



CAREER KRED

4 Simple Steps to Build Your Digital Brand
& Boost Credibility In Your Career



CareerKred Parts One and Two

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The path to promotion and a higher net worth used to include not rocking the boat and biding your time until your boss was promoted or otherwise vacated their position. Being good at your job was enough for you to build up credibility within your organization. This is the old school formula for career success.

In the old school career formula taught to us by our parents, and still followed by so many, opportunities equaled your time in service plus your credibility within the company. Credibility was earned locally, so it was ok if the time part of the equation was a big number.

The longer you waited, the higher your (assumed) credibility, the more likely you were to get the opportunity. This used to be enough. However, a lot has changed in the last several years when comes to the career landscape.

The changes started with companies focusing on core competencies and outsourcing anything that didn't fit. Then came the internet and its efficiencies which accelerated not only the changes to the career landscape, but also the way we look at careers in general.

The Internet has democratized things that used to be rare in a career such as credentials and degrees, which now seem to follow the law of supply and demand. Degrees that once guaranteed a faster path to the top have become so abundant, they are now viewed as minimum requirements. Their value has decreased with the overabundance of supply.

Add to this the coming artificial intelligence created "business revolution" and it becomes very obvious the old school way to a higher net worth is doomed.

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So what's a business professional today do to obtain the recognition, credibility and opportunities their experiences and expertise should command?

Simply put, they need to focus on building their brand instead of the fictional corporate ladder and its old school formula.

As the changes to the career landscape accelerate, roles once believed to be “safe” will become questioned and may even be replaced or outsourced. This will leave many people wondering what happened and they will be forced to make their next career decision: stay the same or choose a new path.

The good news is the changes taking place in the career landscape are the same ones that will enable us to make these decisions on our own without them being thrust upon us.

Like it or not, we live in a digital-first age. Meaning, your first interaction with someone today will likely be online. For this reason, it is now possible to make a good first impression even while you sleep.

Studies have shown that as many as 93% of recruiters today search for candidates online before they decide to give them a call. Is your brand ready for this?

I have spent the last five years understanding how this digital-first world applies to and impacts our careers. This book is the result of what I have learned. In it, I disclose everything I know about defining your personal brand, building your digital brand and the reasons why you need to do both.

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In the not so distant past, credibility was earned by your time in a position, a local sponsor, company loyalty, and often a "can do" attitude. It was only recognized locally, meaning within the metaphorical four walls of your company.

Today, credibility, or your CareerKred as I call it, is earned by building your personal brand, establishing your digital brand, proving thought leadership, and engaging with those interested in your field of study. With the right digital brand you can be recognized for your expertise globally. You are no longer confined by the internal four walls.

Think about the opportunities that can come from being a recognized global brand.

During the course of this book, you will learn how to take your brand global by building and establishing your CareerKred online. By implementing the steps in the process I call D.I.C.E., you will be defining your brand, integrating your brand online, creating content in your area of expertise and engaging with your audience.

This simple 4-step process will help you embrace this digital-first age, help you build a modern day digital brand that will set you apart from your competition and help you get recognized for your expertise.

With the changes to the career landscape accelerating, following the old school career success formula no longer makes sense. It's time to change your path. It's time to take your brand global.

It's time to establish your digital brand now, before you need it. This book will show you how.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

What follows is an excerpt from the book CareerKred. In addition to the executive summary, I have included the first two parts of the book for your review. Following the steps in this book lead me to become an author and sought after speaker on the topics of personal and digital branding.

Keep this question in mind as you read through these first two parts of the book.

What do you want to be known for?

This book will show you how to make that possible. Good luck.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." - Abraham Lincoln

Chapter 1 - Backstory

It was a Friday. It seems it always happens on a Friday. I had interviewed for the position a month ago and had been waiting to find out the verdict. It feels like that, doesn't it? More like a verdict from a judge than a decision from a senior leader.

The call came around three o'clock in the afternoon. "Can you come to my office?" I heard through the phone.

"I'll be right there," I responded. I mean, what else was I going to say? This was, after all, the news I had been waiting for the last five years. I'd put in my time, and now it was my time; I'd earned it. I jumped out of my chair and headed toward his office.

I was confident that this was it. In addition to all my hard work, I was next in line for this promotion. My peers knew it, too, and they all agreed that I was the person for the job. It wasn't just my peers, either; my boss agreed as well. He had told me so just that morning.

All my hard work was about to pay off in the form a promotion, a title, and a door. The corporate office equivalent of the trifecta, the hat trick, or a turkey (a turkey is three strikes in a row in bowling).

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Even though he was expecting me, I knocked on the door to his office before I walked in. “Ryan, come on in; sit down,” he said with a smile, but I could tell by the look on his face that something was not quite right. But I couldn’t be 100 percent sure. After all, he had started with the company only three months ago, and my exposure to him had been limited almost solely to our interview.

He had come from the outside to fill a senior level position left vacant by a restructuring. In all honesty, a lot of people, including myself, thought the position should have been given to an internal candidate who had been in his role for several years. This seemed like the natural progression to many of us, but it was not to be.

I hadn’t even fully settled into the chair when I heard him say, “Ryan, I’m going to cut to the chase. You didn’t get the position.” He went on for a few more minutes, explaining how the company was evolving, taking a new direction, yada yada yada, but I didn’t hear a word. I just stared at him, dumbfounded.

That was how I found myself smack in the middle of a career crisis.

I had no idea how I got there. I had done everything they had asked of me and more. I had twenty-plus years of experience, eight of which had been with this very company. I had learned the ins and outs of the industry, attended trade shows, held customer meetings, negotiated supplier agreements, and built an entire organization from the ground up. Yet here I was on the drive home that Friday afternoon with only one thought in my mind.

I got passed over.

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To say I was devastated would be an understatement. I was at a loss for words, and even worse, no one offered to help. The following Monday I scheduled a meeting with the hiring manager to try to understand why I didn't get the job. What was the skill I was missing, the knowledge I needed to obtain, etc.? Without going into detail, the meeting ended with the comment, "It could have been you."

But it wasn't, and no one could tell me why. Not the hiring manager, not human resources, not even my peers. No one offered any help. I was left alone with my thoughts. I felt totally dejected, and I finally understood what it meant to be a disengaged employee.

At the time I had an hour-long commute to and from work. This provided me with ample time to think about my situation. As I contemplated my career to this point, I started to ask myself a lot of questions.

- What happened?
- Where did I go wrong?
- What do others think about me?
- Is this it? Is this what I'm supposed to do for the rest of my life?

Have you ever asked yourself any of these questions before?

For weeks afterward I struggled to find answers to these questions. And for weeks I continued to come up empty on my own, so I turned to Google. I Googled career crisis and midlife crisis. I read all the resources I could find. I found nothing helpful. It seemed there was no solution for my problem.

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Then one day during my commute, I was listening to a podcast when a glimmer of hope hit me.

The show featured an interview with an executive career coach. The topic was personal branding. I'd never heard of personal branding before, but I do remember when I heard it, I knew immediately this was a big part of my problem. I couldn't explain it, but I knew I needed to develop my personal brand.

Two days later I hired the coach from the podcast. Over the course of next three months, she walked me through the steps of defining my personal brand. This was the beginning of my career transformation.

Wait? I'm Not the Only One?

One of the first things I learned about personal branding is that it is a process. Unfortunately, as personal branding expert Jane Anderson told me during our interview, many people want to skirt the process and not put in the work required to build their brand the right way.

Instead, Jane told me, they approach personal branding as if it's "something you would buy if you have too much money. 'I'd like a personal brand, please. Here's my credit card.'"

Your personal brand is not something you can order and have shipped to you—not by a long shot. Your personal brand is a something you develop over time. What my coach helped me realize during our time together is the importance of understanding and building your brand for your career.

This realization finally hit me on a Saturday afternoon as I was completing an assigned exercise. The exercise was to take an honest look at what I wanted my life to look like in three to five years.

