NOTE: This exercise has been developed as an alternative to more traditional business exercises and lesson plans in the Entrepreneur in the Classroom (EITC) curriculum. It is expected that the instructor will adapt the exercise for their industry/area of study.

Learning Objectives

In your career, whether you work for someone or start your own business, the below skills are key:

- **Networking** - Networking is about the concept of mutual benefit or exchange. Someone is getting to know you, and you are getting to know someone else. You will practice this skill, and practice it, and practice it some more in this exercise.
- **Relationships** - Networking is the beginning point for relationship building. You will really test your relationship-building skills in this exercise….and all you'll have is one minute!
- **Confidence in ability to succeed** – Confidence comes through in all personal communications in your career. Can you make someone believe in you? Believing in yourself is the first step.
- **Flexibility and creativity** - In this exercise you are forced to move up the learning curve FAST and to be creative at the same time! Can you adapt? This exercise will help you hone these skills.
- **Goal orientation** – Setting a goal gives you an end point. Businesses and people who set goals tend to be more successful. Your goal orientation during this exercise could be an indicator of success today, and in your career.

Exercise Instructions

MATERIALS:

- o   PDF A-1 Teaching notes (this document)
- o   PowerPoint A-1 (to guide the exercise)
- o   A blackboard, whiteboard, or flipchart (for recording top 3 to 5 traits/skills)
- o   Moveable chairs or desks for students (for speed networking)
- o   Blank paper and pens (for students to write their elevator pitches)
- o   A timer or watch with second hand (to time elevator pitches).
- o   A reward or prize the instructor can give to the winner and the runner up.

EXERCISE INSTRUCTION HIGHLIGHTS:

- **STEP1.** Brainstorm: Top employee traits and skills. Instructor brainstorms with class about the traits of a top employee in your industry/area of study.
    - o   Alternative: Instructor determines traits ahead of time.
- **STEP 2.** Top employee training program: Instructor informs students that, during this exercise, *they* will be interviewing for a "top employee" training program.
- **STEP 3.** Develop personal elevator pitch**.** Students develop their personal "elevator pitch" (definition provided below) for the purpose of marketing themselves, and their strengths, for the top employee training program.
- **STEP 4.** Pitch during speed networking. Students pitch themselves to the class in a "speed networking" format.
    - o   Alternative: Students get up in front of the class one at a time. (However, the one-on-one format is HIGHLY recommended to give students a sense of actual networking).
- **STEP 5.** Vote & discuss. Students vote on who should be the candidate for the top employee training program. Instructor leads a discussion about their decision.
    - o   Alternative: Instructor takes votes after exercise, but announces winner & holds discussion for following day.
- **SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR NOTE ON TIMING**: This is a high-energy exercise. Timelines will vary based on length of class period. BARE MINIMUM suggested timeline is as follows and assumes a 1 hour class period for a maximum of 20 students (if more than 20 students, pitch time may need to be reduced):
- 1. 10 minutes for step 1 - Intro and brainstorm: Top employee traits and skills.
- 2. 5 minutes for step 2 - Announce interview for top employee training.
- 3. 5 minutes for step 3 - Develop personal elevator pitch. (Instructor circulates through class)
- 4. 25 minutes for step 4 - Pitch during speed networking. (5 minutes set up and break down of circle, 20 minutes pitching).
- 10-15 minutes for step 5—Vote and discuss

<u>Slide 1: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise"</u>
EXERCISE TALKING POINTS:
- Intro – Today's exercise is based on a speed networking format. Have you ever seen shows where someone is sitting at a table talking to another person, the buzzer goes off, and they have to move to the next person? (Pause for potential giggles as some students realize this is a speed DATING format). This exercise adapts that format to a networking exercise.
- There are a variety of other skills you'll learn during this exercise, but just know that understanding your skills and being able to communicate them is CRITICAL for success in any career. (Instructor is encouraged to provide examples in their field of study where networking – and the self confidence and poise required for it - are useful).
- Additionally, the winner and runner up of this exercise will receive _____ (Instructor-determined reward or prize).
- **INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Before giving too much detail on the exercise, launch right into brainstorming traits of the "top employee." The exercise tends to go more smoothly if - during the first step - the students do NOT know they will next be comparing their own skills and traits to those of the top employee. This circumvents any student's attempt to "rig" the exercise by suggesting their own traits as the traits of the top employee.

