

Job Seekers Need to Focus on Their LinkedIn Brand

By Kelly Clay on May 20 2015 // No Comments [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [in](#)

Looking for a new job? Before you send your cover letter and résumé to a prospective employer, consider whether you're really setting yourself apart from other candidates.

While the economy is improving, landing jobs — especially high-paying jobs on the Eastside — can be difficult, as competition is fierce. A glut of talented workers means most job openings are flooded by skilled applicants, and having a friend on the inside who can flag your application isn't necessarily enough to give you an edge. My recent failed attempt to land a high-profile, high-paying gig at a local tech company where my friend was a marketing VP taught me this firsthand.

Landing a job is all about being able to sell yourself as a product and a brand. Says Lisa Quast, an Eastside-based certified executive coach and author of *Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach*: "Developing a personal brand is similar to the technique used by companies to brand products. The overall goal is to differentiate yourself (the product) from others so you can attain your objectives, such as landing a job or promotion. It isn't a requirement as part of the job search process, but I've watched it work well to help job seekers stand out from the crowd."

Quast likes to share the story of a former client who was working in a position that had nothing to do with her dream job of leading large, cross-function projects. "She had excellent skills in this area, as well as certifications in project management, process improvement, and Lean," Quast says. "After going through the steps of personal branding, we rewrote her résumé and LinkedIn profile to repackage her experience and expertise, and then created a marketing plan with all the actions she could take to get herself known as a project management expert. Her personal branding efforts led to inquiries from recruiters through her LinkedIn account, more in-person job interviews, and eventually led to a project manager position at a company with great potential for her future career advancement."

Quast's advice helped the client drastically pivot and improve her career in a very meaningful and strategic way. But how does someone wake up one day — like Elle Woods did in *Legally Blonde* with her decision to suddenly go to law school — and decide to embark on an entirely different career path?

And then how does one actually accomplish it?

Honing your personal brand is the most important thing to consider before you even think about pursuing your next opportunity.

Much of it starts with how you present yourself, especially on LinkedIn. Quast says major turnoffs for recruiters include incomplete profiles, those without a picture or a picture that lacks professional judgment, and bad grammar and spelling. It isn't a contest of who's the most creative in their use of LinkedIn; it's about using the application to its full potential.

For those seeking a new profession, consider doing what Quast's client did: Repackage your work history on LinkedIn so it reflects not just what you currently do, but what you aspire to do.



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To better understand what it takes to adjust your personal brand, I recently sat down with Quast to discuss my own career. After talking for nearly two hours, I walked away with pages of advice. And I thought I had it all figured out!

If you are stuck in a job-searching rut, a career coach might be exactly what you need. "All the best athletes use coaches to help them excel in their area of expertise," Quast says. "The same holds true for career coaches. They help clients excel in their careers."

She notes, however, that "the key for people seeking a career coach is to find the most highly qualified person — someone who has 'been there, done that.' Look at the coach's background and experience and determine if it fits your needs. For example, if your goal is to advance into an executive-level position for a multinational corporation, find career coaches who have done exactly that in their careers. If you're entrepreneurial and thinking about starting your own business, look for career coaches who have started and grown several successful companies."

Whether or not you work with a career coach, honing your personal brand is the most important thing to consider before you even think about pursuing your next opportunity. You don't need to start a blog or hire a stylist at Nordstrom (though I personally recommend and enjoy both on a regular basis), but your LinkedIn profile deserves attention. Make sure you have a picture, the grammar is correct, and you have solid descriptions of every job you've held for the past five to 10 years. As Quast says, "Savvy job seekers understand that their LinkedIn profile is a great way to advertise and to provide information for recruiters and hiring managers about their background, accomplishments and the story of their work history."

Don't have a LinkedIn profile? Forget applying for jobs. Work on your LinkedIn brand now, and you'll find your next job much faster — and it likely will come with a much higher salary.



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