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As I was thinking through where I wanted to be in the future, I considered my ideal job, my ideal workplace, my ideal customers (more on this later), and the different technologies that were in place then and how they could be used to help build my brand.

Being a natural thinker (something I discovered as I went through this process), I started to wonder how I could use my LinkedIn profile to complement my resume and how I could use both to enhance my brand.

Then another thought occurred to me. How do I show up in a Google search?

While not part of the exercise, I decided to find out. So for the first time ever, I typed my name, Ryan Rhoten, into the search bar and hit enter. The results completely surprised me. I realized instantly that I had a problem.

On the surface, you would think my name is pretty unique. I expected to see me on the first page of results. Instead, I discovered I'm not the only Ryan Rhoten in the world. There are four of us.

I didn't show up in the search results until page four, and I was result number eight or nine on that page, nearly 40 results after the first one. I remember thinking to myself, *Nobody is ever going to find me online*. I mean, who looks past page one?

As bad as this sounds—and it is bad for your career, as you'll learn through the course of this book—what was on page one was even worse. One of the other Ryans dominated page one with four or five of the top ten search results.

Why? Because he had recently been arrested, again, for selling drugs.

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As soon as I saw this, it hit me hard. This is what people were finding when they searched for me online. They didn't discover the years of industry experience I have, nor did they see the accomplishments and awards I'd earned over the years. Heck, my LinkedIn profile didn't even show up!

Instead, I was nonexistent, invisible, while the recently arrested person who shares my name was anything but invisible. People searching for me were finding him. Recruiters, hiring managers, potential business clients—they would all find him and not me.

The Game Has Changed

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." —Mahatma Gandhi

During my personal brand journey, a friend recommended a book written by Donald Miller called *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*. The author applies the plot points of a narrative story to our personal lives. One of the plot points he described still stands out in my mind. That plot point is called an inciting incident.

An inciting incident is a place in the story where a problem begins and the protagonist—you in this case—must decide on a path, like Neo from the Matrix choosing the red pill over the blue one.

We all experience inciting incidents in our lives, and if we look at our lives as a narrative, I think you'd agree we are all living out a story. In this story, everything leading up our inciting incidents is considered the backstory. The backstory provides context for what is to come. Our careers are no exception.

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Our career backstory consists of our jobs, our promotions, our experiences, our skills, and our traits. All work together to feed our backstory and provide us with a path along our perceived futures. As you progress along your career narrative, you will also experience inciting incidents.

Some will be of your choosing, while others will come as a complete surprise to you. Whatever your inciting incident is, one thing remains true for each and every one of us. Once we reach it, we have a decision to make. Again, red pill or blue pill?

At this point in the book, I've already provided you with my backstory as well as two inciting incidents. The first inciting incident, my non-promotion, made me consider my path and where my career was headed. I choose the red pill and discovered personal branding.

My second inciting incident was the realization that I was invisible online. This made me consider my online presence and what my friends and my company would think about me. Again I choose the red pill, and this time I discovered the importance of managing one's online reputation.

My inciting incidents left me with simple choices, as yours will do. You can choose the blue pill and carry on with your life and your career. Or you can choose the red pill and discover what you were ultimately meant to become.

Too many people choose to take the blue pill. Maybe they're afraid to rock the boat. Maybe they're afraid to "put themselves out there." The reality is that they've grown comfortable with their life and position. There's nothing wrong with this path. I was on it for most of my life. I was complacent as well.

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It took my inciting incidents to open my eyes and recognize that I was the one holding myself back. Not the boss who didn't promote me, and not Google for putting me on page four. It was me.

If my career was going to change, I had to change. I had to adapt to a new way of looking at my career. It was no longer a straight path or a ladder. No one was watching over my shoulder and telling me what to do next. I needed to own my career because no one else was going to own it for me.

It's been nearly five years now since I took that first metaphorical red pill. During this time, I've asked myself a lot of questions I never imagined before. The questions were always there; I just couldn't see them.

This book is my attempt to help you begin to ask and answer those questions for yourself so you can "plan" your inciting incident rather than have it find you one Friday afternoon. Whatever career formula you have been following, I promise you it has changed. This book will help you discover a new formula.

Looking back, I now know that if I had worked on building my brand sooner, I may never have written this book because I would have received that promotion. Instead, I didn't get the promotion and as a result you're holding five years worth of research from books, blog posts, and seventy-five interviews with career coaches, recruiters, hiring managers, and personal brand experts.

That's the power of the red pill, but as Morpheus tells Neo, you have to see it for yourself. So if you're ready, remember, all I'm offering is the truth about how to build your brand in a way that will get you by raising your visibility online.

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This is the new formula for career success and satisfaction today. The good news is that you can define what success looks like for you. This book will help you get there by leveraging tools already available to you, if you're willing to step out of your comfort zone.

Chapter 2 - About This Book

This book started out as a research project for myself, after being turned down for a promotion and discovering that I am not the only Ryan Rhoten in the world.

In it, you will find everything I know about personal brands, digital brands, and the importance of both for your career. I'll also introduce to you a new word I've coined that I believe sums up perfectly what it takes to stand out and distinguish yourself from others in your field today.

The game has changed. You need to change with it. This book will show you how.

Additionally, I'll introduce you to the Digital Brand Assessment and the DICE process. The assessment is designed to get you started, and the DICE process will help you build and establish your digital brand in order to help you get recognized for your expertise.

What This Book Is Not

Before we dive into the content, I think it's important you understand what this book is NOT.

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This is NOT a how-to job search book. Although the methodology outlined in the book will certainly help you as a job seeker attract new and exciting opportunities, this is not the purpose of this book.

This book is NOT a how-to resume book. If you need help with your resume, do not buy this book. It will not help you. If you are looking for job search and resume help, here are six books I recommend you read:

The Career Upgrade Roadmap: 90 Days to a Better Job and a Better Life by Olivia Gamber

Repurpose Your Career: A Practical Guide for Baby Boomers by Marc Miller

60 Seconds and You're Hired! by Robin Ryan

Navigating Career Crossroads: How to Thrive When Changing Direction by Jane Jackson

The Resume Coloring Book by Lea McLeod

Impact: How to Build your Personal Brand in the Connection Economy by Jane Anderson

I have personally read all of these books as well as interviewed the authors. They are excellent guides on how to conduct a job search and update your resume in today's career environment.

You can listen to my interviews with each of the authors on my podcast, [The BRAND New You Show](#). I discuss each author's book and methodology in detail. So much detail, in fact, that listening to them as you read through the book will help to solidify the concepts in your mind.

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This book is NOT a “quick win” book. Completing the exercises in this book will take you some time, especially during the first step in DICE as you work to define your brand. Building your brand requires you to ask questions you’ve never asked before, such as:

- What do others (your boss, your peers, your friends) think about you?
- What do they say about you when you’re not in the room?

Knowing how others perceive you is immensely powerful because once you know, you can begin to change your behavior if needed. Referencing the old adage of “don’t fix what ain’t broke,” how do you know something “ain’t broke” if you don’t ask the right questions? The answer to these questions is the difference between getting promoted or not. If you’re not willing to ask and answer these questions, this book will not help you, as the answers you discover are the foundation for the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 - The Digital Brand Assessment

I launched the Digital Brand Assessment in January 2015. Its purpose is to help you understand your digital brand. Like it or not, you have one, but the key is how you manage it—which unfortunately many don’t.

We live in a digital-first world, meaning that your online presence (i.e., your digital brand) speaks for you long before you have a chance to speak for yourself. This will only grow more prevalent as time moves on. Because of this, I believe the best opportunities in the future—and the future is now, by the way—will go to those who take the time to define what they want to be known for and then reinforce that in everything they do, both online and offline.

