



The Wright Career Solution

“Moving your Career forward...one step at a time”

Jump on the ‘Brand Wagon’ to Career Success

by Daisy Wright

Recently I had the privilege of speaking to approximately 50 individuals from diverse professions and countries about self-branding for career success. At the start of the presentation, the group was asked to look at logos of companies such as Nike, McDonald’s, Tim Horton’s, Volvo and Enron, and to say whatever came to mind when they saw the logos. One person mentioned “Just Do It” in reference to Nike. Another blurted out “Always Fresh” to Tim Horton’s; “Reliable and Safe” with respect to Volvo, and “Scam and Unscrupulous” in reference to Enron. It was a lesson in ‘instant brand recognition’. Everyone had an opinion (negative or positive) about each company, once each logo was shown. What about you? Do you have instant brand recognition?

Branding is not a new concept. Everyday we make decisions, form impressions, or draw conclusions based on branding. Will we purchase the more expensive name-brand product, or should we go for the inexpensive ‘no name’ product?

It is quite common these days to hear about personal or self-branding, where trained branding specialists work with clients to help them develop their personal brands. Why? To ensure they stand out from their competitors. Corporations employ advertising and marketing specialists to do the same for them everyday in order that they will stay ahead of their competitors.

Catherine Kaputa, author of *U R A Brand*, said “*Self-branding is thinking of yourself as a ‘product’ in a competitive marketplace, and using strategy, tactics, image development, messaging and the other branding tools so you can maximize your most important asset, You*”. Branding is no longer exclusively associated with companies. Whether you are a jobseeker looking for work or a business person looking for clients, you need instant brand recognition. Something special that distinguishes you from everyone else.

Personal or self-branding requires that you take an inventory of who you really are. What are your inner beliefs about yourself? It takes into account how you present yourself, how you communicate (verbal and non-verbal), how you shake hands, your tone of voice, your voicemail message, your email address, the way you dress, and other things. Self-branding also considers other people’s opinions of you. What do people consistently say about you? Are those comments negative (like Enron) or positive? These are some of the things that make up your brand. It’s now up to you to package this brand in a way that will set you apart from your competitor.

In the December 21, 2005 issue of the *Globe & Mail*, a film critic commenting on the sequel to a popular movie, said “...*just another brand-name product not worth the packaging*”.

Obviously, this was a thumbs-down for the movie. Make sure you are worth your packaging. Follow these tips to jump on the 'brand wagon' and stand out from the crowd:

1. Create a mindset that you are no longer an employee trying to find an employer to hire you, but a product that an employer wants to buy.
2. Take a fresh look at yourself to determine what is special about you. Who are you and what sets you apart?
3. Ask people who you have worked with and who know you to give you feedback on what they think about you.
4. Compare your findings in #2 with the feedback in #3 above, to see comments that are common.
5. Based on the comments, create a T-Bar and write down your strengths on one side and your weaknesses on the other.
6. Focus on your strengths to see how you can build on them.
7. Evaluate your weaknesses only to the degree that it will help you become a better person, but do not spend a lot of energy on this.
8. Select the characteristics that best describe who you are and package them into your own brand...'Brand Me'.

A well-branded company knows its products; knows its strengths and knows how to capitalize on its strengths. Get to know 'product me' and capitalize on your strengths. Decide which label best describes you – Nike, Enron or No Name – and wear it proudly.

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