



The 3-1-3 Challenge Worksheet

Use the 3-1-3® Method to explain who you are in three sentences, one sentence, or even as few as three words.



Most people struggle with answering the question “What do you do?” The 3-1-3 Challenge can help. Give it a try!

Step 1. Explain what you do in three sentences.

In order to explain what you do in three sentences, see if you can come up with a sentence for each of these questions:

1. What is the problem you solve (without saying what you do)?
2. What is your solution?
3. Who is your target market?

Before you jump right into it, look through these Mad Libs–esque examples of how different types of people might approach this first step of the 3-1-3.

Employee Example

A middle manager at a bank who has direct reports

1. **The problem that you solve (P).** Define the exact problem.

Example: The problem is that when people don't have _____ (systems to follow, motivation, clear direction, effective leaders to look up to, etc.) at work, they end up _____ (miserable, unproductive, quitting, wasting time, burning through revenue, etc.).

2. **The solution to the problem (S).** Define the exact solution.

Example: I create small-group workshops in _____ (developing systems, inspirational leadership, change management, improving processes, etc.), keeping my direct reports _____ (happy, productive, excited, career driven, etc.).

3. **The market that you cater to (M).** Define the exact market.

Example: The target market consists of the direct reports in my department who find themselves _____ (unsatisfied, unhappy, unproductive, wanting to leave, etc.) and in need of strong _____ (leadership, systems, training, etc.) to help them achieve their highest potential.

Executive Example

CEO of an international shipping company

1. **The problem that you solve (P).** Define the exact problem.

Example: The biggest problem faced by people who ship internationally is _____ (poor tracking, no accountability, markups by middlemen, etc.) causing _____ (millions in lost revenue, lack of visibility, etc.).

2. **The solution to the problem (S).** Define the exact solution.

Example: We have built _____ (end-to-end tracking, incentivized reporting, full visibility, blockchain technology, etc.) keeping our clients _____ (happy, growing, scaling, informed, trusting us as their preferred provider, etc.).

3. **The market that you cater to (M).** Define the exact market.

Example: The target market is medium-sized businesses that depend on international shipping for _____ (parts, inventory, documents, etc.) that rely on us for the best _____ (rates, reliability, speed, etc.).

Educator Example

Faculty member at a university

1. **The problem that you solve (P).** Define the exact problem.

Example: The problem is that _____ (students, graduate students, first-gen students, underrepresented students, etc.) who don't feel a personal connection to the subjects they study will _____ (lose interest, drop out, waste their time, waste money, waste their parents' money, etc.).

2. **The solution to the problem (S).** Define the exact solution.

Example: I specialize in _____ (active learning, creative, motivational, AI tech, immersive tech, personalization, strength-finding, etc.) strategies in the classroom to keep the learning _____ (fun, exciting, enjoyable, connected with student goals, etc.).

3. **The market that you cater to (M).** Define the exact market.

Example: The target market is concerned _____ (students, undergrads, postdocs, graduate students, faculty, administration, stakeholders, etc.) located in _____ (specific location), who want to improve _____ (graduation rates, real learning, student success, enjoyment, etc.) and have a _____ (vested interest, ability, funding, passion, etc.) for modernization of education so that more _____ (underserved, low-income, talented, first-gen, etc.) students can find passion and success in their educational experiences.

Now you try. Identify and explain the problem you solve in one sentence:

The problem is:

Not so easy, right? Many people simply cannot state the problem that they solve when put on the spot. We challenge you to try again by answering the following questions:

- l. What is the problem that you solve (without saying what you do)? Define the exact problem in one sentence.

Employee Example: The problem is that when people don't have clear direction at work, they end up hurting the bottom line, due to unproductivity and wasted time.

Executive Example: The biggest problem faced by people who ship internationally is incorrect tracking that causes millions in lost revenue and lost products.

Educator Example: The problem is that undergraduate students who don't feel a personal connection to the subjects they study can become easily disengaged, ultimately increasing their chances of ending up on academic probation or dropping out.

Tips

- Only highlight one problem.
- Explain the pain in the problem.
- Don't mention your solution (seriously).
- Use specific language and get to the point.

The problem is:

Now read over what you wrote. Does your problem sound like one that is so severe, it needs to be solved immediately?

No? Try again!

The problem is:

Does it now? If not, share your problem statement with others, see what they think, and keep trying until you have something you're happy with.

2. What is your solution? Identify and explain your solution in one sentence.

Employee example: I specialize in developing and improving upon workflows that ensure my direct reports are increasing their productivity by 10 percent each quarter.

Executive example: We have built an open source network that provides transparency, specifically for international shipping, that keeps fees low and our clients informed through the entire process.