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If you are afraid to put yourself out there, if you believe you don't need an online presence, or if you feel your experiences and skills should speak for themselves, you will be left behind. In the words of the soup Nazi from Seinfeld, there will be “no opportunities for you.”

Each year in December, I update the assessment and relaunch it in January. The updates, like iterations in software development, consist of adding any new things I've learned throughout the year as well as fixing any “bugs” I've discovered along the way. Bugs are any confusing questions, feedback, or comments I've received from individuals who have taken the assessment.

By far, the most common piece of feedback I've received comes in the form of a question. “How do I get started building my digital brand?” This book is the answer to that question.

Since its initial launch, over three thousand people have taken the assessment and received their digital brand score—a rating between zero and 100. A score of 100 indicates that you have a perfect digital brand. Some have come close, but none have met it. The average score at the time of this writing is 30, which isn't bad, but it's not enough to get you noticed or send opportunities your way. If you haven't taken the assessment yet, I encourage you to do so at this point.

What's Your Digital Brand Score?

Have you ever wondered how you show up online? Does your digital brand reflect what you want to be known for?

We live in a digital-first world where everyone turns to Google to learn more about you. This includes recruiters, employers, client and even potential boyfriends and girlfriends.

So, if you haven't already, take a few minutes right now to take the digital brand assessment. Learn your digital brand score and ways you can start to improve it

[Learn more](#)

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Chapter 4 - How to Use This Book

This book walks you through a step-by-step process designed to take you from confusion about your personal and digital brand to a “now I get it” mindset—but only if you follow the steps.

The book is divided into seven parts revolving around two key aspects: your digital brand assessment score and the DICE process. Part One introduces you to the main aspects of the book. In Part Two: CareerKred, we'll discuss the increased importance of standing out in your career and how you can leverage your digital brand to boost your CareerKred.

We will begin diving into the DICE process in Part Three: The Define Step. This step will help you discover your brand. In Part Four: The Integrate Step, you'll learn the importance of integrating your brand digitally and how to do so strategically and on purpose. Part Five: The Create Step, may be a challenge for you as you learn how to create content relevant to your brand. Part Six: The Engage Step concludes the deep dive into the DICE process. Here you will learn how to leverage your online brand and content and discover a few social media tools to really expand your reach.

Part Seven, simply called The Wrap, will bring together everything discussed throughout the book and hopefully push you toward the red pill.

You've heard the expression, “It's simple but not easy”, right? The DICE process is a real life example of this spelled out between the covers of this book. Some exercises will be simple, and easy others will be simple and hard. They will *a//* push you out of your comfort zone.

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Exercises

To get the most from this book, you'll need to complete the exercises. Yes, you will learn things you can apply simply by reading, but completing the exercises will ensure that you have a complete personal and digital brand when you're finished.

To help you complete the exercises and keep all of your discoveries in one place, I have created a companion workbook for this book. You can download a copy of this workbook at <http://careerkredbook.com/workbook>.

I think you'll find this a useful resource not just while reading the book but over time as well because your personal brand can and will change.

The Digital Brand Assessment and DICE

The digital brand assessment and the DICE process are interwoven; they both feed each other. Each section of the DICE process outlined in this book will start with the correlating assessment score, as well as a description of what the score could mean for you.

This is not to say you should start reading the book in the section correlated to your assessment score. Remember, the point is to walk through the DICE process step-by-step. That said, I understand your need to get to the solution that works best for you. Here is how the digital brand assessment aligns with the DICE process.

1. Define your brand: 0 - 25 (35)
2. Integrate your brand online (your digital brand): 26 - 50
3. Create content for your brand: 51 - 75

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4. Engage with your audience: 76 - 100

Let me reiterate. This process works best if followed step-by-step from the beginning. My hope, as you progress through each step, is that you'll understand and see the benefit of following the process. Some of you will think, *I already know my brand, so I'm moving right to step two.* Others may be eager to start creating content.

Here's the funny thing, though: Building your brand is a never-ending process. Every day I learn things about branding that surprise me. That's why I update the assessment every year. Your brand, even if you feel you know it well, will still benefit by taking another peek at it.

The DICE process is not a straight-line process where you go from point A to point B and finish. Rather, it's a circular process that starts over and repeats itself once you've completed the exercises in the last step.

Chapter 5 - Why This Book Is Important

You might be asking yourself, "Why is all this branding stuff so important?" I believe the answer has both macro and micro components—macro being the intangible things that impact us, such as the changing career landscape, new technologies, and so on. Macro components, on the other hand, cause us to change our position or behaviors whether we want to or not. It's the Alan Deutschman philosophy of "change or die."

The micro components are influenced by the macro ones. They are more personal in nature, and they usually have a choice associated with them. I referred to these components earlier as inciting incidents. You can also call them warning shots across the bow. They should make you stand up and take notice.

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Since the great recession, there have been tremendous changes, both macro and micro, in the career landscape. Let's start with the macro components. Thanks to technology we are seeing continuous changes in the way we work and where we work. This is will only accelerate in the coming years.

This acceleration is causing us to reevaluate the world of work we have come to know and accept. This ain't our parents career workplace anymore. Opportunities don't fall to those who can weather out the storm of retirements and the upward promotions that usually accompany them. Those opportunities are few and far between as more and more baby boomers are staying employed longer.

"You Must Kill Your Darlings"

Little did William Faulkner know that his phrase "In writing, you must kill all your darlings" could be applied in so many scenarios. The career space is filled with old methods and processes that many still cling to. In the context of this book, "killing your darlings" means forgetting everything you've been taught about traditional career paths so you can chart a new course.

According to the Future of Work Study conducted by Price Water House Coopers,[1] by the year 2020 40 percent of the workforce in the United States will be freelancers. 2020 is not far away—will you be ready for it?

If you doubt this, take a look around. Have you seen any of your peers laid off in recent years? Have you been laid off? Have you seen jobs you thought were steady positions within a company become obsolete seemingly overnight because of the introduction of a new technology? I think we all have.

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This is why you need to prepare now for what author Taylor Pearson refers to as “the end of jobs.” During our discussion about his book by the same name, Taylor mentioned a startling statistic: Since 2000 the world’s population has outpaced jobs by 2.4 percent. This means the world produces more people than there are jobs available for them.

There are a multitude of reasons for this, and chief among them is every corporation’s desire to increase its efficiencies and reduce its costs. You and I, my friends, are costs. In the past, companies could reduce costs by shifting manufacturing locations, introducing new technology in the manufacturing process, or a combination of both.

These changes typically only impacted blue-collar positions.

This has led a lot of white collar folks to believe that their jobs are safe. This is a dangerous mindset and one that Taylor and I discussed at length during the podcast when he introduced me to a concept known as “silent risk.”

He summarized silent risk perfectly by telling the following story of Tom the Turkey and comparing Tom to a real life friend he referred to as Max the Accountant.

Tom the Turkey

All of us began accumulating silent risk the day we started our careers, not unlike a turkey on a farm. From the moment a turkey is born, it is looked after and fed. Every day the turkey wakes up and uses the previous days to determine what the current day will look like.

Because Tom the Turkey is looking backward to determine its present and future, every day looks bright and normal. Tom is confident he will be fed and allowed to do his job—whatever the job of a turkey is on a daily basis.

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Life goes on this way for Tom the Turkey until Thanksgiving Day when the farmer shows up with an axe.

Does this example seem far-fetched? If so, let me ask you a question. Have you or your peers ever been given notice that the farmer was coming prior to the day he or she showed up? Of course not. In the cases I've personally witnessed, peers who were let go had no idea it was coming. The farmer just showed up with the axe.

Max the Accountant is no different than Tom the Turkey. Max started building up silent risk the day he began working. Every day, he came to work, did his job, and did it well, only to go home at the end of the day and start the cycle again in the morning.

Nothing in Max's past would have led him to believe that this life he had created for himself through his hard work would ever go away. Max prepared for his future by earning advanced degrees in business and tax law.

