Defining your Personal Brand

**What is Your Personal Brand?**

Your personal brand is your “hook” – it’s what differentiates you from other job search candidates, and positions your value. It is a statement of what makes you MOST marketable to potential employers.

It is your reputation, your most valuable career asset. You are in effect the CEO and the head marketer of the brand called you. It’s about making a name for yourself and demonstrating what you are truly expert at. When people know about you and what you offer/stand for, they will come to you. You MUST actively manage it at all times.

***It’s the BEST (only, really) effective answer to the question: “So, tell me about yourself.”***

You answer the question: “Why should I choose YOU?” by telling who you are and what you want to be known for. It’s your ‘point of differentiation.’ It helps people quickly see what differentiates you from the competition. You highlight where you are AT YOUR VERY BEST and the ideal roles that you are targeting. What it’s NOT is a listing of your credentials or your “pedigree”. You know, a regurgitation of your prior work experience.

Your brand distinguishes you from the crowd, and highlights where you add value. It addresses the following key considerations:

* Identify your target market;
* Determine your competition;
* What’s unique/invaluable/memorable (in other words “REMARKABLE”) about you;
* Highlights your unique/key strengths and skills; and
* **How you are a unique set of SOLUTIONS to their top PROBLEMS**.

By crafting a compelling personal brand, you will ensure absolute clarity and focus when you communicate your core value to others. It will give your job search clarity and meaning. It will ensure you pursue the right opportunities, reduce the likelihood of wasting your and others’ time by only pursuing the most meaningful opportunities.

Having a laser-focused personal brand statement will assist you in writing a powerful resume and help provide focus in your networking activities by making it easier for people to understand you so they can promote you to their networks and “sell” you MOST effectively.

**II. How to Craft a Compelling Personal Brand Statement: How to highlight what differentiates you from others.**

Be known for the thing/things that you WANT to be known for! Don’t bombard with a laundry list of skills/keywords so it’s difficult to understand/digest. In other words, practice the KISS approach (keep it simple, silly) so its easily understood and appreciated by your audience.

[**Ex**: I am an e-commerce web master who employs “outside the box” design approach that that turns clicks into sales.]

**STEP 1: Define you (looking inward).**

What you will include:

* Core competencies
* Values & beliefs
* Interests, talents, passions.
* You function best/thrive in? What you derive the greatest happiness doing at work? What are you doing that you are so ENGAGED you often get lost in the happy pursuit of your most empowered and engaged self?
* Remarkable, measurable value you deliver?

It is critically important that you aren’t CREATING/manufacturing a brand, you are telling the authentic story of YOU. To that end, create short list of honest but catchy ONE-TWO word adjectives that BEST define you / your brand essence. Some examples include: coach, strategic, drive profits, global, growth-oriented, people developer…)

**STEP 2: Have others define you. Look outward.**

Ask a select few others (5-6) who know you best (friends, family, peers, bosses, coaches/mentors, teachers) for their insights into you/your brand. Ask them:

* What value do/have I create(d) for you?
* Why is that so important to you?
* What do I do best?
* What are 3-4 words that you think best describe me? Why?

This will reveal why others value you/think you do best. It will give you objective perspective on the value in you that you may not see because you take it for granted. We are often to close to ourselves to see the full expanse/scope of value that we deliver to others. Let them share that with you.

Once you have their feedback you can construct your personal brand by focusing on:

1. **Skills/Expertise** – pinpoint a short list of 5-6 things that you do BEST. Narrow the list down to only those things that you enjoy doing, not just what you are proficient at.
2. **Interests** – where you excel, but also derive the greatest satisfaction.
3. **Your Key Strengths**
4. Your most highly desirable **VALUES** – what you hold near and dear that will form the basis of an ideal match with the organizations whose informal cultures possess most if not all of your desirable values in the organization you are best suited to thrive in.
5. **Market Needs** – helps you to understand your ideal target industries, sectors, and organizations (includes start-up’s, established companies, not-for-profits, government entities…) You are in effect defining your own personal job market. What are they seeking in an IDEAL candidate? Key aspects to consider include:
   1. **Your market: geography, industry, job function.** Understand industry jargon. This is where joining relevant industry associations and LinkedIn Groups will help.
   2. **Conduct a market assessment – what does the market want/need?** You will want to align your research on the industry with your own sense of where you are currently in your career. What are your compensation requirements? What does your career progression look like right now/in the short-term? Identify a few (2-3) job postings that best reflect/match your current ideal/best fit target job.

Putting it together – build your personal brand statement

**What you can do> Like to do> Good at = Want to do / Brand / Value**

1. **6-8 catchy words that best define you**.
2. **Compelling short story of your top accomplishment(s)**. Here’s an example for a sales professional: “I find the ingredients of sales growth in business, internally and externally, and apply them to strategic planning then execute the plan in order to deliver profitable growth. I did that to expand overseas, delivering additional $20 million in new sales in foreign markets.”
3. **Your value to others**: “I connect market strategy to sales execution. I find new markets to expand into, and I take businesses global, successfully growing international sales.”

Here, it is important to note that you should be asking yourself “SO WHAT?” as you are crafting the core essence of your brand statement. Meaning, be sure to focus on how employers have benefitted MOST from your work and your accomplishments.

You’ll want to dig really deeply into the keywords that you believe best reflect you and spotlight your core strengths.

Here’s an example from the sales candidate used above how to translate keywords/strengths:

|  |  |
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| **Your FEATURES (The “TELL”)** | **Your BENEFITS** |
| **Strategic** | **Understand the market; Build and connect your market strategy to the sales execution.** |
| **Growth-oriented** | **Expand into new or adjacent markets. Delivering new sales growth.** |
| **Global / International** | **Existing relationships with many international connections. Expertise in imports and exports.** |

So, this is work becomes the following brand statement:

**As a Senior Sales and Marketing leader, I take business global – and deliver profitable, lasting incremental growth.”**