Educator example: I bring real-world experiences into the classroom through artificial intelligence technology, specifically to improve graduation rates among students on academic probation.

Tips

- It's okay to not explain your entire solution; think "tip of the iceberg."
- Be sure to just explain the "what," not the "how."
- Does your solution solve the problem you identified earlier?
- Is it a clear solution that is easy to understand?

Now you try!

Define the exact solution.

The solution is:

Having a hard time trying to fit it all into one sentence?

Notice how the solution statements above are focused on the “what” and not the “how”? It leaves just enough information for creating a bit of curiosity within the listener. Your sentence should do the same. It should be packaged in a concise way that gives a clear idea of what you do, while creating a bit of mystery.

Try again!

The solution is:

Not happy with it? Keep trying until you find something you’re happy with. Share with your friends and see what they think, or try it out and see what kind of reactions you get; then continue to tweak it.

3. Who or what is your target market? Identify and explain your target market in one sentence.

Employee example: The target market consists of underperforming direct reports in my sales department who need help in learning how to achieve their target quarterly productivity measures.

Executive example: The target market is medium-sized businesses that specialize in manufacturing in the United States that depend on international shipping for parts and that rely on us for the best rates and detailed tracking of packages.

Educator example: The target market is made up of first-generation freshman students at the University of California, Irvine, who have been put on academic probation and are in threat of being expelled for low performance in coursework.

Now you try!

Tips

- Don’t use the words “anyone” or “everyone.”
- Get granular with who your target is.
- Include details like location, psychographics, income, and other key identifiers.

The target market is:

Now go back to your sentence. Can you get any more specific? Can you add more elements that narrow it down?

If you are still having a hard time with this, look at your existing employers, customers, or the people who regularly read and like or comment on your content.

Try it again!

The target market is:

Congratulations, you have your three sentences, which consist of your problem, solution, and market: 1, 2, 3! Now it is time for Step 2, where we condense the three sentences to one sentence!

Step 2. Explain what you do in one sentence.

Now that you have your three sentences down, can you combine them into one sentence that incorporates all the elements together?

Here is an example of three elements in one sentence in the order of solution, market, problem (SMP) using the analogy of a manager.

(S) I create the strong training systems for (M) employees in my department who have low productivity and strong resistance to change (P) so that they don't get fired.

Now it is your turn to take your three sentences, extract the core elements (problem, solution, market), and try to write them out in all the six variations.

PSM: (P) The problem is this, and (S) I solve it by doing this for (M) these people.

PMS: (P) I solve this problem for (M) these people, and (S) here is how I do it.

MPS: (M) These people (P) have this problem, and (S) this is how I solve it.

MSP: (M) These people need (S) my solution of this to solve (P) this problem.

SMP: (S) My solution is this for (M) these people who (P) have this problem.

SPM: (S) My solution is this, which solves (P) this problem that (M) these people have.

We're happy you completed the second step of the 3-1-3 Challenge. Good job!

Now you have six different one-sentence explanations of what you do, all in one sentence! When people ask you what you do, you can have an intriguing response for them.

Step 3. Explain what you do in three words.

The final step of the 3-1-3 Challenge is to take two things that nearly everyone could relate to and combine them together, creating an analogy or metaphor that people can quickly grasp. One element relates to you and the other element to what you do.

This is *not* a tagline.

It's designed so people can easily picture what you do in terms of other things that they understand using their own imagination.

Here are some examples of the **first element**, which should relate to you, your personality, how you work, etc.:

Professions

- Blacksmith
- Carpenter
- Craftworker
- Sensei

Hotels

- Ritz-Carlton
- Hilton
- Marriott
- Disneyland Resort

Restaurants

- Morton's Steakhouse
- In-N-Out
- Food truck
- McDonalds

Famous people

- Jimmy Kimmel
- Oprah
- Constance Wu
- Steve Jobs

Cars

- Tesla
- Ferrari
- Jeep
- Prius

Gadgets

- Swiss Army Knife
- Magic wand
- Drone
- Smart Speaker

Cartoon characters

- Charlie Brown
- Curious George
- Fairy Godmother
- Popeye

Sports

- Referee
- Quarterback
- Head coach
- Goaltender

Recognizable brands

- Nike
- SpaceX
- Amazon
- Uber

Fictional characters

- Superwoman
- Lara Croft
- Ted Mosby
- James Bond

Musical

- Pianist
- Jazz guitar
- Microphone
- Violin

Guides

- Tour guide
- Sherpa
- Docent
- Captain

The **second element** will relate to your type of profession, industry, or experience.

Here are some examples:

Professions

- Bookkeeping
- Web design
- Consulting
- Graphic design

Industry

- Finance
- Real estate
- Education
- Digital marketing

Experience

- Podcasting
- Branding
- Blogging
- Speaking

By taking the two familiar elements and combining them, people will naturally try to figure out the relationship in their head, and they will get insights about who you really are as a person in addition to what you do.