Unfortunately, like many people, Max was using his past to predict his future. As a result, he didn't notice that people on the other side of the world—the Philippines, for example—were also going to college and earning accounting and other advanced degrees. Some even specialized in tax law.

As Max was working hard at his job, his employers were looking for efficiencies and cost reductions. As they searched, they discovered overseas accounting businesses who specialized in accounting and tax laws but at half the cost of their current accounting department budget.

Max the Accountant had no idea until the farmer showed up at his office.

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The Democratization of Credentials

Many of you will argue with me on this point, but an advanced degree such as an MBA doesn't mean the same thing it used to. If you doubt me, think about this. If you had two candidates you were considering for a position, one who had recently graduated with an MBA, and the other who didn't have an MBA but had a wealth of experience that could be applied now, who would you hire?

For me personally, I will always hire for experience over a degree.

Degrees today don't mean what they once did. Degrees, especially advanced degrees, used to be rare. If you had one, you were worth more in the marketplace. The introduction of the Internet has changed this—I think for the better.

Credentials in the form of degrees, certificates, or certifications are a dime a dozen today. It seems everyone has one. The Internet has made this possible. Colleges now put the entire curriculum for some degrees online for free. If you have the discipline and time, you can earn a college degree at a fraction of the cost and from the comfort of your home.

It is easy to relate credentials to the law of supply and demand. When credentials or advanced degrees were in short supply, the demand for them resulted in higher compensation for the few who had them. However, we have now reached a point where credentials and advanced degrees are no longer in short supply. In some fields, we may even be at a saturation point. Think back to the story of Max the Accountant. Max was competing against people all over the globe with the same degree.

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This overabundance of credentials is causing the job market to reassess their worth. Today, credential holders no longer command the higher compensation that once accompanied their degree. Instead, these degrees have become the starting point for a job description.

Don't take this section the wrong way; I'm not advocating against advanced degrees. But because credentials are more easily obtained today and will only become more accessible to the world as a whole in the future, credentials aren't viewed the same way they have been in the past.

In the future, what will separate you from your competition is your brand, along with your demonstrable experience.

Taylor and others like him believe that "your track record is the new credential." Your experiences and expertise—i.e., your brand—might be what gets you a particular position that once would have required a degree to obtain.

Let's Get Personal

Besides the higher-level macro reasons this book is important, there are also some micro, personal reasons it's worth your time to read. I could start with the obvious and suggest it's because you yourself have been turned down for a promotion—a promotion you felt you deserved.

If this describes you, I am truly sorry. I feel your pain.

Outside of not getting a promotion, perhaps you feel stuck or bored in your career. This happens, especially since many of us are urged to choose a career path at a young age with no real concept of what a career really means. Perhaps you were just following the process your parents taught you.

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Boredom in your career has a funny way of getting compounded with the responsibilities of life. You have bills to pay, a mortgage or rent, maybe children to feed, and of course saving for college, which effectively starts the cycle over again for your children.

All this “stuff” causes you to stay in a job or a career not because you want to but because you feel you have to. When this happens you lose some of your zeal for your work. It becomes routine. You roll into your office, you put in your hours, and if you’re lucky you get moved around into different departments. This helps for a little while, but it doesn’t help you shake the feeling that you’re stuck.

You want more, but you’re not exactly sure what. You are not alone. Here are some other micro reasons that may resonate with you.

- You are not really aware of “your brand.”
- You don't know what your brand is supposed to be.
- You struggle to identify where you add the most value.
- You can't figure out your “why and what you want to say about yourself.
- You are searching for your field of expertise or your niche.
- You want to discover your strengths.

All of these are very personal, micro level reasons for reading this book. We'll address them all—how you can identify your brand, what your strengths are, what to say about yourself, and even how to find your field of expertise.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

This book will also cover things such as how to build your online presence the right way so you can get noticed by recruiters, hiring managers, and people you don't yet know who can help your career.

This book will show you the right way to use the tools at your disposal, such as websites and social media, to increase your visibility and build your digital brand. We'll even cover ways you can position yourself as a subject matter expert while balancing corporate and personal branding.

Everything covered in this book is real and has been applied to myself and my clients. But for any of it to work, there is one key tenet you must adhere to, and that is the notion that you are indeed a brand.

Management guru Tom Peters said it best in his article for *Fast Company* magazine in 1997:

"It's this simple: You are a brand. You are in charge of your brand. There is no single path to success. And there is no one right way to create the brand called You. Except this: Start today. Or else."[2]

So if you're ready to take charge of your brand and push the career mindset of Tom the Turkey to the side, let's get started.

[1] Rendell, M. & Brown, J. (2105). *The Future of Work: A Journey to 2022*, 23. Retrieved from <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/talent/future-of-work/journey-to-2022.html>.

[2] Peters, T. (1997). *The Brand Called You*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you>.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

PART TWO: CAREERKRED

“Every action or perceived inaction shapes credibility.” - Mindy Hall

Chapter 6 - Is Your Brand Costing You Opportunities?

“Our lives are defined by opportunities, even the ones we miss.” — F. Scott Fitzgerald

Repeat after me: “I am a brand.”

Try it again. This time say it out loud. Acknowledging that you are a brand will change the way you look at your career. I know it changed the way I looked at mine.

Say it again. “I am a brand.”

If that sentence scares you or makes you shake your head in disbelief, maybe this book is not for you. If, on the other hand, you believe you are a brand or think you may be one, keep reading.

Even after my coach and I finished our time together, it still took awhile for this concept to sink in because, up until that point, I had always thought brands were for big companies. You probably feel the same way.

Generally speaking, a brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or other feature that distinguishes one seller's product from those of other sellers. The same is true if you apply this to your career. Like a brand, you and I have features such as skills, traits, and expertise that distinguish us from others.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If you are not quite ready to acknowledge you are brand just yet, then let's at least agree for now that from a career standpoint, you are different from others, even if you do the exact same job as someone else.

This notion is critical to the mindset you need in order to grasp and apply the concepts in this book. Whether you see it yet or not, you are a brand in the eyes of others, and for this book to make sense to you, you must also see this in yourself.

To help you grasp this notion, what if you and I were speaking at a conference and I mentioned coffee? What is the first thing that comes to your mind?

Chances are two things happened. First, you probably thought of a brand like Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. Second, you may have felt some type of emotion when you thought about the brand.

The emotion you experienced could be good or bad. Whichever it is, it was formed by your perception and/or experience with the brand. That's why you perceive some brands as great and others as not so good. Your emotions may have been formed as the result of very good customer service or perhaps the opposite.

Either way, when you hear a particular brand mentioned out loud, your emotions come to the surface and you have a very distinct reaction/opinion about the brand.

If you doubt this, I challenge you to ask twenty random people what they think about Starbucks. Do you think all twenty will give you the exact same answer? No, because brand perception is different for everyone.

Personal brands are no different.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If we were talking at the same conference and instead of coffee I said the word product manager, who is the first person that comes to your mind? If you don't know any product managers, then pretend I said tax accountant, attorney, business analyst, or marketing manager? If none of those titles work for you, feel free to substitute your own.

My point here is that whoever's name came to your mind when you thought about the job title I mentioned, that person has differentiated themselves from their competition. Their brand stands out in your mind. Maybe you had a great experience with them on a project or you've seen the work they do from afar. Either way, a person's brand elicits the same emotions as a business brand in your mind and the minds of others.

Still struggling with the concept that you are a brand? This might help. According to Jerry McLaughlin's article on Forbes.com: (3), a brand is:

[A brand is] what your peers think of when he or she hears your name. It's everything the public thinks it knows about your name brand offering—both factual, and emotional. Your brand name exists objectively; people can see it. It's fixed.[1]

In other words, your brand is ultimately the perception others have about you. It's how they distinguish you from someone else.