<u>Slide 2: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking, 1. Brainstorm top employee traits: SAMPLE"</u>
INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 1:
- Instructor discusses sample traits and skills list for a personal trainer.
- Instructor brainstorms with class about top traits and skills for their industry/area of study. (See next slide for more detail).
- TIMING GUIDE: Bare minimum - 10 minutes for Step 1**
TALKING POINTS:
- **Brainstorm: Skills & traits of a top employee.** The first thing we're going to do is brainstorm about some of the traits and skills of a top employee in our industry. First, here is an example of another industry…
- **Personal trainer example:** In the fitness industry, there are certain traits and skills that are important to be successful and move ahead. A top **personal trainer**, for instance, needs to embody the following: (**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Make sure the class understands what a personal trainer does: Acting as a personalized exercise coach for clients on an hourly basis.)
    - **Friendly**. A personal trainer needs to be friendly. He or she is working with a broad array of clients.
    - **Good teacher**. A personal trainer needs to be a good teacher. If you are doing an exercise incorrectly, the trainer needs to be able to identify this and teach you the correct method.
    - **Certification.** A personal trainer needs to be certified. They probably cannot get hired without it.
    - **Business sense.** A personal trainer who has good business sense. This could mean he or she has smart pricing packages, or that they invoice in an organized manner, or maybe they make regular follow up calls after each session. This is the type of thing that might not be expected in this industry and could really distinguish a trainer in the mind of a client. Because, think about it, who is going to pay someone $50 or $100 or $150 per hour to exercise? Someone with disposable income. A trainer with business sense is thinking as his or her clients are thinking.
    - Wrap up: There are many other traits and skills that may come to mind, however, this is just to give you an example. Also, we're mixing traits and skills together here for simplicity. But, just remember that a top employee is going to be a mix of traits (personality traits) and skills (actual learned skills from study or previous work).

<u>Slide 3: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking – 1. Brainstorm top employee traits. OUR TOP EMPLOYEE"</u>
INSTRUCTIONS:
- Instructor brainstorms with class about the traits and skills of a top employee in their specific industry/area of study.
    - A) What do you consider a desirable job position in our area of study? (e.g., examples could range from lead stylist in salon for a cosmetology class to a legislative aid for the state senate for a political science class).
    - B) What traits and skills do you believe are necessary to be successful in that position? List a minimum of 3.

TALKING POINTS:

Now we're going to come up with a list of top traits and skills for a top employee in OUR industry/area of study. Let's talk about you answers to the following questions:

- **A) What do you consider a desirable job position in our area of study?** Who wants to volunteer a job relevant to our field?

Slide 4: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise – 2. National opportunity"

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 2:

- Instructor informs students that, during this exercise, they will be interviewing for a "top employee" training program.
- TIMING GUIDE: Bare minimum - 5 minutes for Step 2.

TALKING POINTS:

Now, we're going to make this real. I want you to envision the following:

- There is a **new program** offered through the **Corporation for National and Community Service** and the **Small Business Administration** (both government entities supporting service learning and small business). In a groundbreaking national program, these organizations have provided **grant money** for 50 students nationwide. The program's national goal is to **train top students to be top employees and managers in their industry**. The grant money is being distributed to one student per industry/area of study. Should one our students receive the grant money, it would support a year-long training program for the position we have just discussed in class. Thus, if you are selected, you would have a paid position focused on training you to one day assume the position we outlined. Being selected for this **special training program** is an honor.
- Now, this is a program we have made up. It's not real. But, the truth is, there are leadership organizations which do support students in a similar manner. Your job is to imagine that you are interviewing for this position, and that **you need to sell yourself** to the voting committee.

