



Personal Branding: helping clients market themselves

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In 1997, Tom Peters wrote the article "The Brand Called You" in *Fast Company* magazine. He argued that we all have a responsibility to manage our personal brand or someone else will manage it for us. He said we need to treat ourselves as if we are a business and have our own vision, mission, values and purpose. Like a business, we all have skills we can sell in exchange for money. The term 'personal brand' has certainly gained momentum with a combination of factors culminating:

- The amplification of VUCA in businesses: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity
- Increased overall unemployment rates with an oversupply of candidates
- Increasing pressure for job seekers to access the hidden job market.
- The rise of social media platforms
- High youth unemployment with 26% of university graduates unemployed
- Increased pressure for diversity and women to move into leadership roles
- Organisations requiring more flexibility and hiring more on project based contracts
- Greater access to global talent and support at cheaper rates (e.g. oDesk)
- Advancing of technology and access to talent and markets offshore
- Maintaining clients' confidence when job seeking
- Longer periods of unemployment with well-qualified candidates not immune
- Australian cultural challenge of the tall-poppy - not wanting to stand out.

Growth in self-employment and entrepreneurship driven by new opportunities created by advancing technology and labour market challenges forces people to "think outside the square" with regards to their career decisions. The recent

introduction of the Certificate III in Microbusiness is a testament to this. For a job-seeker this is as much about mindset and moving them away from thinking 'employer' to 'customer'.

So as career practitioners, not only do we need to be able to help job seekers find work, we need to help them market themselves in diminishing labour markets and start moving many from job seeker to solopreneur or contract workers.

So, what is the best way to help job seekers undertake personal branding?

Some ways to help your clients with their personal brand are:

1. Get clarity: without being absolutely clear about what a job-seeker wants, the marketing strategy is ineffective.

As we know personal branding is about positioning the client for that ideal role. To do that, their collaterals and activity need to match their future and not the past. Tools like LinkedIn must be used effectively with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), positioning statements and branding to match where the client is going, not where they have been.

2. Create Yourname.com: the job for life doesn't exist anymore. Businesses want more flexibility and many recruit on shorter term contracts and projects. I recommend encouraging clients to at least purchase their domain name to start with. From there, build a simple site using tools like Squarespace or Wix to create a portfolio, videos etc. Job Seekers then need to leverage their site in their marketing plan.

3. Become a Job-Seeker: jobs don't just magically appear. As the name suggests, 'job-seekers' need to go and seek the job, but they can't do that without good collaterals. These give them confidence to hit the market with

a strong first impression. Clients need support with scripts and often role plays to be able to get in front of the right hiring manager and ask for the job they want.

4. Thought Leadership: encourage clients to capture their thought leadership in blogs, videos and podcasts. A 2012 CareerBuilder survey found that of those recruiters who extended the offer to a candidate, it was because they got a good feel for the person's personality. Career practitioners will need to find ways to unpack a client's expertise so they can use it to market themselves. Job seekers can feel clumsy and awkward doing this as they may feel that what they have is not important or have a fear of looking like a know-all.

5. Create the appropriate social media platforms: once clients have collaterals like a résumé, creating a strong digital footprint is the next step. I suggest running an audit on all their social media platforms and asking the client to remove anything from a timeline that is not on-brand. At least have a LinkedIn profile and ensure Facebook account settings are on private to avoid any nasty surprises.

6. Keep it going: once clients have the job, don't sit back and relax. Encourage them to keep their website/blog current, position themselves as an industry expert by looking at ways to increase their value in the market. This becomes an insurance policy around their career, especially if they want full time work. I suggest that job-seekers start building connections and recommendations on LinkedIn ready for their next move!

By following these steps you'll be far more likely to access the right decision-makers, achieve your dream role and be paid what you're worth.