

The Power of Your Personal Brand

Create Your Personal Mission Statement

You might be thinking that you just want to get a simple job; you don't need an elaborate personal mission statement. Although you may not be asked about your personal mission statement during an interview, it is nonetheless important, because it provides you with a concrete sense of direction and purpose, summarized in relatable words. Great brands have clear, concise mission statements to help the company chart its path. For example, Google's mission statement is "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." The mission statement for Starbucks is "To inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time."

It's worth your time to write a personal mission statement. You might be surprised to discover that people who have a personal mission statement find it easier to get an enjoyable job. This is precisely because a personal mission statement helps provide framework for what's important to you and what you want to do and accomplish. A mission statement is a concise statement about what you want to achieve—the more direct, the better. It should be short and easy to recall (you should always know what your mission statement is and how to measure your activities against it). A mission statement should be broad in nature. In other words, it doesn't specifically state a job you want. Instead, it describes who you are, what you stand for, what you want to do, and the direction you want to take.

Once you write your mission statement, you should put it somewhere where you can see it daily—perhaps on your computer wallpaper, on your desk, or on the back of your business card. It should remind you every day of your personal goals.

Define Your Personal Brand

Choosing a career direction and writing a personal mission statement are not things that can be done in one day. They require research, evaluation, consideration, and a lot of soul searching. The same is true for defining your personal brand.

You know about the power of a brand in the selling process and that a brand can be a product, service, concept, cause, or even a person. Truly, the most important product, brand, or idea you will ever sell is yourself. You're not just a person, you're a brand. When you begin your job search, you will need to sell yourself to prospective employers. When you sell yourself effectively, you will be able to sell your ideas, your value, your experience, and your skills to get the job you want.

It's easy to talk about brands. It's harder to define one, especially when the brand is *you*. Many people feel uncomfortable talking about themselves. Others feel as if they are bragging if they are forced to put themselves in a positive light. The fact of the matter is, to be successful and stand apart from the competition, you have to know yourself and carefully craft your brand story. ^[7]For the purposes of finding a career, it is important to carefully consider what you believe defines you—what makes you unique, consistent, and relevant—and how to tell your brand story to create an emotional connection with prospective employers.

Here's a strategy to help you think about defining your personal brand. If you were on a job interview and the interviewer asked you, "Tell me three things about yourself that make you unique and would bring value to my company," what would you say? Would you be able to quickly identify three points that define you and then demonstrate what you mean?

Many candidates might answer this question by saying, "I'm hardworking, I'm determined, and I'm good with people." Although those are good characteristics, they are too generic and don't really define you as a brand. The best way to tell your brand story is to use the characteristics of a brand covered earlier in this chapter—unique, consistent, and relevant and creating an emotional connection with its customers. If you identify three "brand points" you can tell a much more powerful brand story. Brand points are like platforms that you can use to demonstrate your skills and experience. Here are some examples of powerful brand points:

- **Leadership skills.** This provides a platform to describe your roles in leadership positions at school, work, professional, or volunteer or community service organizations.

- **Academic achievement.** This provides a platform to highlight your scholarships, awards, honors (e.g., dean's list), and more. A prospective employer wants to hire the best and the brightest (if academic achievement isn't your strong suit, don't use this as one of your brand points).
- **Sales (or other) experience.** This provides a platform to underscore your contributions and accomplishments in your current and past positions. Past achievements are the best predictor of future success for a prospective employer so you can focus on results that you have delivered.

You can see how specific brand points can make a big difference in how you might answer the question above; they help define your brand as being unique (no one else has this combination of education, skills, and experience), consistent (each one demonstrates that you are constantly striving to achieve more), and relevant (prospective employers want people who have these characteristics). Finally, the ability to communicate your brand story in a cover letter, a résumé, and an interview will help you establish an emotional connection with your prospective employer because he or she will be able to identify with components of your personality.

You've Got the Power: Tips for Your Job Search

You Have More to Offer Than You Think

If you're putting off thinking about your career because you don't have any experience and you don't know what you want to do, don't worry. Take a deep breath, and focus on how to define your personal brand.