Slide 5: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise – 3. Develop elevator pitch"

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 3:

- Students develop their personal "elevator pitch" for a one minute interview with the voting committee.
- TIMING GUIDE: Bare minimum - 5 minutes for Step 3.

TALKING POINTS:

- Now we're going to take 5 minutes for you to develop your personal elevator pitch for the members of the voting committee using a three-part outline. You will have only ONE MINUTE in which to communicate this information:
    - **A) Introduction: Name, school you attend.**
    - **B) Highlight trait or skill and example: Your strongest trait or skill from the list, and an example.**
    - **C) Conclusion: Summary of why the voting committee should receive their vote.**
- An elevator pitch is a common business term used to describe the ability for an entrepreneur to describe his or her business idea in the time it takes to ride an elevator. It refers to a situation where an investor might step into the elevator, and you have to provide a compelling description of your business in about 30 seconds. We're applying the concept of the elevator pitch to yourselves in this exercise.
- **A)** The **introduction** is simple. You are introducing yourself to the member of the voting committee.
- **B) Highlight trait or skill and example.** This means, of the traits and skills we discussed earlier, which do you consider your strongest? Then, think of an example of when you used that trait or skill and summarize it.
- **C) Conclusion.** Why should you be chosen for this opportunity? Summarize your thoughts on this in no more than three sentences.
- Now, for those of you who have not yet started…get started doing your elevator pitch and I will circulate around the room. Please note, again, that the pitch should be no longer than 1 minute. It's even better to plan for around 30 seconds.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES:

- It is recommended that the instructor circulate through class during this step and make the students aware of how many minutes they have to finish their elevator pitch. Many students may need one-on-one consultation. If a student has a question which is relevant to the entire class, announce the issue or question aloud so all the students may benefit (find frequently asked questions and answers below).

- Students' creativity will vary in filling out the 3 parts of the outline. The goal is for the students to showcase their individual talents and learn from one another during the speed networking part of the exercise. For instance, a more advanced evolution of part "A" would include a phrase such as "I'm happy to be here today" or "thank you for this opportunity" in addition to the required information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
- Q: What can I put in my pitch? I don't have any work experience
- A: This hypothetical opportunity is about your potential. To start with, your participation in this class has provided you with skills and knowledge, and is an indication of your interest in the area. You can also stretch and use examples that may not be so obvious to showcase your traits. If punctuality is a trait, maybe you've never been late to class or have never missed a game for a sports team. If attention to detail is a specific trait, maybe you never have anything misspelled on an assignment, or always do what is asked in the instructions of an assignment. If trustworthiness is a trait, maybe you are the most in-demand babysitter on your block or are the family member responsible for taking care of a pet.

- Q: Why do I need to do this? This isn't real (a.k.a.: I'm too cool to do this).
- A: Aside from the reward being offered (if instructor-devised reward or prize is being offered to the winner), this simulates a situation in real life. You might need to interview for a job, promote a business you've decided to start, run for class office, or any number of situations in which you are being judged and want to influence the outcome of a decision which is not in your hands. This is about learning how to influence decisions and take control of situations.

- Q: Is the position being decided on this year or next year (or another very detailed question about the position or its requirements).
- A: This is a hypothetical situation so don't get too caught up in the details. You want to really focus on the traits we discussed in class, and what you can do to show that you do or can demonstrate those skills and traits.

