

# Just Call Me Actuary

## When Your Professional Title Becomes Your Given Name

SOME PEOPLE IN LATIN AMERICA address each other using their professional titles before, or in place of, their given names. Sometimes this practice creates very humorous situations, such as the following: A friend of mine, economist Andrea Perrotto from Argentina, called me “old man” because of my excessively formal business response to a friendly request that she had made to me by e-mail.

I replied with an unpretentious single line, “Don’t call me ‘old man.’ Please, just call me ‘Actuary;”

Kidding, she responded that she did not want to hurt my feelings by just calling me “Actuary” because she thought it sounded too “strong and insulting.” (This coming from an economist!) So, I decided to go deeper in my next reply. I responded:

“I have the guts to encourage this formality, even if my closest friends refer to me using this ‘negative’ adjective, because I am actuarially convinced that being old is a temporary stage of life. Therefore, this adjective will disappear when I die.

“Conversely, being an actuary is a permanent and definitive truth for some human beings. For example, when I die, I think that my friends, peers, and colleagues will not say, ‘The old Jose has passed away.’ Instead, they will say, ‘The Actuary Jose has passed away.’

“That’s definitive. And after some years of professional practice, I have come to believe in this personal premonition. This makes me very proud, and I think that I could be an actuary even in the afterlife. If you think about it, this idea doesn’t sound too bad.

“The actuary for heaven, for example, would have to review heaven’s overpopulation. Consequently, such an actuary could be responsible for redefining and projecting birthrates (incarnation rates), immigration rates (pardon rates) from purgatory to heaven, and ‘moving in’ rates (death rates) from Earth to heaven, or review and rewrite policy provisions for getting into heaven on probation as well as reviewing applications (terrestrial prayers) for extended life time on Earth.

“Also, redefining a global longer life expectancy could be necessary in order to lower the spiritual and traumatic cost of passing from Earth to other addresses, be they up or down. Furthermore, I think every 2,000 years somebody should ask the Almighty Actuary for some very necessary human resurrections in order to avoid the accidental early arrival to heaven of some good transient mortals.

“As for hell’s actuary, I cannot think of a better devil’s job than hacking and messing up heaven’s soul databases to make the existence of heaven’s actuary less pleasant. However, I think this hellish position loses its fun after one or two terrestrial centuries.”

I finished my e-mail this way: “I am frankly not interested in a position in hell, assuming that I have qualifications to go to heaven. Although being forever the actuary for heaven sounds like a great, interesting, and rewarding position, I am not in a hurry to become such an actuary, since I think that I need more training on Earth and more time to enjoy living this short, actuarial life.

“Consequently, even in the worst professional or personal circumstances I will always be very proud of being an actuary. So please, just call me ‘Actuary!’”

José Fidel Castañeda

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