

# How YOU™ are like Shampoo



For **COLLEGE GRADUATES**

The Complete **Personal Branding System**  
to Define, Position, and Market Yourself  
and Land a Job You Love

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# Brenda Bence

BRANDING EXPERT AND CAREER COACH

# Not much work experience? Let your personal brand work for YOU™

**A**s a college grad, you need an edge when trying to land a great job. How do you get around a lack of good work experience on your resume? Stand out in a crowd of older, more experienced candidates? Avoid having to settle for a job you don't love?

## Introducing the only Personal Branding System designed specifically for college grads

Just like the brands you rely on every day, you can become the “brand of choice” for a potential employer – right out of college. Based on the same marketing methods used to build popular name brands, now you can define and communicate your very own personal brand — the Trademarked YOU™. And *that's* how you connect with interviewers and get the job you really want!

You will:

- Discover the 6 personal branding secrets other grads don't know
- Master the 5 activities that best communicate your brand
- Avoid the Top 20 College Grad Personal Brand Busters® that recruiters hate
- Unleash the power of social media to help you find the right job faster
- Learn how to command the highest possible salary once you're offered the job

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### Includes interview recommendations from recruiters at

Google, Sony, Disney, Stanford University, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, AT&T,  
Procter & Gamble, Motorola, Hilton, Nestlé, and Goldman Sachs

**Plus invaluable tips from more than 50 other top companies and schools**

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Author **Brenda S. Bence, MBA**, is an internationally-recognized branding expert, certified executive coach, dynamic speaker, and creator of the award-winning *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding book series. With an MBA from Harvard Business School, her 25-year career has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. As President of BDA International, Ltd., she now travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and corporations to greater success through practical yet creative brand development.

Is your brand ready for the real world? Take the College Grads  
Personal Brand Quiz at [www.BrendaBence.com](http://www.BrendaBence.com)

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Business / Careers / Job Hunting



How  
**YOU**<sup>TM</sup>  
are  
like  
**Shampoo**



For COLLEGE GRADUATES

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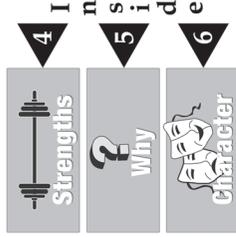
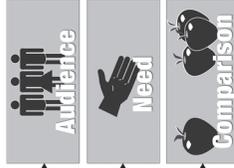
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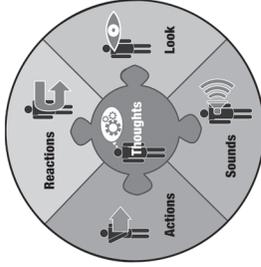
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## Define it

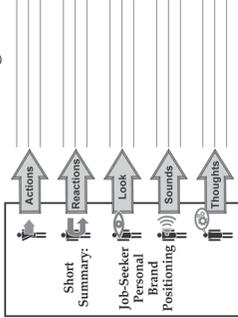
- 1** Outside
- 2** Inside
- 3** Comparison



## Communicate it

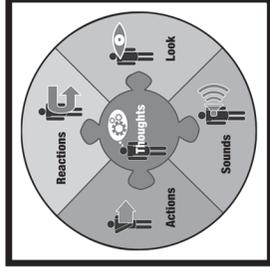


### Job-Seeker Personal Brand Marketing Plan



## Avoid Damaging it

Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™



YOU™

## Step 1

## Step 2

## Step 3

# Introduction

## Your Job Search— How Are YOU™ Like Shampoo?

*It's better to look ahead and prepare than to look back  
and regret.*

— Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Olympic Gold Medalist

**A**lfred Nobel was a successful and wealthy Swedish man who lived in the late 1800's. He was famous for having invented two things: dynamite and the detonator, the device that makes dynamite go off from far away. Thanks to these two inventions, Alfred Nobel had made millions, and he was living a wonderful millionaire's life.

Alfred's brother, Ludwig Nobel, who was also famous and wealthy, died in 1888. But the obituary that showed up the next day in the newspaper was switched, and it was *Alfred's* obituary that got printed, not Ludwig's. So, Alfred Nobel had the mind-boggling experience of opening up the morning paper ... and reading his own life story.

Can you imagine how powerful that would be?

But Alfred must have cringed when he read the title of his obituary. It called him "The Merchant of Death" because of all the work that he had done with dynamite and detonators. In that single moment, Alfred Nobel realized that his personal brand would always be associated with

death and destruction—unless he took control and did something about it.