In the context of your career, your brand is held by anyone you've ever interacted with, from your peers to your bosses. Every day at work, you reinforce and build your brand. If you've built a good brand in other's eyes, it's possible for opportunities to come your way.

On the other hand, if you haven't focused on building your brand and instead left it to chance like Max the Accountant, opportunities will most likely go to someone else. *"Ryan, you didn't get the position."*

CareerKred Parts One and Two

The Old-School Process

"You must unlearn what you have learned." — Yoda

It was neither by accident or intention that I arrived at my career crisis. It was mostly ignorance—ignorance from not understanding I was a brand, from not taking the time to develop my brand, and ignorance from not recognizing the value in distinguishing myself from my competition.

Personal branding expert and author of the books *Reinvent Yourself* and *Stand Out* Dorie Clark told me during our interview, "Standing out (in your career) is no longer an option. It's a necessity." I get this now. I didn't then.

At the time, I thought you stood out in your career by working hard and putting in the time. This was the process my parents followed, and it seemed to work for them. Perhaps you've heard this before.

Get good grades. Go to college. Get a good job.

Work Hard. Live happily ever after. — Mom

Do you subscribe to this philosophy today? I followed this process for most of my career. In fact, I followed it right up to the point of hearing the words, "You didn't get the position." The process that worked so well for our parents no longer works today.

Like many of you, when I got out of college, I followed my parents' formula. I worked hard, and initially my hard work was rewarded with promotions. In hindsight, the promotions only served to strengthen my belief in the process because for the first few years of my career, I was promoted on average once every nine months.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Like an obedient child, I followed the process to a “T,” and I was happy. I was moving up the corporate ladder just like my parents encouraged me to do. I was distinguishing myself from my peers and earning credibility. I was also building up silent risk because the process worked like a charm. Until, one day, it didn't.

You know about that day for me, but what about you? Have you experienced a time when the formula handed down from your parents stopped working? If you have, on that day you started to question everything.

What was it for you? Was it a promotion you didn't? Or was it the day you got your annual review and discovered your boss didn't think you had done as good a job as the previous year? Maybe it was the day you realized your competition for an open position lived on the other side of the world. Whatever it was, it had the same effect on you.

All of a sudden, you felt stuck on whichever rung of the corporate ladder you happened to find yourself. Here's a little secret. There never really was a corporate ladder. It's something somebody, maybe our parents, made up in order to comfort us and keep us moving forward when the days were rough. The problem is, the same “comfort” the ladder provided during those rough days also lulls us to sleep.

Not actual sleep, mind you (unless your name is George Costanza), but the kind of sleep that causes you to become comfortable. The kind of sleep where looking backward convinces you the future is bright. The kind of sleep that drives you to complacency.

And complacency is a career killer.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

The simple truth is that you can't stand out when you are complacent. When you reach this point, there is no chance you will be differentiated from your peers. Your skills, traits and expertise will become hidden in an alphabet soup of corporate titles and jargon—and worse, you might start to like it that way.

You might begin to believe that if you hang on long enough, you'll get the promotion and the salary you deserve. After all, you've got an MBA and all those certifications to boot. But here is something you might have forgotten as you advanced in your career.

You get what you earn.

Complacency causes you to turn this truth around in your head and makes you believe you have already earned what you want.

This mindset is dangerous to your brand. It's a slippery slope that's hard to overcome—just ask Max the Accountant. In fact, if you don't recognize the symptoms, you may never move past it. The brand that once got you recognized as a leader and provided you with new challenges and promotions will begin to fade in the minds of others.

When this happens, you'll find yourself no longer being called upon to take on new projects. You'll watch from the sidelines as others get promoted around you. Your well-respected and hard-earned brand has “suddenly” become less respected, and your credibility begins to dim with it.

Slowly you recognize this is happening and you look for a way to change things, but unfortunately for you, you only know one way, one path, one process for career success: the old-school process that hasn't kept up with the changing times.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If you've read this far, then I believe you are ready to learn a new process, a process that will unfold throughout this book. This new process works in the social world we find ourselves living in, but there is a catch.

The process relies on YOU, not a corporation, for your career success.

As I said earlier, it all starts with you viewing yourself as a business, a brand—or, as my friend and host of *The Voice of Job Seekers* podcast Mark Anthony Dyson says, a consultant—not as an employee. Because as you will discover throughout this book, you are way more than an employee. You are, in fact, a brand.

Chapter 7 - Workplace Credibility

After all of my research and interviews with personal branding and career experts, I've come to believe that the key to career satisfaction, advancement, and maybe even happiness is credibility. If you have it, you can go far. If you don't, well, "Ryan, you're not getting the position."

Credibility is the key to career success. If you doubt this, answer the following questions.

Would you attend a training course run by someone with no experience in the subject?

Would you buy from a salesperson who doesn't know anything about her product or service?

Would you go "above and beyond" for a leader who didn't keep his word?

Would you hire someone for a position who didn't demonstrate that he or she could perform in the role?

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If you are like me, you'd answer "no" to all of these questions. Why? Because if you're going to invest your time, energy, and enthusiasm in someone, you want that person to be credible—i.e., worthy of your trust.

Credibility comes from the root word *credo*, which in Latin which means "I believe." Taking a slightly more modern look at the word *credibility* we find that, according to the *Urban Dictionary*, credibility is *"the quality of being believable or trustworthy."*

A quick Google search for credibility returns this definition: "The quality of being trusted and believed in and the quality of being convincing or believable."

Put simply, credibility is the trust others assign you because of your experiences or actions. Your credibility can help influence people's behaviors as well as their thoughts about you or your area of expertise.

If you, as someone who is seeking a promotion or a new job, are not credible, hiring managers and recruiters will be less likely to trust you. Being credible is what helps people believe that you are worthy of the job at hand.

Credibility portrays you as trustworthy and believable in whatever task you do. Whether you are giving a presentation, delivering training, or selling your ideas, it's credibility that pushes you forward.

Building Your Credibility

If credibility is so important, how can you build it? Unfortunately, there is no single thing that creates credibility. Rather, credibility comes from a combination of things that must be in place in order for you to earn it.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Old-school credibility, like the kind our parents earned, included things like hours worked, projects completed, and maybe even one's arrival time at work. Today credibility encompasses all this plus so much more.

I believe credibility is a by-product of building your brand; it takes time, patience, and consistency.

Credibility also requires character, and building your character requires an understanding of yourself at a deeper level than you do today. For one thing, you need to know your core values. Understanding your values allows you to stand up for what you believe in. This is especially true if your stance is contrary to popular opinion.

More than anything, credibility requires you to become self-aware. You need to know your strengths, what you enjoy, what you are currently known for, and what you want to be known for in the future.

It's hard to build trust and have others believe in you when you don't have an awareness of these things.

Define Your Expertise

"99 percent of my clients know what they don't want, but they don't know what they *do want*." — *Jane Anderson*

Credibility comes from focusing your self-awareness, meaning you need to be known for something. Without being known for something in your career, it is difficult to establish yourself as an expert.

Jane Anderson, personal brand expert and author of the book *Impact*, explained it this way: "You need to become known for knowing something as opposed to knowing something."

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Take a minute and reread Jane's comment. The distinction is subtle but important. We all know something—something about our jobs, our hobbies, or our passions. But do others also know us for that knowledge?

The way to become known for knowing something is by doing something. When you can demonstrate your expertise in a subject matter, whether through experiences or the content you create, you become credible in other people's eyes. But you can't become known for knowing something if you haven't taken the time to define what you want to be known for in the first place.

Think back to the opening question in this section. Would you attend a training course put on by someone who has no experience in the subject? Of course you wouldn't. Because in your mind and everyone else's for that matter, they have no credibility on the subject.

Like your brand, you build your expertise and your credibility each and every day. It can usually be found in a single area or skill set that is unique to you. Your expertise can be in an area within your company or outside of it.

