



CRAFTING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND WORKBOOK

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DISCOVERING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Personal branding is how you communicate the value you bring to a job or a company and helps you set yourself apart from other job seekers. When it comes to personal branding, job seekers typically encounter two big hurdles: The first is the concept of knowing how to ‘sell yourself,’ which makes many people uncomfortable; and the second is the fear many job seekers have of defining themselves so narrowly that they exclude themselves from opportunities. While you may want to say to an employer, “Just give me a chance – I can do anything!” it’s not always the best way to show your enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. That’s where this workbook can help.

Many employers today look to hire individuals who fit their teams in terms of knowledge, experience, skills and personality. Rackspace Hosting is one such company that recruits for cultural fit. CEO Lanham Napier recently explained to TheHiringSite.com why he hires based on cultural fit: “In our company, we recruit based on values first and technical aptitude second... Maintaining our culture is my number one stress factor, and here’s why: I care more about creating a great company than I do a big company.”

Many employers know exactly what they need when reviewing candidates, so having a well-crafted and well-positioned personal brand can help you stand apart.

A personal brand is a blend of knowing how your strengths bring value to the position and company for which you are applying, because you understand the company’s business needs and how that position contributes to those needs.





WHY BRAND YOURSELF

Personal branding has become critical in today's job search as a way to combat an increasingly competitive labor market and navigate an overwhelming amount of technology. Branding helps you present a concise, consistent message that helps employers notice you over candidates with similar skills and experience.

BENEFITS OF A PERSONAL BRAND:

Helps you focus on the value you bring to employers and identifies the unique traits you bring to the workplace. Delivers an authentic message to hiring managers around your career goals and depicts who you are as a professional. Enables employers to see not only the skills you have, but also the unique personality and character traits you have to offer.

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- Delivers an authentic message to hiring managers around your career goals and depicts who you are as a professional.
- Enables employers to see not only the skills you have, but also the unique personality and character traits you have to offer.
- Helps you depict how your personal vision for the future aligns with the long-term business objectives of the hiring organization, effectively elevating your status from commonplace commodity to one-of-a-kind package.

A useful methodology to apply when creating your brand is **SOAR**, which stands for **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results**. Created by career planning experts Jacqueline M. Stavros and Gina Hinrichs, SOAR is a strategic planning framework that focuses on strengths and seeks to align values and passion with opportunities in your industry.

The nature of the **SOAR** strategic process helps you prepare your verbal, written and visual brand as a living, evolving, energy-creating part of your job search. The methodology invites you to discuss or journal about what makes you valuable as a member of the workforce.

"The Thin Book of Soar: Building Strengths-Based Strategy" is available to purchase on www.soar-strategy.com.

WHERE AND HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR BRAND

Once you identify your unique value proposition, it's time to tell the world. It's important to educate the employers you want to target with your new personal brand message. Include this brand message within your cover letters, requests for informational interviews, social networking profiles and other networking opportunities. Branding becomes an equal part of your online and offline job searches as you interact with people who can lead you to potential job opportunities.

Verbal and written branding will help you convey how you fit into your industry by sharing your strengths, career aspirations and the benefits you offer. By coming up with a concise, relevant message about your key accomplishments, you're better able to shape how others perceive you as an applicant. Consistency is key in delivering your brand message.

WHERE TO TALK AND WRITE ABOUT YOUR BRAND

- Improvise verbal branding at networking events and in interviews.
- Customize written branding in resumes, cover letters, thank-you notes and follow-up letters, status updates, social media profiles, and networking outreach messages.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR VISUAL BRAND

Visual branding is how you are perceived. Elements of your visual brand start with actions, attitude and wardrobe, and extend to include a consistent look and feel throughout all your job search materials, social media presence and more.

Everything from your body language, to the color and design of your resume, to your email signature, to your photos on your social media profiles plays a role in your visual brand. If there are certain channels you wish to keep private and leave out of your job search, be sure to set your privacy settings appropriately.

TIPS FOR VISUAL BRANDING

- Choose a font, heading, formatting style and professional voice to maintain a consistent look throughout your materials, including resumes, cover and approach letters, thank-you notes and follow-up letters, status updates, and networking outreach messages.
- Perform a Web search on yourself and do a 360-degree assessment to know how your actions, behavior, attitude, and wardrobe – both online and in person – are perceived. Hiring managers are probably doing the same; therefore, if you see things that would prevent you from hiring someone, you should hold yourself to that same standard.
- If your industry is more creative, consider creating a portfolio website, blog, or online resume. Potential employers will expect you to show off your creative prowess.