So, he decided to change what his brand stood for. He made a plan to develop the Nobel Prizes to make a difference in important subjects that he really cared about. And when he died in 1895, Alfred Nobel left most of his millions to establish those prizes. He didn't want his name, "Nobel," to stand for destruction and death. Did he succeed? Well, just look at what the name Nobel stands for today—the world's most prestigious prizes awarded for outstanding achievements in Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, and Peace.

You've heard of the Nobel Prizes, right? But you probably didn't know the other work that Nobel had done in his life. That's because Alfred Nobel was successful in changing his personal brand so that his name could stand for what he *wanted* it to stand for.

You can change what you stand for, too, by creating your own personal brand and using it to energize your job search. As author Carl Bard said, "Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending."

## Did You Know You Already Have a Personal Brand?

So, maybe you're thinking, "Good story, Brenda, but what does that have to do with me? I'm just getting started in my career. How could I already have a personal brand?"

That's a fair question—and here's my answer: Even if you've never had a full-time job in a company, **you already have a personal brand.** (And you didn't have to do anything as earth-shattering as invent dynamite to get it!)

It's true. To have a personal brand, you don't have to be an inventor or even sit down and give your personal brand any thought. Just by virtue of being *you* in a job interview or at school or wherever you are, you have a personal brand. The question is whether you have the personal brand you *want*. If not, you're leaving too much of your job search and your future to chance.

Just like Alfred Nobel, you have the power to change your personal brand and create the one that you want. In other words, you have to make a decision about how you want to come across before, during, and after interviews in order to get the kind of work you really want. And there's no better time to work on your personal brand than now as you think about your first job after college and as you get ready to launch yourself into the professional marketplace.

## Personal Branding and Your Job Search

But what if you're starting at the bottom of the totem pole with little or no experience, and you're convinced it's going to be hard as nails to find a job that keeps you happy and excited? Well, I'm here to tell you: With personal branding, you can do it. If you want the kind of job where you can't wait to get up in the morning and get to work, personal branding is the answer.

Defining your college grad personal brand can be the missing link to helping you find the type of job you've been daydreaming about. Knowing who "YOU™" are — The Trademarked You — will give you a clear edge in your job search. In fact, once you carefully define the college grad personal brand you want to communicate in interviews, you'll be able to look at your job search with new meaning and confidence. That's how you make every moment of your job hunt count. And yes — even though it's hard to believe — you may actually begin to find interviews *fun*.

Yep, personal branding can do all of that, but here's the scoop: It really is up to you. If you want a great first job out of college that sets you up for success both short-term and long-term, you have to do something about it. If you don't, I can guarantee you one thing: Nothing will happen.

Now, I can almost hear you saying, "But Brenda, I don't have control over whether an interviewer likes me or not. If they decide not to hire me, what can I do?" Even though it may feel like your job search is at the mercy of potential employer "decision-makers" out there, a big part of your job search success *is* in your control. The key to that control is learning how to master your college grad personal brand. In *How YOU™ are like Shampoo for College Graduates*, we will focus on those fundamental parts of your job search that *are* in your control.

## My Personal Branding System

So, let's recap. Here's the reality: You already have a personal brand. Every time you've gone on an interview or shown up at school or at a meeting, your personal brand was front and center, even though you didn't know it. Now, it's time to take control and learn how to manage it. That's how you will have better success before, during, and after job interviews, and — ultimately — that's how you'll land a great position in a company where you want to work.

*How YOU™ are like Shampoo for College Graduates* is a do-it-yourself, no-nonsense guide to getting the job you want through

successfully branding yourself. It's simple, easy to read, and it works. I custom-designed the personal branding system in this book to help graduating students like you take the guesswork out of personal branding. This system will show you exactly how to figure out (1) what your personal brand is and (2) how to use it to get the job you want *faster*. In this book, I'm going to walk you through my proven step-by-step personal branding process — using exercises and worksheets — to help you define the most powerful college grad personal brand you can possibly have. This system is all about applying it in the real world.

Most importantly, your brand won't just remain a nice idea in your head. I mean, think about it: It makes no sense to spend the time defining your brand just to leave it in a drawer while you continue on the same as always, right?

No, you need a roadmap to make sure you're communicating the brand you want to potential employers. That's how you find your dream job. That's how you take the steering wheel at the beginning of your career and drive it where you want it to go.

