



# Give me your best 'elevator pitch'

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Recently my team changed its name. For as many years as I can remember this team has been called 'The Secretariat'. I think this is probably a hangover from days gone by when we arranged meetings, showed up at those meetings and took minutes, plus did a bit of admin. Times have moved on and we are now a dynamic and highly skilled team of 24, providing strategic, educational, public policy, marketing, professional practice, events, logistical and administrative support to a broad and diverse group of professionals. The word secretariat doesn't even begin to describe what we do. (Plus it sounds boring and old-fashioned. Would you want to work in a Secretariat?) So I recently asked some of my best thinkers to come up with a new name for us to call ourselves internally. Which they have – HQ! I reproduce here parts of the email they sent back to me with their recommendation.

**In communications primarily aimed externally (such as the website and Annual Review), we considered it would be appropriate to refer to either Institute, Institute staff or, in the case of the website, "our people".**

**That leaves us with the fun bit. For internal purposes, we favoured 'HQ' – we thought it was contemporary, short and simple, vibrant and alert. It indicated, like 'hub and spoke' – that we act as the central command point/nerve centre for things going in and things going out.**

I am much more excited to be working for Actuaries HQ nerve centre than working for the Secretariat! I expect that this will similarly motivate the rest of the HQ team.



Names, and how we describe things, are important. They can add a lot of energy to a concept, even a simple one like describing the team you work in.

So how do you describe yourself, and your profession? Does your description add energy to, or sap energy from the listener?

## YOU, OUR MEMBERS, ARE BRILLIANT MARKETERS!

In the immortal words of the Foo Fighters "I have another confession to make" – you should be used to this by now in this column. I thought actuaries were, how can I put it... somewhat dissatisfied at marketing.

When we started the branding project last year, I said to myself that it's no use asking actuaries what they think about brands and taglines. We're analytical and many of us don't have a marketing bone in our

bodies. What value could we possibly add to this exercise?

Well, I can tell you that now I'm eating my words. When we asked for feedback on tagline ideas from you, the members, then tested them in a range of forums with actuaries and other business leaders, the one that came out on top was one that an actuary suggested. Jon Buckeridge from Melbourne came up with the tagline 'Calculated Advice' – which I think is brilliant.

*Just to get off the topic for a moment, after all the things I have learned in the last two and a half years in this job, I think I need to set up the 12 step AUA program (Actuaries Underestimators Anonymous). The program will take people who previously thought actuaries only had narrow technical skills, and put them through an intensive program, starting with the admission "Hi, my name's Melinda and I underestimate actuaries". At the end of this program, once they are on the wagon, they will be singing our praises and employing us in large numbers. Please let me know of any colleagues or bosses who are in dire need of the 12 steps. I think I'll start with the CFOs.*

## THE ELEVATOR PITCH

So now that I'm converted to the power of the actuarial marketing mind, there's something that I've been thinking about for a while because I struggle with it.

Here's the scenario. You happen to catch an elevator with someone who is running a major business. She asks you what you do. Here's your chance to pitch the actuarial profession, and at the same time to perhaps sew up a lucrative consulting contract with her business.

You have at most 30 seconds. What do you say? The best we've had to date has been something like:

**"I'm an actuary. I measure and manage risk and uncertainty"**

Not exactly inspiring stuff – I can feel myself falling asleep as I listen. So what would you say? How, in just 30 seconds, can you sum up the weird, wonderful, unique, rarified and arcane world and work of an actuary? Here's my effort (but I put in a disclaimer up front that I'm rubbish at this).

**"I'm an actuary. I advise businesses on how to optimise their risks to get the most advantage out of uncertain future events."**

I'm sure you can do better! Let's see who can come up with the best elevator pitch for the profession. Written or video entries are welcome.

Email your elevator pitch to [actuaries@actuaries.asn.au](mailto:actuaries@actuaries.asn.au) with the subject line 'Elevator Pitch' by 15 August. Login to the members website and have a look at our *Elevator Pitch* video.

The winner will receive the undying admiration of their peers – and possibly a modest vinous or chocolatey gift. **A**

<sup>1</sup> Foo Fighters – Best of You [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_L4Rixya64&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_L4Rixya64&feature=related)