



Four Personal Branding Tactics that Scream “Hire me!”

By Catherine Kaputa

In a hyper-competitive job market, employers are having trouble finding potential employees among a sea of qualified candidates. You can convince them that you're ideal by developing and communicating a compelling and unique personal brand. Zeroing in on your unique personal brand and communicating it consistently and effectively in your job search is a surefire strategy for attracting employers' attention and landing a new job. Here are four personal branding tactics that will make you irresistible to hiring managers.

1. Brand yourself in a sentence.

Effective brands are defined succinctly and competitively in a single sentence. The sentence should declare what's different about you and why it matters. It should be short enough to write on the back of a business card and definitive enough to define the brand's purpose. For example, Google defines its brand this way: "Google organizes the world's information and makes it universally accessible and useful." When you are composing your brand sentence, think of how you can label or position yourself differently. For example, rather than calling myself a career coach like others do, I call myself a "personal brand strategist" and go on to say, "I use the principles and strategies from the commercial world of brands for the most



important brand – Brand You.”

For an IT professional, we devised this brand sentence: “Jon Smith” - a technology solutions pioneer developing new revenue streams through technology in the converging worlds of Hollywood, Silicon Valley and Wall Street.

2. Get feedback on your 60-second elevator speech.

Brands hire experts to create their ads, then they test them to get feedback.

There’s an easy way for you to get feedback: Just grab a video camera and record yourself giving your elevator speech or your answer to the most popular interview question, “Tell me about yourself.” Then sit down and evaluate your performance.

The only way to get good is to practice, make a video and rate your performance.

Your personal commercial should elaborate on your brand sentence in an interesting way. Take another page from the branding playbook and include a memorable phrase that embodies your brand purpose, like an ad slogan does for a brand. Try an analogy - put two different ideas together to express who you are, such as “I’m a cross between _____ and _____” or “I’m like _____ meets _____.”

For example, Tazo Tea defined itself as “Marco Polo meets Merlin.” I sometimes say, “I’m a cross between a P&G brand manager and a career coach.”

Even though you’ve practiced and videotaped your delivery, your elevator pitch shouldn’t seem wooden and rehearsed. The key is to practice, but to avoid memorization so you don’t sound like you’re scripted.

3. Create branded marketing materials that break through the clutter.

Every brand has marketing materials: advertising, a website, brochures, business cards and other collateral that are all designed with a distinctive look and feel and a message focused on the brand vision - the best brand story possible.



You should do the same. Your marketing materials are your business card, cover letter, email address, voicemail message and resume. Later you can expand your brand's marketing materials to include online social networking profiles, a website and a blog. It's easy to do them for free or economically through a resource such as VistaPrint. But don't use their free business cards with their logo on the back (that will brand you as cheap!). Or use a template design (You are a brand after all), Make sure that all your marketing materials have a similar look (they should use the same fonts and colors, for example) and tell your best brand story.

You can take another page from the branding playbook and get "celebrity" endorsements in your marketing materials. Of course, we're not talking about actual celebrities, but getting a quote from a former boss or client about a project where you played a major role. Put together a Resume Addendum and list key projects in a case study format: "Challenge," "Solution," and "Results." Then put the quote from your boss or client at the top of each case study. You can also use your endorsement quotes in your cover letter, website and your LinkedIn profile.

4. Develop a breakthrough email campaign.

CNN anchor Erin Burnett got her start on television after writing what she called a "stalker letter" to anchor Willow Bay. Of course, Burnett wasn't literally stalking Bay, but a clever email and letter campaign to companies and hiring managers can brand you as someone with initiative and get you noticed.

Many of my clients have used this technique successfully in today's tough job market. Here's an email sent a client, a young technologist in transition, sent that got him a series of interviews and eventually a job offer:

Subject line: *Looking for ways to keep costs down for your clients?*



Body of email: *I'm a technologist who recently supplemented my technology training at ABC University's program in xxx. I'm a go-getter who can deliver projects and services at a lower rate for your clients, a key concern during these economic times.*

In today's environment, I think it's important to segment tasks that require someone to do a process or a project versus those that require someone with extensive experience to exercise judgment. Today's clients are looking for ways to decrease costs and I can help provide different ways to bill the client at a more cost-effective rate.

I would love to get on your calendar for a phone or in person meeting to discuss how I can add value to your company. I have attached my background and look forward to speaking with you.

When you get into the branding mindset, you'll want to reassess your personal brand regularly just like any brand manager would do--not just when you're in transition. After all, Brand You is a journey that will last your whole lifetime.