HOW TO START BUILDING YOUR BRAND

Answering the questions below will help you create a dynamic, concise and consistent brand message.

(The following exercise is used courtesy of "The Thin Book of SOAR: Building Strengths-Based Strategy.")

MY STRENGTHS

If you had to define the word "strength," you would probably say, "A strength is something I do well." A strength, however, is an activity that makes you feel strong. Strengths have the qualities of yearning, restoration and presence.

GIVE FIVE ANSWERS TO EACH OF THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO PULL OUT YOUR UNIQUE AND AUTHENTIC STRENGTHS:

(Coaching tip: Dig deep, ask: "What else?")

- What work duties give you energy?



- Which professional activities do you most look forward to doing?

- What are some activities you find yourself yearning to do again or learn more about once you've completed them?

- What makes you unique? What makes you the best at what you do?

- List 5 of your strengths and skills that get results?

- What did you accomplish in the past that you are most proud of? How does that reflect your greatest strength?

MY OPPORTUNITIES

Examining what your target industry, company or position needs from you helps you focus on how you can bring value and benefits to your future employer.



ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT MAKES YOU ATTRACTIVE TO EMPLOYERS:

- What opportunities for contribution and growth do you see in your industry?

- How can you differentiate yourself within your target industry?

- What benefits do you bring to a prospective employer? (i.e. How have you made money, saved money or saved time for your past employers?)

- Identify 3-5 needs of your industry. How can you meet those needs? What pain points do you solve?

- What challenges do you help your organization overcome?



MY ASPIRATIONS

Exploring your values and aspirations for the future can align your daily mindset, beliefs, behaviors and attitudes toward a compelling vision. Aligning your brand with values and passion for what you want to create for yourself and the community can illustrate to employers what you will bring to their organization beyond your skills, knowledge and experience.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO DISCOVER WHAT ALIGNS YOU WITH INSPIRING LEADERS:

- What work would be the most compelling for you? This would be work where you feel you could make the most difference and feel motivated daily.

- What do you want to do? What kind of long-term difference do you want to make in your industry?

- Reflect on your strengths and opportunities, where can you make a difference in this job or industry? How can you contribute to this job or industry?

- How does this job or industry align with your values? (i.e. Who do you want to become? What do you care deeply about accomplishing or contributing?)

MY RESULTS

Giving evidence of your accomplishments is key to showing employers how you can successfully deliver results. Backing up your brand with ideas on how to generate results shows employers how you bring intelligence and value to their business.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO PINPOINT HOW YOU DELIVER RESULTS:

- What are your quantifiable or measurable accomplishments? When have you made money, saved money, contributed to the culture, improved a process, policy or system, taken on additional responsibility, increased productivity?

- What accomplishments would potential employers be most excited to hear about?

- What makes you the best at what you do?

MY IMPACT STATEMENT

Looking back on the information you just generated, jot down what stands out to you. If your brand was a news story, **what would the headline be?**

EXAMPLE IMPACT STATEMENTS

- PMP-certified project manager known for successfully leading multi-million dollar projects internationally.
- Copywriter who crafts web content that goes viral.
- Global Social Media Strategist driving successful campaigns on a shoestring budget. 800%+ ROI in the past year.
- Tax Accountant CPA specializing in family-owned businesses with revenues of \$1 – 5 million.
- Sales Trainer who builds high performing sales teams that align with corporate vision.



Impact Statements are a great way to advertise your unique and attractive abilities in a memorable way. They can be used at the top of a resume, social media profile headline, and capture the reader's attention in a cover letter. Some job seekers even include them in an email signature or business card.

Use your notes generated above and craft an Impact Statement that includes your target job title plus a major impact that differentiates you in your industry.

YOUR BRANDING CHECKLIST

You've worked hard to craft your brand, and now you're ready to share it. The whole point to creating a brand is to make yourself visible and market yourself to your target industry.

