

8.6: Selling U - Six Power-Packed Tools to Let the Right People Know about Your Brand

Learning Objectives

- Learn about six different ways to get your cover letter and résumé to the right people.

Now that you understand how preparation can help you be successful in selling, let's go back to selling the most important brand of all—you! In the *Selling U* section in Chapter 7, you did your research, identified and qualified your twenty-five target companies, and obtained the contact information for at least two key people at each organization. Of course, there is still some homework to do before you see the payoff of securing an interview. However, you can think of this step in the process as the exciting part. Consider what happens when a company releases a new product. The company doesn't keep the news to themselves, discreetly shipping the product out to stores with the hopes that the right buyers will just happen to find it. Instead, it leverages every resource it has to get the word out. Think about the new Prius. Toyota took advantage of publicity surrounding the car's fuel efficiency to generate buzz with newspapers, radio, and television reporting on Prius-related press releases. Toyota leveraged Web resources (e.g., blogs, discussion forums, product fan sites) and highlighted positive product reviews in its press releases and online.

When a company has designed a new product or brand, it is excited to let people know about it. The more enthusiastically it shares the news, the better the payoff. The same should be true of your job search. *You* are a new brand that is about to go on the market, you know you have unique qualities to offer, and you should be excited to let other people know this about you, too. Sending the news to potential employers at your target companies is a good way to start. If you take advantage of this tool, in combination with five other power-packed tools for getting the word out, you will be surprised by the positive results you see.

Power-Packed Tool #1: Professional Social Networking

You learned about the power of networking, and especially professional social networking, in Chapter 3. More and more companies are turning to professional social networks such as LinkedIn to identify potential candidates for jobs. But it's not enough to simply create a profile on LinkedIn. To be noticed on a massive professional networking site, just as in the real world, you have to stand out. That means completing your profile, adding content, participating in discussions, and linking to other content, such as your blog. Also, share your content by joining groups on LinkedIn, such as *The Power of Selling* (a group of selling professionals to support you in this class and beyond), Sales and Marketing Executives, and Salesblogcast.com, or other groups in your area of interest. These groups include thousands of professionals with whom you can connect and network. And ask people such as supervisors from your job, internship, or volunteer organization; professors; or other professionals to speak on your behalf by posting a recommendation about you.

Power-Packed Tool #2: Direct Mail

Direct mail is a powerful but often overlooked source you have for getting your cover letter and résumé to people who are making hiring decisions. Now that you've done your research and identified your twenty-five target companies and key decision makers at each one, it's time to put that information to work.

You might think that sending letters to companies that don't currently have open jobs posted might be a waste of time. The fact is that hiring managers don't like to post jobs, as it takes time and energy to come up with the job description, clear it through all the proper channels, sort through résumés and cover letters, and interview potential employees. This means that a number of your contacts may have open positions they haven't yet publicized, and they would be delighted if a qualified candidate like you could save them the hassle of a drawn out hiring process. And if you've done everything correctly (e.g., addressed your cover letter individually to key hiring managers, not just human resources), but your letter doesn't end up in the right person's hands, your contact at the company may very well pass your résumé on to someone else who would be a better fit. ("Hey Dave, is your department still looking for a marketing assistant?") If you want your letter to stand out even more, consider sending it to some top prospective employers with a return receipt requested or via FedEx. It's a good way to ensure that the recipient received your cover letter and résumé and there's a good chance your letter will get opened quickly.

Sending your cover letter and résumé to several people at your twenty-five target companies will set you apart from your competitors because very few people send information by mail these days. Think about the number of e-mails you get in your inbox daily. A letter stands out, and the best part about sending direct mail to your target companies is that it's easy to do. You can use the spreadsheet you created in Chapter 7 to easily personalize cover letters and envelopes to the people at your target

companies by using the **mail merge feature**. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 142. Watch the video below to see how it's done. Keep in mind that hiring managers are busy people, and sometimes letters get lost or forgotten. If you don't get the response you were hoping for, send your letter to the same people in your mail merge again in three to four weeks. Kim Richmond, "10 Ways to Get the Word Out about Your Brand," presentation in the How to Market Yourself as a Brand to Get the Job You Want Workshop Series, Upper Merion Township Library, King of Prussia, PA, June 1, 2009.

