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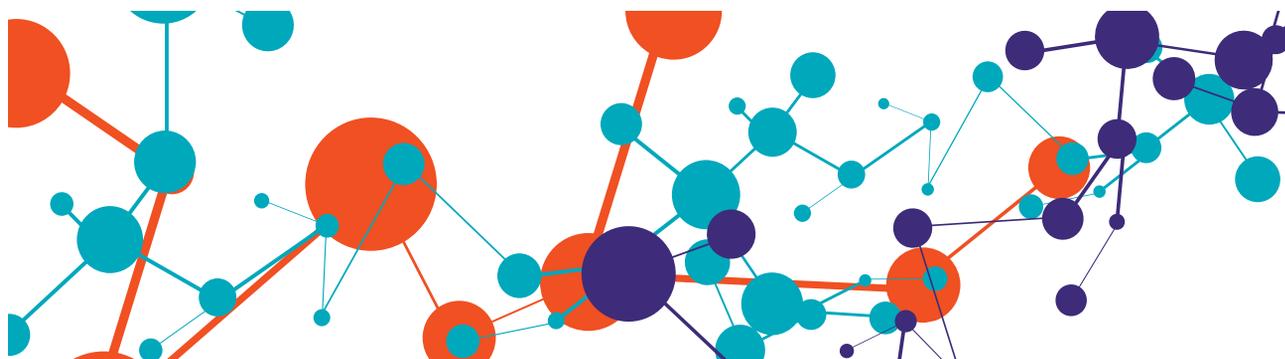
MARKETING YOUR CAREER BRAND

Michelle Carroll

Alan De Back

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

MARKETING YOUR CAREER BRAND



AUTHORS

Michelle Carroll

Michelle Carroll, founder and CEO of Carroll Career Consultants, specializes in career management solutions for individuals facing career crossroads and organizations seeking career management programs. Michelle is passionate about infusing social technology into the career development process to bring cutting-edge information to elevate her clients to success. She is also a sought after speaker, coach for clients in her private practice, and lead coach at NASA's Goddard career center.

Alan De Back

Alan De Back, owner of Alan De Back Learning & Communications, is an independent career coach and learning consultant in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. His background includes more than 20 years in career coaching in both learning- and training-related functions. He has extensive experience with clients in the nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors, and is skilled at customizing solutions to fit each client's needs.

Community Manager, Career Development

Ron Lippock

Editor, *TD at Work*

Patty Gaul

Associate Editor

Ashley Slade

Production Design

Kristie Carter-George

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Marketing yourself in today's career environment is about more than just having an effective resume. You must understand all the tools at your disposal, both traditional and new social media platforms, and how to integrate them into your desired career brand. Your career brand is a combination of your skills, interests, and the value that you can bring to a potential employer or customer. In the past, your career brand was expressed primarily through a traditional resume. Today, your brand encompasses every way you promote yourself, both in electronic and more traditional formats.

In addition to outlining your assets, you need to identify "customer" needs, and how your brand will address those needs. A customer may be a prospective employer, your current employer, or perhaps a potential client you are trying to lure. We will use the term "customer" throughout this publication to describe the audience who needs to understand and want your career brand.

This *TD at Work* provides the tools and strategies to market your all-important career brand.

This issue will:

- define a career brand, and explain how you can develop yours
- explain how to market your brand, and outline elements of your marketing package
- show how to effectively use social media as a marketing tool
- provide tips on writing the new and improved resume
- show the differences and similarities between a federal and private-industry resume.

IDENTIFYING YOUR CAREER BRAND

The first step in marketing yourself and your career brand is to understand exactly what the brand is that you are promoting. If you are not clear on your brand and what you're all about, your marketing efforts will be unclear and confusing.

Your career brand is composed of everything you want to be known for professionally, including your experience, and your skills and interests. Your brand is not unlike a favorite brand that you purchase as a consumer. Whether the brand is a kind of cookie or a model of car, you return and buy that brand over and over for a number of reasons. What attracts you to the brand is probably the trio of quality, consistency, and value.

- **Quality:** You may have been impressed with the excellence of that particular brand.
- **Consistency:** Perhaps the consistency of knowing what you will be getting appeals to you.
- **Value:** The perceived value you are getting for your money is attractive to you.

The reality is that you probably return to your preferred brand over and over because you appreciate the combination of the quality, consistency, and value that brand provides.

YOUR CAREER BRAND IS COMPOSED OF EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR PROFESSIONALLY, INCLUDING YOUR EXPERIENCE, AND YOUR SKILLS AND INTERESTS.

The manufacturer of your preferred brand has carefully identified exactly what their brand is all about. They know the "hot buttons" that appeal to their repeat customers and they maximize them. As you determine your career brand, you must also understand exactly what it is that makes you unique and what will appeal to your potential "customers."

Identifying the Skills That Build Your Brand

To build your brand, you must know your strongest assets. You will need to maximize them in your branding in order to appeal to your desired customers. Without understanding the skills you need and want to promote, you cannot establish your niche in the marketplace.

