

1.4: Selling U- The Power of Your Personal Brand

Learning Objectives

- Understand how the selling process can help you get the job you want.

Ultimately, this book is about the power of YOU.

To help you realize that power and get the job you want, this textbook includes a section called *Selling U*. It is the final section in every chapter, and it is filled with proven methods, information, examples, and resources to help you apply the selling concepts you learned in the chapter so that you may sell yourself to get the job you want.

In the *Selling U* sections throughout this book you'll learn skills, such as how to create a cover letter and résumé that help you stand out, how to communicate with prospective employers, how to go on successful interviews, how to follow up, and how to negotiate and accept the right job offer. The complete table of contents is shown here.

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Getting Started

Some people know exactly what they want to do in life. Madonna, Venus and Serena Williams, Steve Jobs, and countless others have been preparing for their chosen careers since they were young. Dylan Lauren, daughter of designer Ralph Lauren and chief executive of Dylan's Candy Bar, could see her path even when she was young. With a father who was a fashion designer and her mother a photographer, she said, "I always knew I wanted to be a leader and do something creative as a career." Patricia R. Olsen, "Sweets Tester in Chief," *New York Times*, June 7, 2009, business section, 9. Katy Thorbahn, senior vice president and general manager at Razorfish, one of the largest interactive marketing and advertising agencies in the world, always knew she wanted to be in advertising. Her father was in advertising, her uncle was in advertising, and she had an internship at an advertising agency, so it was no surprise that she pursued a career in advertising. You probably know some people like this. They know exactly the direction they want to take and how they want to get there.

It's not that way for everyone, however. In fact, most people don't really know what they want to do for a career or even what types of jobs are available. Whether you are currently working at a job or you are just beginning to determine your career direction, it's never too early or too late to learn about what career might be a good fit for you. It's a good idea to use the three steps outlined

below to help you begin your career search. These steps can be most effective if you complete them even before you put together your résumé (you'll get the tools to create your résumé and cover letter in *Selling U* in Chapter 2).

Step 1: Explore the Possibilities

Whether you know your direction or are trying to figure out what you want to do “when you grow up,” there are some excellent tools available to you. The best place to start is at your campus career center. (If your school does not have a career center, visit the library.) The people who work there are trained professionals with working knowledge of the challenges to overcome, as well as the resources needed to conduct a career search. People find that visiting the career center in person to meet the staff is a great way to learn firsthand about what is available. Also, most campus career centers have a Web site that includes valuable information and job postings.

At this stage in your career search, you might consider taking a **career assessment survey**, **skills inventory**, and/or **aptitude test**. If you're unsure about your direction, these tools can help you discover exactly what you like (and don't like) to do and which industries and positions might be best for you. In addition, there are many resources that provide information about industries, position descriptions, required training and education, job prospects, and more. These are especially helpful in learning about position descriptions and job opportunities within a specific industry.

Here are some resources that you may find to be a good place to begin a search. Most of the Web sites listed provide surveys exercises and information at no charge.

Table 1.4.1: Resources for Your Job Search

Resource	Description
Career One Stop www.careeronestop.org/SKILLS/SkillCenterHome.asp	Information, job profiles, skills assessment, and more information available at no charge. The Skill Center is especially helpful. The site also includes salary and benefits information as well as other job search information.
Job Hunter's Bible http://www.jobhuntersbible.com/counseling/index.php	Links to job assessment tests, personality tests, and more. This is the companion Web site to the popular best seller <i>What Color Is Your Parachute?</i>
Queendom, the land of tests http://www.queendom.com/tests/testscontrol.htm?s=71	Free tests for leadership, aptitudes, personality traits, and more.
Riley Guide rileyguide.com/assess.html#tools rileyguide.com/careers.html	A robust Web site with free information and links to help with your career search. The assessment section and career and occupational guides are especially helpful. (Some charges may apply on some linked sites).
Career-Intelligence.com www.career-intelligence.com/assessment/career_assessment.asp	Self-administered career assessment tests, personality tests, and more; charges apply.
Lifeworktransitions.com www.lifeworktransitions.com/exercises/exercls.html	Articles and exercises to help you determine your strengths, passions, and direction available at no charge.
United States Department of Labor Career Voyages www.careervoyages.gov/automotive-main.cfm	Free information about industries, jobs, and more, including in-demand jobs.
United States Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook www.bls.gov/oco	Free detailed information about occupations by industry, training and education needed, earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job, and more.

Step 2: Create Your Personal Mission Statement

You might be thinking that you just want to get a simple job; you don't need an elaborate **personal mission statement**. Although you may not be asked about your personal mission statement during an interview, it is nonetheless important, because it provides you with a concrete sense of direction and purpose, summarized in relatable words. Great brands have clear, concise mission

statements to help the company chart its path. For example, Google’s mission statement is “To organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.”Google, “Corporate Information, Company Overview,” <http://www.google.com/intl/en/corporate/> (accessed June 6, 2009). The mission statement for Starbucks is “To inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time.”Starbucks, “Our Starbucks Mission,” www.starbucks.com/mission/default.asp (accessed June 6, 2009).