Next are examples of descriptions using this metaphor method. Can you guess which one goes with which industry?

a. Jimmy Kimmel of Podcasting	___ Mortgage lender
b. Blacksmith of Branding	___ Machinist
c. Mei Lin of Vegans	___ Accountant
d. The Charlie Brown of Blogging	___ Banker
e. Energizer Bunny of Bookkeeping	___ Customer service
f. Queen of Home Finance	___ Paralegal
g. Robin Hood of Hollywood	___ Teacher
h. Wonder Woman of Depositions	___ Web designer
i. Ted Mosby of Finance	___ Podcast host
j. Cardiologist of Websites	___ Veterinarian
k. Rachel Zane of Law	___ Sous chef
l. Han Solo of Filing Paperwork	___ Office administrator
m. MacGyver of Coding	___ Marketing manager
n. Banksy of Photoshop	___ Writer
o. Lara Croft of Lab Experiments	___ Recruiter
p. Composer of Strategy	___ Lawyer
q. Air Traffic Controller of Complaints	___ Independent film maker
r. Head Coach of Student Success	___ Videographer
s. Broker of Talent	___ Risk manager
t. Pianist of Metals	___ Programmer
u. Referee of Risk	___ Director of operations
v. Doctor meets Pet Lover	___ Scientist
w. Sensei of Storytelling	___ Graphic designer

The minimum number of words to accomplish this is three: one element (that portrays you), a relational term, and the second element (that portrays what you do). If the elements you are using are multiple words, then the three words could become five or six words total. Don't get stuck on the number of words. The idea is to create a metaphor for what you do, leveraging what people already know.

How do you come up with the elements to *relate* to each other? Here are some tips to come up with the first element:

Think of a famous person that you are like: _____

Think of a cartoon character that you are like: _____

If you were a car, what type of car would you be? _____

If you were a hotel, what type of hotel would you be? _____

If you were a fictional movie character, who would you be? _____

Now think about *what you do*—your answers will be the second element of your metaphor/analogy that represents what you do.

What can describe what you do in one word? _____

What is the one thing you do best? _____

What business are you in? _____

What is your specific expertise? _____

What is your best talent? _____

What is your industry? _____

Now combine the first and second elements together. Mix and match, have fun, and get creative with it.

(thing/person/car/cartoon, etc.) + (relational term) +
(thing you do/business/expertise/talent/industry, etc.)

I am the _____ of _____.

I am the _____ of _____.

I am the _____ of _____.

I am like _____ meets _____.

I am like _____ meets _____.

I am like _____ meets _____.

Think of me as the _____ of _____.

Think of me as the _____ of _____.

Think of me as the _____ of _____.

Do any of them jump out at you? If so, share them with friends and see if your analogy or metaphor describes the essence of you and what you do. Remember, it does not have to be an exact match. It should be enough information for people to get an idea of what you do without your telling them exactly what it is. The fun for them is piecing together the two elements and coming up with their own insight. It's like a puzzle or a game, and our brains love games.

APPLYING THE 3-1-3 IN REAL LIFE

Great job completing the 3-1-3 Challenge!

Now you can incorporate your three words into your Exposed and Authentic Bio in Chapter 9, and when people ask you what you do, refer to your three sentences, or your one sentence, or even your three words. You're on your way to success! (If you don't have a copy of *Ditch the Act*, visit DitchTheAct.com and get yours today!)

Crafting Your Social Media Headlines

Aside from your profile and cover photo, your social media headline is the first thing that people see when they land on your page. Headlines should be short, and they take a bit of creativity to craft in order to entice people to want to get to know you.

It's hard to fit your accolades, what you do, your education, and your personality all into one tiny message, but it's possible.

To create your social media headline:

1. Start with your three-word analogy or metaphor.
2. List the biggest place you have been featured. (If you haven't been featured anywhere, don't worry about it. You can add a hobby or what you do for work.)
3. Use emojis to highlight your interests.
4. Provide a call to action.
5. Make yourself easily accessible by listing your email address.

People care about what you do and your accolades and want you to be humanized.

Tips

- Use “|” instead of “,” to separate items because it is easier to read.
- Use emojis to give you a sense of personality.

Here are two examples:

The Geek of Greek cuisine | Top Chef finalist | Featured in Los Angeles Magazine & Zagat | I feed you like family (insert emojis here) Available for catering cook@chef.com

Matchmaker of Homes | LA Realtor serving newlyweds | Featured in The Knot & The Spruce (insert emojis here) I find where you'll spend your lives together ilove@weddings.com