

**That which makes you different, makes you better**  
***Interview with Career Consultant Mary-Frances Fox One-on-One***

*Elizabeth Duncan*  
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You won't be hired for your education, skills or even experience, says a top Toronto career management consultant.

"It's your distinctions that get you hired, says Mary-Frances Fox, career management coach and president of Work Creatively. You are hired because your employer perceives that you will bring something to the job that they really need. So you should understand exactly what your talent is and how that makes your work valuable to an organization. Take the time to inventory your pattern of success, the things you continuously do well and enjoy, and the practical benefits this pattern brings to an employer."

From her 12-year background as a marketing communications manager, executive speechwriter and arts psychotherapist, and 10 years in career management, Fox has a unique perspective on careers and offers her clients a wealth of strategies and different ways of thinking that they can use to build and advance their careers.

In an interview given before her February 26 presentation offering career marketing strategies for intermediate and senior communicators, Fox discussed some of the highlights of the career management tools she offers as business strategies for individuals.

"Your career is your biggest source of earning power, and it is absolutely worth your time and energy to manage it well. And, she adds, to market it well."

"The job market is not a place, it's a metaphor. Do marketers ever give up when the economy goes down? No they adjust their offer to suit current needs. Think of your career as a great, marketable product and take a leaf out of a product manager's book: the four Ps: product, price, place and promotion. These are the professional tools marketers wield to create business. Fox says you can use this classic marketing formula to build and sustain a demand for what you do.

First, you're a product. Ensure you explain what you do as a product people will want to buy. Second, know your price. Know the market rate for your type of job and why you are valuable. How much is your expertise worth when you think of the business headaches you know how to help a company avoid? Third, is place or distribution. This means where you the product can be seen or acquired. This means your networking habits, inside and outside your organization. Meet everyone you can, and discuss your goals and capabilities informally. And the fourth classic P is promotion, or shaping opinion and stimulating demand. Pick an intentional image and introduce yourself as such. Make people think of something specific when they hear of you.

Remember, she says, that emotions drive buying AND hiring decisions, and employers biggest concern in bringing people on board is risk. So be sure to position yourself as an

answer to your prospective employer's problems. All work is problem solving, anyway, Fox has noted, so be a solution they can easily perceive.

"Twinning your message with a prospective company's focus or needs, is the surest way to move your agenda forward, says Fox. Marketing is best described as building strong ties between your product and those people for whom it meets a need. Marketing your career is all about figuring out what keeps your prospective employer awake at night and being the saver of time, money, effort, or relationships for them."

When you're preparing for a job interview, Fox suggests you use a technique she invented called *messaging at your fingertips*. Name your fingers with the top 5 best things your knowledge and performance mean to a company, and look at your hand when you need to describe yourself.

Your fingers might be labeled with: your special expertise; 1 or 2 of your strengths; a recent achievement story; any notable education; and finally, your style or mission -- what you are like to work with, or why you do this kind of work.

"The value of using your strategic communication skills to communicate the value of your approach to work is huge," she says. And communications specialists may not even realize that all those positioning and persuasive skills they have can be used to great advantage during an interview.

*Mary-Frances Fox is president of Work Creatively Career Advisors Inc. She can be reached at (416) 922-4476, (888) 315-0003 or [mffox@workcreatively.ca](mailto:mffox@workcreatively.ca).*