How to Do a Mail Merge



You can personalize hundreds of cover letters in just minutes using the Mail Merge feature in Word (Microsoft or Mac). Watch this video to see how easy it is to do.

Power-Packed Tool #3: Company Web Sites

During the preapproach to a sales call, a good salesperson spends time at her prospective company's Web site, researching the organization and its key people in greater depth so that she can go into the meeting knowledgeable about basic company facts and informed of any recent developments. This is also an important technique when researching prospective employers—and it's a task that requires minimal effort on your part. If one of your target companies contacts you for an interview, the knowledge you gained from this Web site research will prove useful.

The online job boards for your twenty-five target companies are another avenue for getting the word out about your brand. It doesn't hurt to apply for published positions, particularly if you take steps (using techniques described here and in other chapters) to set yourself apart from the majority of other applicants. If the Web site gives you the option, sign up for e-mail alerts that will let you know when new positions open up. Company Web sites are excellent resources for finding advertised positions because the job descriptions posted there are often more detailed than the descriptions you might be able to find through general online job boards. LT International, "Job Searching: The Importance of Examining Company Websites," BNET, January 2008, jobfunctions.bnet.com/abstract.aspx?docid=915723 (accessed July 15, 2009). Moreover, many companies post open positions only on their Web sites to avoid the cost of posting on other job boards.

Power-Packed Tool #4: Online Job Boards

The benefit of online job boards like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and Yahoo! HotJobs is that they make it a snap to perform searches by industry and keyword, and they often return a wealth of results. In fact, Internet job boards have recently become one of the fastest growing online categories. Sarah Radwanick, "Job Search Ranks as Fastest Growing U.S. Online Category in 2008," *Reuters*, January 22, 2009, (accessed July 15, 2009). These sites can be an excellent avenue for learning about career opportunities in your target industry, and they should be an ongoing part of your efforts to find the right employer. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 133. These sites might help you find job opportunities through companies that you wouldn't have otherwise considered working for, and they will certainly keep you informed about the kinds of positions for which people are currently hiring in your industry and the particular qualifications for which many employers are searching.

Most sites will allow you to set up e-mail alerts (customized by your chosen keywords) so that new job postings come to your inbox regularly. It's best to enter as many keywords as you can think of that are relevant to your interests and experiences so that you don't miss anything. For instance, if you want a job in advertising, you would choose *advertising* as a keyword, but you could also

list words like *promotions*, *account executive*, *account manager*, *account coordinator*, *customer services*, *brand manager*, *advertising agency*, and *social media*. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 139. You might also consider creating a separate e-mail account to keep track of your job-related e-mails, particularly if you have subscribed to alerts through several job search Web sites. In fact, it's a good idea to go through a number of Web sites so that you can stay informed about as many opportunities as possible. You can go through general job boards like Vault.com or CareerBuilder.com, industry-specific job boards like MarketingSherpa.com, location-specific job boards like SeattleRecruiter.com, or a combination of these options.

Table 8.6.2: Online Job Boards

General	
CollegeGrad.com http://collegegrad.com	Career information and job board directed at college students
Experience www.experience.com	Job board, articles, and career planning advice
CareerBuilder.com http://careerbuilder.com/	One of the largest job boards on the Internet; includes career planning articles
Craigslist http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites	Location-specific job boards
Riley Guide http://rileyguide.com/	Job board and career planning information and resources
Industry Specific	
SMEI http://smei.associationcareernetwork.com/Common/HomePage.aspx	Job board for sales and marketing executives
Accounting Jobs Today http://www.accountingjobstoday.com	Job board for careers in <i>accounting</i> and <i>finance</i>
Accounting.com http://www.accounting.com	Job board for <i>accounting</i> positions
Sologig.com http://www.sologig.com	Job board for <i>freelancing</i> , <i>contracting</i> , <i>consulting</i> , and <i>temporary work</i>
MarketingSherpa.com http://www.marketingsherpa.com	Job board for <i>marketing</i> ; includes articles
Stylecareers.com http://www.stylecareers.com	Job board for <i>fashion</i> , <i>apparel</i> , and <i>retail</i>
Mediabistro.com http://www.mediabistro.com	Job board for <i>marketing</i>

Source: Adapted from Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 221–23.