- Create a networking letter and send it out to your friends and family. This is a great way to inform your network how your strengths and aspirations align with opportunities.
- Make sure your approach and cover letters integrate and reflect your brand message.
- Have business cards ready to hand out with your basic information (name, email, phone, tagline). Networking etiquette indicates you should be prepared to give a card if asked or if given one yourself.
- Create a professional voicemail message. Even if you think you have wit or great taste in music, recruiters and hiring managers may disagree. Ask people you trust to evaluate your outgoing message. Does it sound like someone they would consider hiring?
- Create a professional email address. Recommended: Firstname.Lastname@email.com is simple and clear. Avoid nicknames, phrases or hobbies in your email handle.
- Wardrobe is part of visual branding. Ask for wardrobe advice from peers, research appropriate attire and talk to a sales associate at your favorite shop. Projecting an image of leadership and confidence in the job search and networking meetings is a great first step toward your career vision.
- Google yourself. Do you look professional or is there embarrassing content about you online? Start cleaning up your online reputation before you start your search.
- Join social media sites and use them to build a network that knows who you are, what you can do, and how to reach you. Always include your professional photo (headshot), tagline and brand statement in your profile.
- Join online professional groups. As a group member, listen, ask questions, add comments and establish yourself as a thought leader to engage industry professionals to connect with you and review your profile.
- Review professional social media profiles of people with your target job title: Review their skills, career paths, overall profiles and the groups to which they belong. Use what you learn to improve your profile and continue to update and modify your image as it evolves.
- Your brand should be consistent and visible. Deliver your brand message through the following avenues:
 - Job sites
 - Every time you log in to CareerBuilder.com, make sure your profile is complete and a current resume is uploaded. Your personal preferences will then align with the job recommendations. Set up job alert tools to receive notifications about job postings that match your criteria.



- Recruiters/staffing agencies
- Company career sites
- School/alumni organizations
 - Find out about networking events.
 - Ask to connect with alumni at your target companies.
- Professional associations
 - Hand out your business card and follow up with those who give you theirs.
- Volunteer opportunities
 - Need experience? Consider volunteering. A better brand is built through real work!
- Job fairs
 - Job fairs are great places to deliver your brand. When you go, make sure you dress professionally, are ready to pitch your 30-second brand statement, and hand out business cards and resumes.
- Set your social media sites' privacy settings and be aware of who you list as "friends." Use additional care when posting things to online channels.
- Use social media as your personal PR resource: Give status updates daily to let your network know all the proactive things you are doing to reach your career goals. Some strategies to try:
 - Retweet (or share) an update from an industry thought leader from one of your target companies.
 - Reply to someone who tweeted or shared something insightful (again, preferably someone from a target company or a recruiter with whom you'd like to foster a connection).
 - Share a professional insight article or interesting piece of information you've found on the Web.
 - Update your own status to share a proactive way you are forwarding your career or job search.
- Your brand is about how others perceive you. Reach out to former managers or colleagues for recommendations. Post your recommendations publicly on your profiles if appropriate.
 - Establish a "give to get" mentality: By giving recommendations first, your requests for recommendations are more likely to be responded to in a timely manner.
 - Give time and timeframes. We are all busy and it is appropriate to give, at minimum, three weeks for a contact to write a recommendation. At that point, politely and non-aggressively follow up on the status of the recommendation.

Take these extra steps to make yourself visible and market yourself to your target industry.

- Create a portfolio highlighting your work.
- Create a video or PowerPoint resume.
- Create a personal website or blog

A FEW FINAL BRANDING TIPS

- Your job search is an exercise in knowing how to sell yourself. You are the product, and the employer is the buyer. A clear and compelling career brand helps employers perceive the benefits of your product, giving you an advantage in the job market.
- Successful personal brands are unique, authentic, attractive and visually compelling. Project an image of your authentic self, focus on the value you bring to employers, and make them aware of that value.



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CAREER SERVICES

- Branding is accomplished through verbal, written and visual means. Verbal branding includes your tagline and success stories. Visual branding is accomplished through your actions, attitude, attire, and consistency in look and feel of all job search materials.
- Practice delivering your message. You must be able to deliver your tagline naturally, without appearing as though you've memorized a script.
- Branding is a living, energy-giving way to communicate your value through various avenues. Commit yourself to take time to shape and enhance your ideal image on a daily basis.