Chances are you don't recognize it now, but you will after you've completed the Define step.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Establish Your Expertise

People who have expertise just love to share it. —David Baldacci

If you and I were to meet at a bar for drinks, and I asked you what you were an expert at, what would your answer be? You either know an answer right away or you don't. A lot my clients can answer this question right away. Many of them truly know what they want to be known for. Some want to be known as an expert in accounting, others in engineering, model airplanes, the latest technology, or even podcasting.

Whichever it is for you, the “what” matters much less than the “who”—as in who knows you're an expert besides yourself?

Today an important part of being credible and trustworthy in other people's eyes is establishing your expertise online. You see, “expert” is a title you can give yourself, but it's much more powerful when others bestow it on you.

Being called an expert by someone else makes you instantly credible to other people. Once you earn this moniker, it's important to protect and reinforce it in whatever area you are known for. The best way to be credible and demonstrate your expertise today is to be found in a Google search.

This is the beginning of being known for knowing something.

During the Integrate step, we will walk through how to integrate your brand online so you show up in search engines in a way that emphasizes your expertise and showcases whatever it is you want to be known for so that others can recognize it.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Would you attend a training course run by someone who shows up on the first page of Google? Of course you would. Todd Lohentry, a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) expert, told me during our podcast interview:

"Showing up in search automatically imparts a certain level of authority and credibility to you. If there are two candidates for a job opening, the person who demonstrates they have done the work is the person who has a leg up in the process, all other things being equal."

To put this in context, as a hiring manager, would you place preference on a candidate who shows up in search demonstrating expertise in the area for which you are looking to hire over a candidate who only provides a resume?

I'm guessing you would, and that's the power of integrating your expertise into your brand online. It helps you demonstrate your work while also adding credibility to your name.

Communication Creates Credibility

"Communication—the human connection—is the key to personal and career success." — Paul J. Meyer

Just as in the offline world, your communication skills in the online world play an important role in your credibility. Communication is the way people get to know and like you. However, in order for you to communicate your expertise or your message, you need a platform from which to do it. This is why I believe a website is so important today in establishing your credibility online.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If you don't have a platform, my friend Shane Purnell, host of the *Platform Giant* podcast, will tell you: You may need to CARVE one out for yourself.

You CARVE your platform through communication, both online and offline. In order for people to see you as credible, you not only need to show up in search engines, but you need to show up for whatever it is you want to be known for. One of the best ways to do this is to voice your thoughts and opinions to the world through a blog.

You'll also want to communicate your thoughts through social media and other online platforms. To become known for what you know, you must take a stance and create content that is unique to you and your expertise. Doing so allows people to understand the depth of your knowledge and form an opinion of you.

This is a key part of becoming credible in someone's eyes. If you consistently demonstrate your knowledge and thoughts about your area of expertise, people will begin to see you as the expert.

Would you hire a person you didn't believe in?

Build Your Tribe

As you begin to establish credibility, a funny thing happens. People start to seek you out. They ask you for your advice, your opinion, your thoughts in your area of expertise. You will also begin to attract like-minded people.

When this happens, you must be able to engage with them.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

It can take a long time to build up your credibility, but only a conversation to destroy it. Think back to the definition of credibility: “The quality of being believable or trustworthy.” If someone were to ask you to have a conversation, and you said yes but then ignored them, do you think this would impact your credibility in that person’s eyes?

If you were a hiring manager, would you hire a candidate that appears highly qualified, has the expertise you are looking for, but won't return your calls? Of course you wouldn't, and neither would I.

In the Engage step, we'll discuss all the different ways you can maintain and boost your credibility.

Influence

A side effect of building your brand and credibility is influence. *Influence*, according to the Urban Dictionary, is “the power to change, encourage, or make a difference without force.”

Influence is also “the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something.”

In other words, influence means you are able to affect action. As a career professional, your goal is to influence hiring managers and recruiters to make the right decision—i.e., hire you.

The more you demonstrate your expertise, the more credibility, influence, and authority you will have in other people’s minds. The authority they impart to you in their minds only comes after you’ve established a certain level of “I know what I am talking about.” Or as Marc Miller, career coach and host of the *Repurpose Your Career* podcast, likes to say, “You’ve answered the question, ‘How do I know that you know your stuff?’”

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Chapter 8 - CareerKred

"If people like you they will listen to you, but if they trust you, they'll do business with you." — Zig Ziglar

Credibility plays a huge role in your career. However, chances are good you don't recognize it in yourself. Credibility is what gets you promoted, it's what sends opportunities your way and not someone else's way. When you get opportunities that others do not, it's because people see you as not just capable but also credible. You are both believable and trustworthy in their eyes.

As I mentioned earlier, you build credibility and demonstrate capability each and every day throughout your career. With each successful project you complete, experience you gain, or blog post you write, you are earning trust and building influence. You are becoming more and more credible.

I'll take a leap here and assume that everyone who reads this book has heard of the term *street cred*. The Urban Dictionary defines *street cred* as "commanding a level of respect in an urban environment due to experience in or knowledge of issues affecting those environments."

While your experiences in an urban environment may be minimal, you can earn "street cred" in the corporate environment due to your experience and knowledge in your area of expertise. I call this CareerKred.

CareerKred is the influence and trust you earn through your actions and experiences as they relate to your career.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

A quick note here about the word *career*. A career is defined as a profession that someone does for a long time. A profession on the other hand is a job that requires special education, training, or skills, while a job is simply the work that a person does regularly in order to earn money.

For the purpose of this book, a career is the work you do to earn money on a regular basis that requires education, training, and skills. This includes work in a corporate environment, a start-up, freelancing, coaching, or even work you do from home on the side. CareerKred is not tied to a specific type of job.

Like street cred, CareerKred is earned over time. It provides the social proof you need to show you can indeed change, encourage, and make a difference in the lives of individuals and businesses you work with.

When you have CareerKred, people recognize it and are drawn to you. They trust what you say and believe you are the right person for the job. Your CareerKred is what will drive opportunities to you.

CareerKred Used to Be Local

Like the Force in *Star Wars*, CareerKred has always been with you. It started the moment you took your first job, and you've been building it or losing it ever since.

There's something interesting about CareerKred, though. Not long ago, it was only earned locally. The only people who acknowledged your CareerKred were the people in your building, your office, or your company. The exception to this was if you worked directly with clients and customers.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Unless you had an insider connection to another company, your CareerKred was largely non-existent to anyone outside of your company. That's how the resume became so important in the job search process. How would a company know about your CareerKred if you didn't provide it to them? The resume served this purpose.

Within your company, your CareerKred was earned your through your actions and interactions with others. You came to work, did a great job, and people took notice. Hopefully your CareerKred was recognized by those "above" you and you were rewarded either with a promotion—or if you weren't quite ready for a promotion, you might have been placed in a company-sponsored professional development program. Remember those?

In those days companies really seemed to care about their employees and a once-popular measured metric called employee retention, which was the precursor to the modern-day employee engagement metric. Oddly enough, while employers still track employee retention, it's no longer discussed during board meetings and has been mostly relegated to a human resources measurement.

Employee retention programs were eventually renamed . . . *replaced* . . . with the much more pleasing-sounding "professional development programs." The purpose of these programs was an attempt to keep you around as an employee, to give you hope that there was another rung on the corporate ladder for you. Companies recognized your "local" expertise and did not want to lose you. They wanted to keep your CareerKred within their four walls.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

If you're smiling as you read that last sentence, you are not alone. In the years since the Great Recession, the local CareerKred environment has changed dramatically. Largely tied to our earlier discussion on efficiencies and reducing costs, in their quest to please "The Street," companies did away with employee retention and professional development programs as success metrics and instead decided to let you figure out your own career path—something for which none of us have been trained.

Today it's easier and less expensive for companies to hire for the role, not develop for potential. This mindset has been largely driven by the Internet and the rapid advancement of technology. As Taylor Pearson and I discussed in a recent podcast interview, it's much less expensive now for a company to hire your skill set at a lower wage from someone thousands of miles away with similar degrees and experiences.