Slide 6: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise – 4. PITCH!"
INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 4:
- Students pitch themselves to the class in a "speed networking" format.
    - Alternative: Students get up in front of the class one at a time. (However, the one-on-one format is HIGHLY recommended to give students a sense of actual networking).
- Divide class into Team A and B.
- First seat team B (suggested formation = a circle, u-shape, or rows of seats).
- Next seat team A facing of a member of Team B. (For odd-numbered classes, one student will have an empty seat or the instructor can fill in).
- Instructor starts timing 1 minute for Team A members (candidate) to pitch to their Team B counterpart (voting committee member).
- Students must adhere to the time limit: At exactly 1 minute, Team A and Team B switch roles and Team B members make their pitch.
- After 1 minute time is called. Team A members stand up, and move to the next seat.
- Repeat until Team A members arrive at their original pitch partner from Team B.
- Students who finish early need to stay in the role of candidate and voting committee member (Note: Advanced students in the role of candidate might make additional pitch statements about themselves; Advanced students in the role of voting committee member might ask follow up questions.)
- TIMING GUIDE: Bare minimum - 5 minutes for Step 4. (5 minutes set up and break down of circle, 20 minutes pitching).

TALKING POINTS:
- Now you're going to practice your pitch. I am going to divide you up into **Team A, and Team B.**
- Team B, I want you to take a seat in a formation (suggest formation such as circle, U shape, etc. in classroom).
- Team A, I want each of you to take a seat across from a Team B member.
- You will be in the **role of either the candidate** interviewing for the job training opportunity, or you will be in the **role of a voting committee member** listening to the pitch.

- o Team A members, when I start the timer, you will be in the role of candidate. You will go through your elevator pitch. Consider Team B a member of the voting committee.
- o Team B members, you will listen to the candidate's pitch and play the role of a voting committee member. After one minute, you will switch roles and Team B members will make their pitch, while Team A members will serve in the role of the voting committee members.
- o If one of you finishes early, what you do with any time within the one minute is up to you. But, I ask that you stay within the context of the exercise and your roles as voting committee member and candidate.
- o **You must adhere to the time limit.**
- o **Pitch time!** Get ready and GO! (Instructor starts timing one minute, circles through classroom.)
- o Team A STOP! Team B, GO! (End of the 1 minute for team A, beginning of one minute for Team B.)
- o Team B STOP! Team A, get up, and move to the next seat in front of a new Team B member. Team A GO! (Start of 1 minute for Team A. Repeat process until Team A members arrive at their original pitch partner from Team B).
- o Now I'd like everyone's attention, let's discuss what just happened. (After all pitches have been completed).

Slide 7: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise – 5. Vote & discuss"
INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 5:
- Students vote for one candidate for the employee training program (students cannot vote for themselves).
- Instructor leads a discussion about the decision.
- TIMING GUIDE: Bare minimum - 10-15 minutes for step 5.
  - o Alternative: Instructor takes votes after exercise, but announces winner & holds discussion for following day.

TALKING POINTS:
- Now you've heard about half of the class's elevator pitches. I want **you all to vote for one person – NOT yourself** – who you'd nominate for the employee training opportunity **based on their pitch**. (Instructor can take a show of hands, written votes, or use an online voting service like Zoomerang to tally votes. Encourage students to vote on the pitch, itself, and to not make it a popularity contest. The students will have to provide a rationale for their decision during the discussion.)
- The **winner** is _____ (student name), and the **runner up** is _____ (student name).
- **What was it about their pitch** that got you to vote for them? Something they said or did worked. What was it? Let's try to understand the most important things they did.

INSTRUCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE:
During the Step 5 discussion a wide variety of points will come up as to why the students liked certain elevator pitches. The instructor's role is to distill the comments into about 3 main takeaways for the class on WHAT made this student's pitch so compelling. Fold in other students' pitches, as well, in the discussion. The point is not that other students did a great job, but that this student did several things all together in his/her pitch. There may also be something unique the student did which made their pitch stand out (e.g., remember the "business sense" trait/skill from the personal trainer example). Common answers are below:

What works:
- "The student was very professional. He made a very well-rehearsed pitch. He also mentioned how happy he was to be there, and thanked me for the opportunity afterwards."
- "The student was very enthusiastic. He/she really seemed passionate about the position."
- "The student had great examples of how her skill set overlapped with the criteria used by the voting committee."
- "The student just made me want to say yes."
- "They had a great conclusion and ended on a very strong note."

