

## THE 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL: WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT YOU?

By Laura A. DeCarlo, CERW, CCM, CEIC, CCMC, IJCTC, CECC, CCRP, CWPP  
A Competitive Edge Career Service, LLC

*What do you do? Who are you? Tell me a little about yourself...*

During your career you are apt to hear these words directed at you many times. When networking, selling, or interviewing, you need to be able to express who you are with power, clarity, and professionalism. A 30-second commercial is really all about demonstrating your Unique Selling Proposition or USP. Since you only get one chance to make a positive first impression, you need to focus on the three P's: Preplanning, Preparing, and Practicing in order to ensure that your USP will accurately represent who you are and what you have to offer.

Your USP is basically a 30-second monologue describing your benefits, qualifications, and unique value. Because the best commercial will be one that describes your strengths in terms of the employer's perceived need, you will most likely need to create more than one USP. Like branding a product, you want your commercial to be crisp, concise, and memorable. Not unlike a cover letter, your commercial needs to grab the listener.

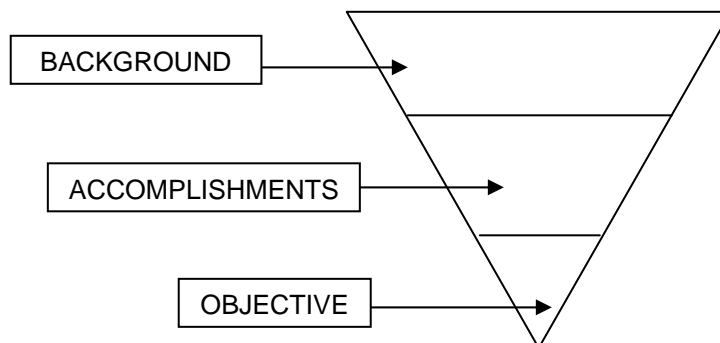
There are several different takes on creating a custom USP, which will allow you to find the one that best fits your personality and situation:

### COMMERCIAL #1: Networking Version

1. Job title (or title of position client is seeking).
2. An overview of general skills; e.g., "I am a COO in the architectural sign industry with 10 years of experience."
3. Specific skills in the particular category of work; e.g., I am especially adept in building, revitalizing, and optimizing operations to attain solid profit growth in volatile markets.

### COMMERCIAL #2: Three-Step Qualification Inversion

Another way to think about creating the 30-second commercial is that of an inverted pyramid:



*In other words, you start by giving **Background Information**:*

"I have over ten years results-driven COO experience in the architectural sign industry coupled with prior public and corporate accounting as a CPA."

You continue by supplying highlights of **Accomplishments**:

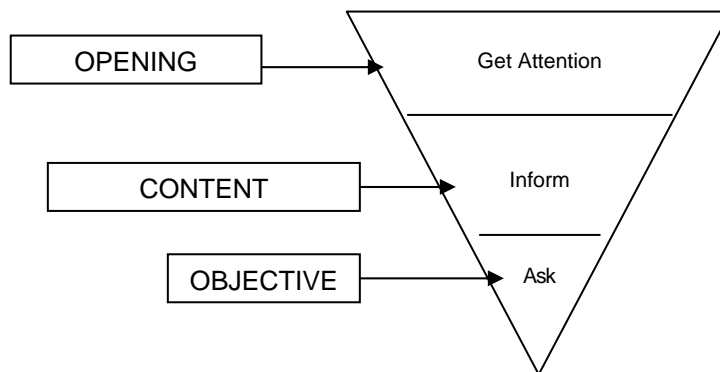
"I was recruited by ACI Modulaire in 2001 to spearhead an organization-wide turnaround of operations from a two-year decline in performance throughout American markets. As a result, ACI successfully realigned goals to reduce overhead costs by 25% and tripled sales from \$3-9M in eleven months. In order to continue to realize this caliber of results, I instituted a complete re-engineering of the company culture and introduced project management methodology, which positively impacted staffing, quality, manufacturing, and customer satisfaction."

You finish by sharing a **Target or Objective**:

"These accomplishments are indicative of the dramatic improvements I have brought to each of the corporations I have led during my career. Whether challenges with start-ups, turnarounds, or high-growth ventures, I have excelled. I am confident I will do the same for your organization (insert company name)."

### COMMERCIAL #3: Proactive Product Brand

Try to think of a creative way to represent yourself, like a product brand. On that note, yet a third way, is even more proactive:



**The Opening:** Use this as an attention grabber. You might do this the same way you did in English class with the five paragraph essay; e.g.:

1. Ask a question that incites interest or causes the reader to stop and think.
2. Use words and phrases that grab attention.
3. Use words or a phrase that evokes humor.

Consider these examples:

*Sales person: "Let me ask you this, What if you could double your company's sales?"*

*Dentist: "I get to the root of the problem."*

*Consultant: "What if you could implement a top-down organizational re-engineering that would increase your profits by a minimum of 15% in six months?"*

*Executive: "Spearheading start-ups, turnarounds, and high growth ventures are my forte."*

*Graphic Designer: "I put power in your presentations."*

**The Content:** Once you have the reader's attention, now you can provide the meat of your message. Emphasize what you can do for the company and the benefits that will be received. Talk in terms of results, feelings, benefits, outcomes, and ideas. Remember, an employer is always thinking, "What's in it for me?"

**The Closing:** Give your call to action, just like in the closing paragraph of a cover letter.

#### **COMMERCIAL #4: Succinct Two Sentence Advantage**

This is called the succinct two sentence advantage, which can almost be construed as a mission statement. With this approach, you easily circumvent rambling and boring commercials as well as those that might be seen as exploitive or cutesy.

It is as specific and limited as it sounds: two sentences to sum up the essence of your offering.

#### **GETTING STARTED & FOLLOWING THROUGH**

Regardless of what method you choose to adopt when creating your USP, be certain to focus on utilizing a positive and professional language and presentation style. Apply a formula of Language + Motivation = Outcome. In other words, positive language combined with positive body language will equal a positive and favorable outcome.

When you see advertisements, you will notice that they emphasize the positive outcome you will gain from the product, not the downside. A sample USP may include information such as: personal qualifications, technical skills, relevant education, training, certifications, and achievements.

Consider this sample 30-second commercial from a corporate accountant:

*"I am a CPA with over nine years of corporate accounting and financial reporting experience. In my most recent position, I was selected to spearhead and lead several special projects which included strategic planning, forecasting, and corporate treasury functions. I was recognized last year as Manager of the Year for my ability to develop my accounting staff and provide training in many facets of customer service, auditing, time management, problem solving, and other key functional areas. I possess an MBA and am active in both the National Management Association and the Space Coast Chapter of the Florida CPA's Association."*

Developing a fluid, confident and natural sounding commercial takes time and practice. Be sure to script out your commercial and practice it in advance. Practice makes perfect!



*Laura DeCarlo is a published and award-winning Certified Career Management Coach and Certified Expert Resume Writer. She is the President of the Professional Resume Writing & Research Association (PRWRA) and Principal of A Competitive Edge Career Service, LLC, a turnkey resume writing, career coaching and career management firm. She is also the liaison for the partnership between the PRWRA and CoreNet Global. For a free consultation or resume critique contact Laura via email at [success@acompetitiveedge.com](mailto:success@acompetitiveedge.com) or by phone at 800-715-3442 / 321-752-0880.*