My guess is you've probably seen this very thing happen within your company. Jobs have been outsourced overseas, or open positions within the company—especially senior level positions—have been filled by people from outside the company.

The Internet and advancing technologies will only accelerate this trend. Artificial intelligence algorithms will one day replace jobs that were once considered "sacred" within a company. When this happens, no jobs will be safe.

All of this is to say that the career formulas and paths you once knew, the ones that would help you advance locally, have become obsolete. You need a new path, one that is designed with the new career environment in mind. You require a path that allows you to chart your own course, choose your own adventure, and decide what you want to become known for.

To do this you must not only begin to think and act like a brand and a business of one, but you must also begin to think globally.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Think Globally

To advance in today's career environment, you must think globally. The very same forces that created the outsourcing trend are also the very forces that can free you from the old-school career path. If you're willing to accept the concept of CareerKred, that is.

As you might imagine, earning your CareerKred is a lot different today than it was a few years ago, and this is a very good thing for us in terms of branding. For starters, we can now earn CareerKred globally. Between the Internet and social media, we now have the ability to establish our expertise in a way that will resonate with people on the other side of the world, without showing them an old-school paper resume.

The Internet and social media have given job seekers and career-minded professionals the greatest career gift possible when it comes to earning CareerKred. Both the Internet and social media, if used intentionally and correctly, can make people and opportunities seek you out for your expertise.

But there is a "dark side" to the Internet and social media as well. You see it in the news every week. Some numbskull posts something online about his boss or his work hours and gets fired for it. You can also see it in every politically charged post online via Twitter or Facebook.

And while it may very well be your "right" to post whatever you want online, you do need to be prepared to get passed over for a job or miss some other opportunity you may be seeking because you choose to post something objectionable online.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Whether you like it or not, people judge you and make decisions about you based on what they find online. With every post you write, picture or video you upload, you leave behind a digital footprint for the entire world to see.

There are those who proclaim that they don't want to put themselves "out there" and thus refuse to embrace the concepts we'll discuss in this book. If this is your belief, I want you to read the next sentence carefully.

You already have an online presence, whether you want one or not.

Think about it. Do you have an account on any social media sites? (This includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) Have you ever commented on a blog post, contributed to an online discussion, created a profile to donate to a cause, or been mentioned by others in any of the above items? If so, you have an online presence.

If you answered no to all of those questions, then you have, at least to this point, achieved invisibility online. But before you congratulate yourself, understand that, with a few quick keystrokes in the Google search bar, recruiters and hiring managers can find candidates within seconds for their open positions.

Care to guess what happens when they type your name in the search bar if you have no online presence?

If you're invisible, they move on. If, on the other hand, you do turn up in a search and what is displayed aligns with what the recruiter is looking for, you might just receive a call for an opportunity you didn't even apply for.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Think and Act Like a Consultant

In today's global career environment, in addition to having a defined digital brand, you must also begin to think of yourself as a consultant versus an employee.

To boost your CareerKred today, you must think bigger. You must think beyond the scope of your role at your company. Think beyond the title you've been given and consider the skills and experiences you've gained during your career and how you can apply them as the brand of you . . . as a business of one . . . as a consultant, selling your skills and services to the highest bidder.

This book would never exist if I had continued to play the "head down, do your work" game. And believe me, I played that game. I was good at that game, because it was the only game in town.

My guess is that you are good at the game as well. But the fact that you picked up this book tells me that you are looking for something more for both your life and your career.

The good news is that this book will allow you to skip ahead about five years, which is how long it took me to learn the lessons you'll find within these pages. Together we'll walk through the steps required to build your CareerKred to a place where you will be noticed—not just locally but globally as well.

But to get there, you have to think bigger than you do today. You have to come out from the shadows of invisibility. You have to see yourself as a business of one. Whether you are an employee, a freelancer, a side business owner, or a full-fledged entrepreneur, building your CareerKred starts with a very simple concept; *You are a brand.*

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Chapter 9 - The DICE Process

“Developing your personal brand is the same thing as living and breathing your résumé.” — Gary Vaynerchuk

When I heard the words, “Ryan, you didn’t get the position,” I didn’t realize my CareerKred was at an all-time low. But I did realize that I had two choices: continue down the same path or figure out a solution to move forward. That day I decided it was time to try a different path. Red pill, please.

That decision led to another, and another, and another, until eventually I discovered personal brands, personal branding, and the importance of developing and maintaining CareerKred. That single decision opened a new world of possibilities to me. Possibilities I didn’t even know existed because they couldn’t be seen from the well-worn path.

As I continued on my new journey, I picked up new skills along the way. I learned how to assess my strengths, how to define my brand, how to build websites, how to start a blog, and most importantly, why this stuff is important anyway.

I learned how to stand out from the crowd, become more visible, get recognized for my expertise, and how anyone, with enough hard work and effort, can use today’s technology to impact his or her career.

Continuing down this path, I started to ask myself how could I help others do the same. Reflecting on this question, I noticed that everything I was blogging about, talking about, and learning about lived in three circles: personal brands, online reputation management (digital brand), and careers.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

For the longest time, I saw these three circles as separate. Then one day, in a caffeinated state of awareness, it occurred to me that the three circles overlapped like a big Venn diagram. And at the center of this overlap was the process I now call DICE.

DICE is the formula I created for building your brand and boosting your CareerKred in today's digital-first world. It will help you grow an audience, become visible online, and gain recognition for your accomplishments and expertise.

As you probably guessed, DICE is an acronym. It represents a four-step process that includes Define, Integrate, Create, and Engage. For the remainder of this book, we will walk through this process step-by-step.

Overview of DICE

I mentioned it earlier but it bears repeating: For you to really grasp the concepts in this book, you must understand that each of us are a business of one. We are not employees. We are consultants selling our services, our skills, our traits, our training, and our expertise to the highest bidder.

Over the years I have watched the hiring process switch from one where individuals were hired based on resumes and interviews to one where an individual's skills are now assumed, and that person's ability to demonstrate those skills and expertise (CareerKred) in the public eye has become the deciding factor between him or her and all other candidates.

So how does the DICE process help you build CareerKred? It all starts by defining your brand.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Define

“Strong people define themselves; weak people allow others to define them.” — Ken Poirot

We often compare ourselves to others, and this is especially true in our careers. Unconsciously, we equate our success with the success we see in others. In order to define YOUR brand, you must stop comparing yourself to others and begin to recognize the value you add and how you make a difference.

The Define step is not easy. It is the biggest section in this book for a reason. It's about asking hard questions of yourself, determining the value you add in the world, and identifying how you make a difference. It's about discovering your strengths and learning to focus on them instead of trying to fix your weaknesses.

More than anything, the Define step requires self-awareness. Self-awareness is having a solid understanding of who you are and how you relate to the world. Self-awareness is about being mentally and emotionally present in situations and understanding how you can best contribute.

It's also about being clued in to what you truly like and dislike.

Make no mistake: The Define step is real, hard work. Unfortunately, many people I work with want to skip this step. Why? Because it's not sexy, it requires introspection, and it can take a while to wrap your head around it. But here is my warning to you based on my experiences with clients:

People who skip this step will never live up to their full potential.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

The Define step lays the groundwork for the rest of the DICE process. If you skip it, your branding efforts will fall short. You will not earn CareerKred because you will not understand how to link your strengths to what you want to become known for. You will not be ready for the next step in the process, the one everyone wants to skip right to: Integrate.

Integrate

Let me reiterate that you cannot successfully integrate yourself online if you don't know what you want to be known for. Why? Because the Integrate step is all about telling the world who you are and how you add value to it. This is what people want to find when they search for you online. They do not want to find pictures of the party you attended last weekend. At least most people don't.

We live in a digital-first age.