Unique elements:
- Students who "create" an experience to match the criteria (not acceptable in a real interview, but shows determination and creativity in a school exercise).
- Students who ask the voting committee members questions.
- Students who incorporate visual aids.
- Students who incorporate a motto or branding element: "I'm the school store guy."

What doesn't work:
- Students who don't take it seriously and are just "going through the motions."
- Students who use slang.
- Students who don't relate their skills and traits to those used by the voting committee (those set forth in class).
- Students who decide right away on their favorite candidate.
- Students who take the presentation to an over-the-top level which could come off as unprofessional (this is a tough fine line for instructors with very creative students).

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Advanced students may take notice if mostly traits or mostly skills are discussed. While this is a good and important discussion, the main takeaway for the exercise is learning to pitch. Furthermore, the most likely observation about skills (education/job experience) vs. traits (personality) is how strong a role personality and communication plays.

Slide 8: "Exercise A-1: Speed Networking Exercise – CONCLUSION"
TALKING POINTS:
- Congratulations on getting through a fast and furious exercise.
- **Career and Entrepreneurship skills** - This is one exercise that is part of a larger curriculum on entrepreneurship called Entrepreneur in the Classroom (EITC). By doing this exercise many of you have demonstrated some key traits necessary for success when starting your own business, and for your career in general. Here are just a few of the traits exhibited during the exercise today that are indicators of entrepreneurial and career success.
  o **Networking** - Networking is about the concept of mutual benefit or exchange. Someone is getting to know you, and you are getting to know someone else. It is a critical skill for success in your career whether you work for someone else, or are your own boss.
  o **Relationships** - Networking is the beginning point for relationship building. When asked, entrepreneurs say that relationships are one of the top 5 factors leading to their success. Often, relationships they made early on came to play a role in their business later in life.
  o **Confidence in ability to succeed** – The process of making a personal elevator pitch is about assessing your strengths, and then communicating that in less than one minute! That takes not only intelligence, but confidence, which is mentioned in the EITC curriculum as a top entrepreneurial trait.
  o **Flexibility** - In this exercise you were forced to move up the learning curve FAST! Something that didn't go over so well with one pitch partner may have been revised by you, on the spot, for the next pitch partner.
  o These are just a few examples of how you've demonstrated traits today that could serve you in other areas of your life. Great job.
- **Looking ahead**
  o **Creativity** – All of you today demonstrated your real flair for creativity, a very important part of success in any career.
  o **Goal orientation** – Many of you really demonstrated your ability to set your sights on a goal, and attain that goal. That is one of the MOST critical success factors in life and business. (Suggestion: Praise students on impressiveness of this…it is a big deal).

INSTRUCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE: Instructor can pause for feedback and/or start calling on students. The instructor should be prepared to insert a job description at this phase (e.g., "It seems like you all are a little shy at this beginning part of the exercise. _____[student name] why don't you share your idea of a desirable job position." Or "Can everyone agree that _____[instructor-volunteered position] is a desirable job within our industry?" However, it is important that there is "buy in" from the class and that they understand the position and have some experience with it either personally or through class.
- **What traits and skills do you believe are necessary to be successful in that position? List a minimum of 3.**
  o **INSTRUCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE**: Instructor can pause for feedback and/or start calling on students. The students should have many thoughts on this topic. The instructor's job will be to narrow the list to between 3 and 5 traits and skills. This can be done through intuition (i.e., "I'm getting the sense based on class feedback that these 3 to 5 traits and skills are the most important.") or voting (i.e. "Let's vote on what you all consider to be the top 3 to 5 on the list").
- Here is our final list of top traits and skills for this position (Instructor refers to list on board/screen/etc.)