on the job and the lines functioning.

What are businesses in your community doing that stabilizes entry-level, lower-wage employees living in daily instability?

It's very exciting to bring together so many different sectors. As we all work in our different silos, it's important that we get together and share our best practices and strategies. I was talking to a poultry farmer, and he told me how they keep their different grains stored in separate silos. But then they have this expert nutritionist who comes and blends those grains to make the right combination for the chickens, and that's absolutely what we're doing in our communities. We're all working in our different silos, but we come together to create sustainable communities where everybody can live well.

*You can read the full, unabridged article at [ahaprocess.com/workplace](http://ahaprocess.com/workplace). For more information on providing a Workplace Stability training session at your site, please email [workshops@ahaprocess.com](mailto:workshops@ahaprocess.com) or call (800) 424-9484.*