



## My Elevator Speech – Steve Byrum

Several times a month—usually in airports and airplanes—I am asked what I do. Most people are simply being friendly, and they do not want a twenty minute answer. My “elevator speech” is maybe three minutes, but it never fails to initiate a longer conversation, the exchange of business cards, and consequent communication. While it would be misleading to suggest that “deals” are closed this easily, there have been occasions when very substantial working relationships were teed up with a minimum of information.

Here’s what I do in a nutshell:

1. I ask whether there is familiarity with Jim Collins’ ***Good to Great***. There almost always is, at least the part about finding the right person for the right seat on the bus. People readily affirm their agreement with the importance of finding the right person and the difficulty of finding the right person. Often, they will continue the conversation with references to when they did not get the right person, and the chaos and cost involved
2. I will ask—making sure that I am not taking over the conversation—what the person I am talking to feels “right person” means. Usually, there is a response about training, education, experience, and skill sets. I agree with enough enthusiasm to affirm the person’s answer.
3. Then, I am ready to explain that maybe there is more to being this right person than skill sets, although I am clear about the importance of skills sets, etc. This is where I bring up the idea of ***good judgment***—the key point I am wanting to drive home. Without exception, there is always some current item in the news about some instance of bad judgment and—occasionally—as with the example of the pilot who landed the plane in the Hudson River, of good judgment. People always agree on this point, often with their own examples.
4. Now, I am ready to go into detail that my work across the years has been with an assessment instrument/tool that measures judgment. I will drop in the idea that we put ‘metrics’ around almost every element of the workplace, so why not put metrics around judgment? Sometimes I will drop in the idea of Edwards Demming that some reality has meaning and is usable only if it can be measured. I will tend to go ahead and say that some people believe that someone is either born with good judgment or not, and I insist that we have found across the years that judgment evolves, and definitely can be improved both with individuals and groups of individuals. The concept of group judgment is often foreign to people, but they pick up on the idea quickly.

5. By this time, I am usually answering questions or listening to how the person's company could certainly be helped by better judgment. I have even seen others in nearby seats begin to join the conversation at this time.

6. At some point, I will tend to say: "If I am making this sound too complicated, it is really pretty simple. Do you have kids or grandkids? You want them to have high IQs, good psychological balance, and nice personalities, I'm sure. But, as you well know, they can have all of the above and without good judgment, very negative events can occur." Most people are quick to give personal examples of what I have just described, and I am one step away from showing how the Judgment Index is not an IQ test, a psychological profile, or a personality inventory.

7. Without being demeaning, I sometimes make a bigger deal out of the value—but also the inadequacy of personality inventories and the idea of personality—since the personality assessment is what many people are familiar with.

At this point, there are usually more and more questions and the conversation is extended. So much for the book I was ready to get back into or the nap that was so inviting!

Sometimes there are questions about how long the tool has been in use. I usually mention the early 1960s, and the fact that Hartman was dominated for the Nobel Prize. I do not go into his personal history, the Nazis-Hitler-Disney story, as it has proven only to be a distraction at this point.

Sometimes they want to know about clients. My top shelf is Yale, Mohawk Carpet, Memorial Hermann Healthcare, Sonic Automotive, and Blue Cross Blue Shield. The question will then usually come: "Have you ever worked with their type of industry?" There is usually some kind of association I can make, or I will say no but I would really be interested in establishing an exemplary site in that industry.

The question about why they have not heard about this occasionally comes up, and I am ready to explain that the marketing around the tool has been very poor, but that we are correcting that now in a vigorous and successful manner.

I do get questions about costs, and I try not to stumble on this one. I will talk about highly competitive pricing, even the chance of revenue sharing. I will give an entry example of how the first, comprehensive exposure to a leadership group can be made for less than \$5,000 which would be credited toward any future work. I will volunteer to do the person's own profile with a phone followup. I tend to have a couple of pieces of material with me which I will share. The "Mohawk Menu" is excellent at this point.

I never ever get on the plane or sit down next to someone in the airport lounge with the intent of trying to steer a conversation toward an informal cold call. People hate that. I always let the person ask the first question. I never let the conversation go beyond "I am an organizational

consultant” unless I am asked about the nature of my consulting work. The most I will say at that point is that I help organizations find better people and build better teams.

At the far end of a more fully engaged conversation, I will explain how good judgment is so critical to wellness, safety and risk management, or the variety of our other applications. I will be ready to throw in that our computer programs are better than anything out there and amazingly quick on time of return of information.

Seldom ever are there questions about validity and legal matters, but I am ready to give brief responses if needed. For anyone pushy in this area, I simply say that we have all of that data, and that I am glad to provide it.

On a rare occasion, people will talk about competition. Here, I am especially ready to say that I believe we are better—that we strongly differentiate ourselves—on the basis of the way our interpretations are strong on concrete and practical application rather than conceptual, academic theory. This is a really big deal, and given the chance I will make an even bigger deal out of it. People will really appreciate the fact that “book learning” is not enough. They will want to know if there is a way to better understand if people “can walk the talk” and “get things done.”

My problem, and I hope it is not yours, is that I will have the conversation, swap the business cards, and then lose the moment off my radar because of some new, pressing responsibility that I am getting to. I’ve kicked myself for two weeks over the inability to find a business card from a very interested person I was on the plane with early in December.

Finally, I try to keep an extra copy or two of FROM THE NECK UP in my briefcase. I will sign the book and give it to the person. For some reason, giving the book is always a big deal. The conversation usually spills out into the airport concourse, and I have actually had people approach me for a card who simply overheard parts of the conversation.

Hope this helps. And, I hope you have a great New Year. You have my warmest regards and best wishes for all that you are doing.

Steve Byrum, PhD  
President/Chief Operating Officer  
Judgment Index USA