It’s worth your time to write a personal mission statement. You might be surprised to discover that people who have a personal mission statement find it easier to get an enjoyable job. This is precisely because a personal mission statement helps provide framework for what’s important to you and what you want to do and accomplish.

A mission statement is a concise statement about what you want to achieve—the more direct, the better. It should be short (so don’t worry about wordsmithing) and easy to recall (you should always know what your mission statement is and how to measure your activities against it). A mission statement should be broad in nature. In other words, it doesn’t specifically state a job you want. Instead, it describes who you are, what you stand for, what you want to do, and the direction you want to take.Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 18.

✓ Links

Learn more about how to write your personal mission statement.

Quintessential Careers

www.quintcareers.com/mission_statements.html

www.quintcareers.com/creating_personal_mission_statements.html

Nightingale Conant

www.nightingale.com/tmission_ExampleStatement.aspx

Time Thoughts

www.timethoughts.com/goalsetting/mission-statements.htm

Once you write your mission statement, you should put it somewhere where you can see it daily—perhaps on your computer wallpaper, on your desk, or on the back of your business card. It should remind you every day of your personal goals.Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 20.

Step 3: Define Your Personal Brand

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

You’ve learned about the power of a brand in the selling process and that a brand can be a product, service, concept, cause, or even a person. Truly, the most important product, brand, or idea you will ever sell is yourself.Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 1. You’re not just a person, you’re a brand. When you begin your job search, you will need to sell yourself to prospective employers. When you sell yourself effectively, you will be able to sell your ideas, your value, your experience, and your skills to get the job you want.

It’s easy to talk about brands. It’s harder to define one, especially when the brand is *you*. Many people feel uncomfortable talking about themselves. Others feel as if they are bragging if they are forced to put themselves in a positive light. The fact of the matter is, to be successful and stand apart from the competition, you have to know yourself and carefully craft your brand story.Peggy Klaus, *Brag: How to Toot Your Own Horn without Blowing It* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2003), 3. For the purposes of finding a career, it is important to carefully consider what you believe defines you—what makes you unique, consistent, and relevant—and how to tell your brand story to create an emotional connection with prospective employers.

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

Many students might answer this question by saying, “I’m hardworking, I’m determined, and I’m good with people.” Although those are good characteristics, they are too generic and don’t really define you as a brand. The best way to tell your brand story is

to use the characteristics of a brand covered earlier in this chapter—unique, consistent, and relevant and creating an emotional connection with its customers.

If you identify three “**brand points**” you can tell a much more powerful brand story. Brand points are like platforms that you can use to demonstrate your skills and experience. Here are some examples of powerful brand points:

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

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

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

You Have More to Offer Than You Think

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

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

Creating your brand points can effectively make the difference between being an ordinary applicant and being the person who lands the job. Indeed, your brand points are the skeletal framework for the way you sell yourself to get the job you want. You’ll learn how to use your brand points as the core of your résumé, cover letter, and interviews in Chapter 2 and Chapter 10.

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

✓ Suggestions for Brand Points

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

- Sales experience (or experience in marketing, retail, finance, etc.)
- Project management experience
- Leadership experience
- Management experience
- Negotiating experience
- Work ethic and commitment (e.g., working while going to school)

- Entrepreneurial experience (e.g., eBay or other small business experience)
- Customer service experience (e.g., working in a restaurant, retail store, bank)
- Academic achievement
- Subject matter expert (e.g., author of a blog)
- International study
- Community service

Key Takeaways

- *Selling U* is the final section in each chapter that provides information, resources, and guidance about how to sell yourself to get the job you want.
- Getting started for your job search includes three steps:
 1. Explore the possibilities. Learn about yourself through **career assessment surveys**, **skills inventory questionnaires**, and **personality tests**. Investigate industries in which you may want to work by using the resources provided. Don't forget to visit your campus career center.
 2. Write a personal mission statement. State your purpose briefly and concisely. It will help you plot your course.
 3. Define your personal brand. Identify three **brand points** that define your personal brand and become platforms on which to showcase your skills and experience. These three **brand points** will be the basis of your résumé, cover letter, and interviews.

? Exercise 1.4.1

1. Visit at least two of the Web sites listed in Table 1.1 for a career assessment, skills inventory, or personality test. Complete at least one of the free tests or surveys. Discuss one thing you learned (or the test confirmed) about yourself.
2. Write your personal mission statement. Discuss what you learned about yourself by creating it.
3. Discuss how the characteristics of a brand can relate to a person (e.g., unique, consistent, and relevant and has an emotional connection with its customers).

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