Although it's important to use direct mail when submitting a cold-contact application, when you apply for positions you find on online job boards, you should apply through the Web site using the format they prescribe. Just make sure you include a cover letter when you submit your résumé. Hiring managers are likely to throw away résumés that come in without cover letters because a cover letter is what allows you to personalize your application, sending the message that you care enough to make an effort in your job search. Finally, keep in mind that while many job seekers rely entirely on online job boards for their searches, and while these sites can be a good avenue for learning about opportunities, they are not an end-all method. They are strongest when used in combination with your direct-mail campaign and the other power-packed tools mentioned in this chapter.

Power-Packed Tool #5: Get Out There

Finally, when you want to let people know you are on the market and have unique skills to offer, consider integrating a number of methods discussed in other chapters of this book to let people see your face. Phone calls, letters, and online communications are critical to your job search, but nothing creates an impression and establishes personal connections like face-to-face interaction.

- **Informational interviews.** (See the *Selling U* section in Chapter 5.) Develop a list of contacts that work in your field of interest and get in touch with several of them to ask about setting up an informational interview: “You do what I would like to do. Could I come in and learn about how you got into the industry?” People naturally love sharing their knowledge and expertise, so most of your contacts will be more than willing to help. “Informational Interviewing Tutorial: Learn about How an Informational Interview Should Be an Integral Part of Your Networking and Job-Hunting Plan,” Quintessential Careers, www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html (accessed July 15, 2009). Informational interviews are excellent resources for establishing connections and generating job leads.
- **Mentors.** You are never too young nor too old to have a mentor. Mentors can help you develop your knowledge and skills, build your network, and learn inside information about working in your chosen field. Kim Richmond, “10 Ways to Get the Word Out about Your Brand,” presentation in the How to Market Yourself as a Brand to Get the Job You Want Workshop Series, Upper Merion Township Library, King of Prussia, PA, June 1, 2009. Mentors are your allies: the people who most want to see you succeed—and the ones who often have the resources to help you do so.
- **Networking.** (See the *Selling U* section in Chapter 3.) It’s impossible to overstate the importance of building your network. Online tools like LinkedIn are powerful resources, but face-to-face networking with personal and professional connections alike can generate surprising results. Who knows, your stylist might tell you, “Oh yeah, my brother-in-law is in sales. You might want to talk to him about a job. I’m not sure if he has any jobs open, but I’ll give you his number so you can touch base with him.”
- **Internships and professional organizations.** (See the *Selling U* section in Chapter 14.) Internships are an excellent way to network, learn more about working in your chosen field, gain valuable experience, and sometimes get your foot in the door at a company. Another way to get exposure in any industry is by joining and getting involved in professional organizations. In Chapter 14, you will learn more about the value of applying for internships and joining professional organizations.

Power-Packed Tool #6: Follow-Up

Following up helps you maximize your efforts after networking, applying for an online job, sending direct mail, contacting someone via networking (online or offline), and visiting a job fair. You will leave a good impression, help your contacts to remember you, and set yourself apart from other applicants. Follow-up can sometimes have surprising benefits, so even when a door seems closed, make the effort to send a personal note or thank-you. Consider a college graduate who integrated follow-up into her job search. Shortly after applying for a public relations position at one of her target companies, she received a letter saying the position had been filled. Anika followed up on this letter with a note, thanking the interviewer for her time and mentioning how much she had enjoyed their meeting and her visit to the company. A week later, she got the position—the candidate the company originally hired had changed her mind. Because she was the only applicant who had followed up, she stood out, and the company hired her as a replacement.

