

Sorry, but your job doesn't matter. THIS is what matters

Spear Communications

Understand. Be understood.

30-1954 Bloor Street W. Toronto M6P 3K9 ◦ (647) 882-1965 ◦ spearcommunications.com

What do you do when people ask "What do you do?"

We've all been there.

At the cocktail party, the wedding reception, the Christmas party, the parent-teacher night.

It's inevitable. You meet someone new, and they ask The Question.

"So what do you do?"

If you're like 95% of the world, you don't have a good answer for the question "What do you do?"

Sure, you know what you do. So you tell them.

It takes about 3 minutes, but to your audience it feels like an eternity.

You've hardly started, and their eyes are glazing over.

Worse yet, you're not even telling them what you do.

Chances are, you're rattling off a job description.

So stop doing that, and start thinking about the meaning and value of your work.

Here's a story to help.

The Communications Consultant and the Tax Accountant

Once upon a time, there was a Communications Consultant who ran a business.

Every year something called Tax Season came around.

Now, the Communications Consultant was great with words and ideas and communications strategies.

But numbers and tax forms confused and overwhelmed him.

He felt sick to his stomach when it came time to balance the books.

Paperwork for him was a tedious and painful ordeal. He hated, hated, hated it.

And the thought of dealing with the tax man was the worst of all.

It kept him awake at night.

Then one day he met an accountant.

The accountant said, "I will relieve you of this painful burden at an affordable price. Go home and relax."

The Communications Consultant was delighted!

The truth is, he would have paid the tax accountant 10 times the asking price to be relieved of his pain.

The lesson of the story

What do you suppose the tax accountant says when he's asked "What do you do?"

Do you think he talks about ledgers and fractions and calculations and the time value of money?

No!

Because he understands the value of his work, he says, "I relieve pain."

And, take it from me—the customer—that's exactly what he does.

I don't even understand what he does, and to be honest I don't care. As long as he does it right, I'm happy.

And for the people who come to me, it's exactly the same.

Of course they want me to do a good job, but above all else they want to be relieved of the burden of doing something that know they are not experts at doing.

Some of my clients are finance professionals. They are great with numbers. But words? No so great.

How they feel about communications is how I feel about doing my taxes.

So I relieve their pain, and they are happy to pay me for it, just as I am happy to pay to have my accounting pain relieved.

So what do you do?

Who are you helping in your business?

How are you helping them?

What is the value your end-user is getting from the work you do?

What pain are you relieving?

What pleasure, experience, or insight are you providing?

Think of that moment when your service, product or technology reaches the customer.

What are they feeling when they consume the benefit created by your organization?

Is it hope? Comfort? Security? Certainty? Empowerment? Happiness?

Now think how much more interesting, accurate, vivid and meaningful it would be to answer the question "What do you do?" by saying:

"I relieve pain."

"I provide hope."

"I empower people."

"I deliver happiness."

"I make the world safer."

It's what you do.

And it's why it matters.





- Wayne K. Spear is the Founder and President of Spear Communications. This article is part of his ongoing series called "Thought Bombs."