You have more to offer than you think.

- Have you worked in a restaurant, hotel, retail store, bank, camp, or other customer service environment? You have multitasking skills, customer service skills, and the ability to work under pressure and deliver results.
- Have you worked for a landscaping company, technology company, or other service provider? You have experience interacting with clients to understand their needs. (Also, don't forget to mention the fact that you increased the company's sales if you made any sales).
- Have you worked as a cashier in a bank or in an accounting department? You have had the responsibility of handling money and accurately accounting for it.
- Have you earned money on your own with a small business such as babysitting or lawn care? You have entrepreneurial experience. Include how you landed your clients, advertised for new ones, and

managed your costs and time. Every company wants people who can demonstrate drive and independence.

Creating your brand points can effectively make the difference between being an ordinary applicant and being the person who lands the job. Indeed, your brand points are the skeletal framework for the way you sell yourself to get the job you want.

For now, just take the time to really think about what are the three brand points that define you. Your education, skills, and experience will probably be different from the example, but your brand points can be just as powerful. Use the box below as a starting point to identify your three brand points.

Suggestions for Brand Points

These are thought starters. You should define your brand based on what you have to offer.

- Sales experience (or experience in marketing, retail, finance, etc.)
- Project management experience
- Leadership experience
- Management experience
- Negotiating experience
- Work ethic and commitment (e.g., working while going to school)
- Entrepreneurial experience (e.g., eBay or other small business experience)
- Customer service experience (e.g., working in a restaurant, retail store, bank)
- Academic achievement
- Subject matter expert (e.g., author of a blog)
- International study
- Community service

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Your job search includes three steps:

1. Explore the possibilities. Learn about yourself through **career assessment surveys, skills inventory questionnaires, and personality tests**. Investigate industries in which you may want to work by using the resources provided in this course.
2. Write a personal mission statement. State your purpose briefly and concisely. It will help you plot your course.
3. Define your personal brand. Identify three **brand points** that define your personal brand and become platforms on which to showcase your skills and experience. These three **brand points** will be the basis of your résumé, cover letter, and interviews.

TEST YOUR POWER KNOWLEDGE (ANSWERS ARE BELOW)

1. Name three situations in your life in which you use selling.
2. Name the four key characteristics of a brand.
3. Describe what this sentence means: "Each salesperson supports an average of 12.9 other jobs within the company."
4. Is sales considered a line or a support function? Why?
5. What is the impact of Sales 2.0 on the selling function?
6. Which of the four characteristics of a brand is most important when you are selling your personal brand?
7. What is a customer-centric organization?

TEST YOUR POWER KNOWLEDGE ANSWERS

1. Getting into the school of your choice, convincing your parents of something, getting the job you want (as well as other situations you may name).
2. The four characteristics of a brand are the fact that it is unique, consistent, and relevant and has an emotional connection with its customers.
3. "Each salesperson supports an average of 12.9 other jobs within the company" means that the level of sales that is generated by each salesperson is enough to fund the salaries and benefits of almost thirteen people in the organization in departments such as human resources, marketing, operations, finance, and others. Without the sales, the company would not be able to pay for the other jobs.
4. Sales is considered a line function because salespeople are part of the daily operations of the company.
5. Sales 2.0 is a term that applies to the ever-changing world of technology, communication, and relationships in selling. The evolution of the Internet has led to a change in the balance of power in the selling process. Now, customers may have more information than a salesperson due to the research they are able to do on Web sites, through communities, and user-generated content. (In other words, both good and bad news travel fast.) Salespeople have to focus on collaboration inside their companies and with their customers to deliver the best solution to meet their customers' needs.
6. All of the characteristics are important when you are selling your personal brand. It's important to define your brand by developing the three most important brand points that best describe you.
7. The organizational chart in a customer-centric organization has the customer at the center so that all functions focus on meeting the needs of the customer rather than working in silos.