Consider these techniques that will allow you to make the most of your follow-up efforts:

- **Send thank-you notes.** Send a personal thank-you note to everyone in your online network who gives you a referral and to anyone with whom you have an informational interview. Allison Doyle, “Informational Interview: What Is an Informational Interview and How It Can Help Your Career,” About.com, <http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/infointerviews/a/infointerview.htm> (accessed July 15, 2009). Also, send a thank-you note or e-mail to contacts you meet at career fairs. It’s best to send a thank-you e-mail the same day, then follow up with a handwritten note. When you write your handwritten note and mail it the day of your meeting or interview, your contact will usually receive it the next day. And do it in a timely manner. Don’t let weeks go by—send your notes within a day so that they arrive while you are still fresh in your contact’s mind.
- **Call.** Call your twenty-five target companies one week after you mail out your cover letter and résumé. If you are sending your direct mailings to at least two contacts at each company, it won’t be realistic to follow up with *everyone*. Pick the key contact at your target company—usually the hiring manager in your targeted department—with whom you want to follow up and make sure you actually get her on the phone when you call. If the call goes to voice mail, you can leave a message, but try back again until you reach her.

It's also important to keep thorough records of your communications with your target companies and contacts. Use the Excel spreadsheet you created for your mailing list to record the date you mailed your cover letters and résumés, the date you followed up, the result of your follow-up, and any future actions you need to take (e.g., call back in one week). You can use a similar system when you follow up with your online job board applications. Postings listed on online job boards don't always provide the contact info for individuals at the company, but whenever they do, make sure you follow up with this person by phone one week after you have submitted your résumé and cover letter. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 145.

Follow-up is an opportunity to take advantage of the research you've been doing and any information you've gathered from tracking a company's RSS feeds or Google News Alerts. For instance, say you want to work in the entertainment industry and you're following up with a hiring manager at Epic Records. You've found out through the company's RSS feed that they've recently released an online collection of bonus tracks, live recordings, and previously unreleased songs by the group Incubus, "Epic Records to Release The Vault—A Comprehensive Look and Listen inside Incubus," *Reuters*, June 2, 2009, (accessed July 15, 2009). so you mention this to the hiring manager when you follow up about your application. This lets the hiring manager know that you've done your research and are genuinely interested in the company, which helps establish a rapport.

Key Takeaways

- You will never see the payoff from your potential employer research unless you get the word out. Let people know you are on the market for a job.
- The most important step to ensure your résumé reaches decision makers is direct mailing your cover letter and résumé to contacts at each of your twenty-five target companies—a task you can accomplish easily with a **mail merge**.
- Keep an eye on the Web sites of your twenty-five target companies to find out about new job postings and stay updated on developments at each company.
- Online job boards will let you find out about new advertised positions daily and can help you identify opportunities you might not have otherwise considered.
- Use networking sites like LinkedIn to make new contacts and connect with people in your industry.
- Follow up—after sending a direct mailing, after meeting someone at a career fair, and so on—to strengthen relationships with people that can help you find a job.
- Leverage techniques mentioned in other chapters—informational interviews, mentoring relationships, networking, internships, and professional organization memberships—to help get the word out about your brand.

? Exercise 8.6.1

1. Visit the Web sites of five of the companies on your target twenty-five list. Sign up for a job agent and complete a profile, if those are options on each Web site.
2. Visit three online job boards. Sign up for a job agent and complete a profile, if those are options offered on the sites.
3. Identify at least one person with whom you can meet for an informational interview. Contact the person and meet with him to learn about how he got into the business and ask him for additional contacts with whom you can network.
4. Identify at least two professional organizations that may be of interest to you. Visit the Web sites to see their upcoming events and plan to attend a meeting or event for each one. Explore membership information and learn about the benefits and cost of membership. Join each organization's group on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to keep up-to-date on events and discussions.

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