

MANAGING YOUR CAREER: HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL MARKETING CAMPAIGN WHEN THE PRODUCT IS "YOU"!

by *Bobbie LaPorte*

If you are like most marketing professionals, you will change jobs an average of six to eight times in your career - and probably make at least one complete career change during your professional lifetime. In today's dynamic and competitive workplace it is no longer enough just to do your best on the job. To be successful you need to be actively managing your career - developing your professional credentials, building your network and keeping yourself constantly marketable.

But as marketers, do we approach a job search as a "marketing campaign", with ourselves as the product? If you are honest, I am betting your answer is no, but that is absolutely how you should be managing your career and approaching a job search. Here are a few things to consider the next time you are thinking about making a career change.

HOW STRONG IS YOUR BRAND?

Yes, "personal branding" is a hot topic, but in today's competitive job market it is now more important than ever to stand out from the competition. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can you state the four or five most relevant and compelling brand attributes (adjectives that describe you)
- Do you know what those around you would say is your greatest strength?
- Do you know how your self-perceptions differ from the perceptions of those around you?
- Can you clearly describe what differentiates you from your competitors or colleagues?
- Are you clear on your target audience - those people (professional contacts, recruiters, employers) who need to know about you so you can achieve your goals?

Having strong and credible answers to these questions and others will allow you to position and differentiate yourself effectively in the job market.

WHAT ARE YOUR JOB TARGETS?

Approaching this part of your search with a market research mindset will help you to develop clear and focused targets for your search:

- Have you done the research to understand what industries and companies would represent the best opportunities for you?

- Have you taken the time to understand how your experience, skills, interests and values match up with potential job opportunities?

- Are you clear on how your accomplishments translate into benefits for a potential employer?

- Have you developed a target list of companies and individuals that you can share with contacts to help you network into these organizations? No doubt, this is hard work...but it will bring focus and clarity to your search and help you find the shortest path to employment.

HAVE YOU CREATED POWERFUL PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS?

How you are viewed as a job-seeker goes beyond creating professional job search tools:

- Do your resume and cover letters reflect your positioning as a professional?

- Do you proof every written communication you send to an employer for typos, grammatical errors and a professional business tone? You would be surprised how many job-seekers sabotage their candidacy because they overlook these communications basics.

- Are your on-line profiles (e.g. LinkedIn et al) consistent with your resume; do they present the same professional image you are working to create?

- Have you done the necessary preparation for the interview process (practice, practice, practice). Potential employers develop a lasting impression of you in the first 20 seconds of an interview, so make sure your personal appearance and presentation give the best possible impression

- Say "Thank You"....this may seem obvious, but less than 10% of job-seekers take the time to thank the people they have interviewed with - and I am talking about a personal, handwritten note, not an email!

These are just a few examples of how you can apply the elements of the marketing process we use every day as professionals to manage your career and conduct a successful job search. The next time you are "in the market", reflect back on how you would approach your campaign with "you" as the product!

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reprinted from SFAMA Marketing Connections, March, 2007
Editor: Tracey Matchett, Sugo Music. Design: Alana Jelinek Design

