

When Someone Doesn't Need Your Services: Change "I" to "We"

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Does your elevator speech leave people wanting? Do you hesitate momentarily before answering the question "So, what do you do?" Do you wonder if once you tell people you are an IP litigator, they will walk away with glazed looks knowing they will never need your services—even if they understand what an IP litigator is?

Sometimes answering the "what do you do?" question leaves us in a bind —not because we don't have an excellent and well-rehearsed "elevator speech" but because we know once the askers understand what we really do, they will conclude that they don't now, nor will they ever, need our services. Telling a new friend that you are an M&A specialist rarely ends in an immediate referral, just as describing your ERISA practice to someone seeking an equipment lease seldom brings you new business. Describing your exact niche may bring you indirect referrals later if someone keeps your card and passes it on but it's rare.

Prevent missing new business opportunities by changing the "I" to "We" and selling your firm.

When asked "what do you do?" try this alternative, response. I'm a lawyer with a full-service firm, **we** work with big and small corporations and also handle matters for individuals. Follow this with a question that fits the situation. For example: "Have you worked with a law firm before?" or "What kinds of issues do you deal with at your company?" Now you've moved from a simple inquiry about your job to a conversation that may lead to information allowing you to help someone with your (or your firm's) resources.

Don't get caught narrowing your opportunities because your specific practice area is not relevant to the person you just met. Prevent people from walking away scratching their heads wondering what an eminent domain lawyer is. Change "I" to "We" and broaden your possibilities.