



## PERSONAL BRANDING 101 AND YOUR JOB SEARCH

The idea of personal branding isn't new, yet it continues to be a source of confusion for many job seekers. My intent with this article is to demystify the concept and provide a few simple ways to help you create and leverage your personal brand during a job search, without going overboard.

I'll start by sharing my definition of a brand or branding which is "a method by which an identity is developed and brought to life for a product or service." In most cases, the individual or organization developing or managing a brand is trying to influence a decision, opinion, or belief based upon how you think and feel. Consider your opinions about household products like soap, automobiles, beverages, or insurance companies. You have limited experience with many of these products and services, yet have an opinion which may influence how you think or feel. Ultimately these thoughts and feelings can influence how you act when given a choice to purchase, select, or recommend a product or service. In the case of a personal brand, the job seeker is the product and the brand can be brought to life in a variety of ways. The goal for job seekers is to influence the way a hiring manager thinks and feels about you which can lead to a job offer. With that as background, here are the key elements which should be considered as part of your personal brand (list #1):

1. Education, skills, and experiences which align to the position and/or organization
2. Your reputation to include work-ethic, ability to deliver results, and add value
3. Your personality style and compatibility or fit with the organization and/or position



Recall from our definition, a personal brand must bring the elements just mentioned "to life." During the job search, this is commonly done using (list #2):

1. Resumes
2. Interviewing and interpersonal skills
3. Dress and appearance
4. Your social media presence
5. A network of friends, family, and associates

In short: your personal brand is the cumulative image you project. When done right, it can result in a successful job search. To maximize your opportunities for success, you should purposely determine your brand image (list #1). Allowing it to happen randomly is never recommended. Next, you need to ensure all methods by which your brand is communicated are correct, professional, and consistent (list #2). Start by knowing yourself and aligning your resume to the position. You should prepare for the interview, always be yourself during hiring process, dress appropriately, and demonstrate the value you bring to an organization. Following these guidelines will improve your personal brand and maximize your chances for success.