CAREER BRANDING TRENDS

In	Out
Contemporary resume formats	Standard chronological resume
Using social media effectively	Ignoring social media presence
Customizing to customers	One size fits all approach

To start this process, you will want to do a self-analysis. What do you think are your most pronounced competencies? What specific examples can you identify as to how you have used and displayed these skills in the past? Do you feel comfortable enough to articulate these examples to a potential customer?

WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE SKILLS YOU NEED AND WANT TO PROMOTE, YOU CANNOT ESTABLISH YOUR NICHE IN THE MARKETPLACE.

You will also want to consult those around you—your co-workers, your direct reports, and perhaps even your supervisor—for valuable input. They will most likely see things that you do not see about yourself. Be sure to ask them for specific examples of how you used a particular skill so you can truly understand how and when you displayed it.

Finally, you may want to take a skills assessment. Numerous assessments exist, both on paper and online, offered through government and private business. Assessments help you identify your skills. Once again, be sure to think of a particular situation in which you used or displayed a particular competency.

Does Your Brand Complement Your Desired Career Path?

Just because you happen to have a particular skill and can discuss numerous specific instances in which you used it successfully, you may not necessarily be interested in using that skill moving forward. You may be a fantastic technical writer, and you may have written numerous technical reports and publications that won accolades from the readers. If your career interest is not in being a technical writer, however, why would you want to promote those skills with potential customers? You need to identify those assets that complement your desired career path, because those are the skills you will want to use in building your career brand.

If you are unclear about your desired career path, you must first get clarity about where you want to go. You may already have a very clear picture, and you can start to assess which of your skills align with that path. If it's not clear, an interest assessment can be an excellent tool for starting to gain that clarity. A good career coach can help look at your interests and where they cross over with your identified skills. That crossover is the base of building your career brand.

What Are Your Customers Looking For?

Your brand must also meet the needs of your customers. If you are not offering something that your customers need or want, your branding efforts will come to naught. In addition, consider the branding trio: quality, consistency, and value. Can you articulate how your brand addresses each of those attributes?

A famous example of branding that failed can be found in one of the products of a famous automobile manufacturer in the 1970s. During the gasoline shortage at that time, virtually all the major auto manufacturers identified a customer need for high gas mileage in their products. This manufacturer quickly developed and marketed a small car that addressed that requirement. Unfortunately, the car—the Ford Pinto—had a nasty habit of bursting into flames as the gas tank

exploded when involved in a rear-end collision. Quality was obviously lacking. The model flopped and was taken off the market.

You must combine your brand with what the customer wants and needs. At the same time, you must ensure quality, consistency, and value.

DEVELOPING YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE

In order to market your brand, you need to have an effective message. Your message should concisely articulate who you are, what your brand is, and what you have to offer a prospective customer.

One way of conveying your brand concisely is building and using a “one-minute commercial.” Sometimes known as an elevator speech, your one-minute commercial provides an overview of you and your skills and gives specific examples focusing on how you have served your customers. Consider this format for an effective one-minute commercial:

- How do you describe what you are and what you do without using lingo or jargon that sounds trite?
- How do you serve your customers, gearing your message to reflect their needs?
- How are you helping your customers solve their problems?
- What is one recent success story—again, showing concrete examples?

Here is a basic example of a one-minute commercial that uses this format:

I am a software skills trainer. I work with my customers to fully understand their needs, and design customized software training to address those needs. Many of my customers require training for employees with limited computer proficiency, and I make sure that the training I deliver is targeted directly at their skill level. For example, last month a client needed Excel training for a group of administrative assistants who were experienced only with Microsoft Word. I created a module appropriate for their level of knowledge, and adapted the tasks that they needed to learn to perform. The client called me two weeks ago to tell

me that every person I trained is now productively using Excel.

MARKETING YOUR BRAND

You may have a great personal career brand, complete with a clear and concise marketing message. If you are not reaching your customers and potential customers, however, all the work you have put into defining your brand has been wasted. Your customers must receive your marketing message.

SOMETIMES KNOWN AS AN ELEVATOR SPEECH, YOUR ONE-MINUTE COMMERCIAL PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF YOU AND YOUR SKILLS AND GIVES SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FOCUSING ON HOW YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR CUSTOMERS.

With a multitude of new tools at your disposal, marketing your brand has grown much more complex. How do you determine which tools will be most effective in delivering your message and reaching your customers?

One answer to this question is research. You need to determine exactly how your customers need and want to hear about your brand. How do they make other buying decisions and what tools do they regularly use to help them make those decisions? If you can, the ideal approach is to contact some of your current or potential customers and ask those questions. In the absence of the ability to reach out to customers directly, do some general research. If you are job hunting, what tools are today’s recruiters and human resources representatives using to source potential candidates? An online search with appropriate questions will help you find those answers.

Tools for Marketing Your Brand

In general, the tools you use to market your brand are going to be vastly different than those used even 10 years ago. For example, a traditional job

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