

JOB WELL DONE

Personal Branding Primer

In the age of Twitter and LinkedIn (and their offline counterparts, happy hours and networking mixers), many people are rising above the resume, carefully crafting a personal brand to promote themselves to the world. Our experts share tips to on how to make your image shine.

BY SHAWNA REDING

“YOU GOTTA ASK FOR THAT J-O-B!” As his fist pounds the podium and his eyes bulge, Herb Miller warns more than 100 undergraduates in his Foundations of Marketing class that if they aren't “bodacious” enough, they may just find themselves jobless after graduation.

And for Miller, senior lecturer in marketing, nothing says “bodacious” less than a standard resume. He says it has become a bland representation of “statistical data and text” that an interviewer must legally keep on file. That's why his students must instead create a brochure that projects their “brand.” Complete with a photo, statement of short- and long-term goals, core interests, and a list of strengths the student will bring to a company, a brochure “brings the student to life—they suddenly become a viable entity,” Miller says.

Finance major Jane Smith was initially skeptical of the approach, until a recruiter

told her during a second-round interview, “You were the only candidate to give us a brochure and we knew we had to bring you in.”

But what about professionals more established in a career? Is personal branding overdone, or a reality of today's job market?

“A person is a product, just like any other product,” says Stacey Rudnick, director of MBA career management. “That means you have to apply the ‘Four P's’ of marketing”—product, price, place, promotion—“as you aim to enter whatever job market you choose. Develop your ‘product.’ Know what you're worth. Find out who to communicate your worth to and how you're going to promote yourself.”

Sara Canaday, UT alumna and author of the book, “You According to Them,” says that promoting your brand involves expressing a rogue point of view within your organization that shows your

ability to influence. She says this can be done by giving courses and writing blogs and memos that demonstrate an interest in the progression of the company.

And while some people still dismiss it as meaningless, Twitter offers personal branders enormous power and visibility.

“You can show off how intelligent you are, how worldly you are, your skills, and your ability to communicate with others,” says Robert Quigley, senior lecturer in the College of Communication and former Statesman.com editor. “These are things employers are searching for when they're looking to hire and promote.”

Quigley says the simple, microblogging nature of Twitter showcases your credibility in your field. The key to marketing yourself on Twitter is “sharing your expertise so that others get use out of following you,” he adds.

But even if you're not interested in social media, your personal brand suffers if you don't at least have a basic web presence, says career strategist Laura Hill, BBA '75.

Keeping an updated profile on a website like LinkedIn creates a space for colleagues to vouch for your competence and ensures “you exist in the eyes of the public,” Hill said during a webinar on LinkedIn etiquette she gave for the McCombs Alumni Network in April. Hill went so far as to say that if she can't find a business contact on LinkedIn, she wonders, “Does this person really exist?”

But updating a LinkedIn account often creates a pressure to include every detail of your work experience, which can appear “too aggressive,” Hill cautioned. She suggested creating a link to your resume so that an employer can “see everything they need to see” if they feel inclined to do so.

And whether it's manifested in a resume, brochure, Twitter profile or lunch date, the best personal brand—like any good brand—is clear, unique, compelling, and consistent.