This means that your first encounter with hiring managers, recruiters, or potential customers (you can even add potential boyfriends and girlfriends here) will more than likely happen online. That's why it's so important for you to have a platform you, not Google, control, one where you can demonstrate your expertise.

The Integrate step isn't to be done willy-nilly or taken lightly. Your online profile, your digital brand, is the de facto resource people will use to judge you before they ever meet you in person. And let's face it, we all judge others by what we find online. Why should someone judging you be any different?

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Posting pictures of kittens, puppies, and parties online will not gain you a spec of CareerKred, no matter how hilarious or entertaining they might be—unless, of course, kittens, puppies, and parties are your thing. The Integrate step is about strategically crafting your online presence, taking the brand you uncovered in the Define step and putting it online for all to see.

The Integrate step starts with a Google search for your name. Have you ever done this before? Judging by what I see posted online, I'd venture to say that many people haven't. Every day, people, maybe even you, post pictures of stupid crap, or sign up for the latest social media “thing,” only to abandon it after a day, a week, or a month. If this is you, please stop now.

This behavior leaves you with an online presence so scattered that no recruiter, hiring manager, potential customer, boyfriend, or girlfriend will ever pursue you. In the discerning eyes of a recruiter, you will come across as not professional, and you will quickly become lost in the crowd and passed over.

The Integrate step, when done correctly, helps you tell your story online in a way that allows your CareerKred to shine and makes you stand out from the crowd so people take notice. It ensures that when you are found in a search, you show up for whatever it is you want to be known for.

At a high level, the Define and Integrate steps are designed to help others get to *know* you. But for people to start to like you, you will need to give them a reason beyond just showing up in a search result. Which is why the next step of the DICE process is Create.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Create

“Don’t tell people your dreams, show them.” — Anonymous

Create can be a challenging step, but it’s a really important part of the process for boosting your CareerKred. Its purpose is to get people to like you—or not. You’ll find out more what I mean by that last part a little later, but for now consider that it’s OK if people don’t like you during this step. In fact, it’s almost desired.

Stepping out of your comfort zone during the Create step is also required. Shannon L. Alder once said, “Life always begins with one step outside of your comfort zone.”[2] I understand now that when I heard the words, “You didn’t get the position,” it was largely because I had stopped pushing the boundaries of my comfort zone. I had become comfortable and complacent. As a result, my CareerKred had been diminished.

The Create step will change all this for you.

The Create step is you telling the world who you are and how you add value by creating content in your area of expertise for others to consume. In large part, this means you will share your thoughts in public.

The best way to create content is to start blogging. The preferred method is to do this on a website you own and control, but there are other methods as well, and later we’ll discuss the pros and cons of each. Having your own place on the Internet is a critical part of the Integrate step.

For many of you, blogging will be difficult at first. This will be especially true if you haven’t taken the time to Define what you want to be known for. The Define step is so important to the Create step that if you skip it, you will not be able to move forward in the DICE process.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Creating content in your area of expertise will most likely begin with writing. This is where all of my content creation starts. In addition to writing, other types of content you will create might include images, audio, and video. I view all of these as a pyramid, with one stacked on top of the other. Writing is at the base of the pyramid; it serves as the foundation. In terms of sophistication, it's the easiest to execute because it only requires your brain and some writing tools. The other content types sit on top of written content, and we'll discuss each in detail in the Create section of this book.

The content you create in this step will act as a magnet, repelling those who don't like your thoughts, insights, and ideas, and attracting those who do. This magnet helps people know where you stand; it gives them an idea of who you are, how you think, and what you're about. Based on your content, people will either like you or not.

If they don't like your stance or your thoughts, they will move on to someone else—and this is a good thing. The Create step is the key to providing insight into you as a person or potential employee. This is what helps companies determine cultural fit.

Once you've used your content to tell the world who you are and how you add value, you'll move into the final step in the process, Engage.

Engage

By the time you get to the Engage step, you have defined your brand and what you want to be known for. You have strategically integrated your brand online in a way that will highlight your CareerKred, and you've started sharing your thoughts and expertise online.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

As a consultant, as a business of one selling your services to your customer (i.e., employer), it is important for people to get to know, like, and trust you in order for them to do business with you. At this point in the DICE process, you have given anyone searching for you online all the reasons they need to know and like you. The Engage step will help you build trust.

There is no mystery to the Engage step. It is exactly what you think it is. It's reaching out to like-minded peers to build your network within your industry and outside of it. You'll do this by engaging with them via social media, meet ups, or even a good old-fashioned phone call.

The Engage step requires direct interaction with the audience you have built or are trying to reach. This interaction will help you build trust with people who can further help you grow your CareerKred. Ultimately, the Engage step will have an impact on your career.

At this stage of the DICE process, it's important for your message to remain consistent. You've worked yourself to a point where people trust you, which means they expect certain topics and conversations from you. This doesn't mean you can't go "off-brand" occasionally, but to do that, you need to have earned trust by following all of the steps in the DICE process.

Hopefully, you can see how the DICE process works at a high level. Of course, within each step there are a host of little steps and important details that will need to be implemented or at least considered before we move on.

Speaking of moving on, I'm ready to get going, aren't you? If so, I offer some final words of wisdom to help you get into the right mindset.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

Some will follow you and some won't. But somewhere out there, someone is waiting for you and your message. Wouldn't it be a shame to deny that person (company or client) the benefit of your wisdom?

So if you're ready, let's go!

Get your digital brand score

Take the assessment. Learn your score. Start boosting your CareerKred today.

[Take the Assessment Now](#)

[1] McLaughlin, J. (2011). *What is a Brand, Anyway?* Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jerrymclaughlin/2011/12/21/what-is-a-brand-anyway/#57355f572aa4>.

[2] Alder, S. GoodReads.com. Quotes by Shannon Alder. Retrieved from <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/736100-life-always-begins-with-one-step-outside-of-your-comfort>.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

LOOKING FOR HELP IMPLEMENTING YOUR DIGITAL BRAND ONLINE?

If you are interested in hiring Ryan to help build your digital brand, whether business or personal, there are a variety of ways you can work with him.

Speaking engagements

Ryan is available for a variety of presentations and breakout sessions on all the topics covered in this book:

- Unpacking your process to unlock your brand's potential
- Leveraging your digital brand to build your CareerKred
- Build your personal brand digitally in four simple steps
- Creating your executive, C-Suite, and CEO brand
- Accelerate your content production using the Content Pyramid

Unpack your process

This is a one-on-one, one-hour session where Ryan will guide you through unpacking your coaching process step-by-step. Once completed, Ryan will “reassemble” your process visually in order to provide you with a brandable and marketable coaching method you can use to provide clarity to your clients. In addition, Ryan will also show you how you can leverage your process to create lead magnets, eBooks, marketing funnels, an online course outline, and a content schedule so you never need to worry about what to post again.

CareerKred Parts One and Two

CareerKred Assessment

This one-hour, lightning-round session is for individuals and small business brands where Ryan will personally help you assess where your brand stands today and the key next-step actions you need to take in order to boost your CareerKred and build your digital brand. During the call Ryan will assess your online and social media presence, and the call will conclude with Ryan's findings and recommendations.

Boost Your CareerKred

This is a six- to twelve-month customized program. Ryan will personally work with you one-on-one and serve as your brand manager to help you design and implement a digital branding strategy just for you. This is the ultimate CareerKred boosting package for executives who understand the importance of establishing their online presence, their thought leadership, and their overall digital brand as it relates to their career.

Digital Branding Package for Small Business and Coaches

Many coaches and small business owners Ryan works with suffer from two things: the "curse of knowledge" and being busy beyond belief. In this three- to six-month program, Ryan will provide you with both front-end and back-end consultation and the implementation you need to get your brand recognized. The program is tailored to meet your needs and could include content identification, content repurposing, lead magnet and sales funnels set up, podcast set up, email marketing, and inbound marketing services