As you read on, here's what you'll learn:

- How to define your personal brand using the College Grad Personal Brand Positioning Statement format modeled off of the six core elements used by the most successful name brands in the world. It's worked for Nike, Starbucks, and McDonald's, and it will work for YOU™, too.
- How to communicate your personal brand through your College Grad Personal Brand Marketing Plan so that potential employers will see you as you *want* to be seen. This will help you master the five most important activities you do throughout your job search that will impact your personal brand — and your ability to get the job you want.
- How to avoid damaging your college grad personal brand by learning from the mistakes that other grads like you have made during their job search. This is one of the most unique and fun parts of the system — our top 20 most damaging College Grad Personal Brand Busters®. Knowing these will help you bypass the most common traps that have prevented other college grads from getting the job they wanted. You'll know what to watch out for before you even get there.
- Lots of amazing interview success tips and secrets from dozens of college recruiters and human resources experts all over the world

that I interviewed for this book. They've been in the trenches and have seen it all!

- How to use the graphic called “The Proven Pathway to Getting YOU™ a Great Job” that is on page 16. It will guide you kind of like a map as we work through each step of the personal branding system together. Don't worry if it doesn't make sense to you yet. It will — I promise.

As you read these pages, I hope that you will experience that “aha!” moment that comes from the power of thinking of yourself as a unique personal brand. I hope you'll see how you can use personal branding to make real changes in your life that can lead to a terrific job with a sweet paycheck, great job satisfaction, and exciting career opportunities.

## Input Equals Output

*How YOU™ are like Shampoo for College Graduates* is an interactive, action-oriented experience, but your personal brand won't be handed to you on a silver platter. I can guarantee you one thing for sure: What you put *in* to defining and communicating your college grad personal brand is exactly what you'll get *out* of it. As I said, it's up to you! The more time and energy you give to this process, the faster you will get the job you want.

I know, I know ... you've had it with homework. You're near the end of your time at college, and you want to just put it all on autopilot. But trust me: You'll be glad that you took your personal brand seriously and followed this process step-by-step. When you're driving down the street in the new car you bought thanks to your great new job, you'll be thanking me and patting yourself on the back for making it happen.

Get ready to feel pumped as you take charge of your job-seeker personal brand and become the Brand Manager of YOU™. Let's get started on helping you to find a job right out of college that you'll love.



"This is our best-selling brand!"

# 1

## The Power of Brands

*“Is Google a ‘better’ search engine? Is Red Bull a ‘better’ energy drink? Is Microsoft a ‘better’ operating system? Or did these companies just build better brands?”*

— Laura Ries, Media Commentator

A book on personal branding wouldn't be complete without taking some time to understand the powerful role that brands play in our lives every single day. Not that long ago, a *Time* magazine article reported that the average American citizen runs across about 3,000 brands per day. When I first heard that, I found it hard to believe! But, then, I stood at a busy intersection in downtown Los Angeles and looked at all of the signs ... I drove to the Dallas-Fort Worth airport with hundreds of billboards lining the way ... I walked down a grocery store aisle in Philadelphia and saw brand after brand peering down at me. Maybe 3,000 brands per day isn't all that hard to believe after all!

Think about it for a second. How many brands have *you* seen today on can labels, the side of a bus, the top of a taxi, or on the web? No matter where you look, brand names are screaming for your attention. Let's face it: Brands are everywhere and are such a part of our day-to-day lives that we often don't even think about them.

But, if you're like most of us, you will probably be loyal to at least one or two name brands for the rest of your life. Are *you* loyal to a favorite brand? Would you consider it out of the question, for example, to wear anything but Adidas tennis shoes or to switch from your favorite brand

of ice cream? Why? What is it about that favorite brand of yours that gets you to buy it time and time again? Great brands make us intensely loyal.

Great brands can be incredibly big and influential, too. Take Coca-Cola, for example. People all around the world buy an estimated \$15 billion of Coke every single year — that's more than \$1 billion worth of Coke *per month*. To fully get the picture, that's more than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about 85 countries in the world. How's *that* for powerful?

## The Untouchables

So, what do we know so far? We know that brands are everywhere, that they can create intense loyalty in us, and that they are big and can have a powerful influence on us. Is there any question why I find brands so fascinating?

But what's even more amazing about brands is that, even though they have all of this power and influence, you can't touch a brand. It's true. You can smell the aroma of a cup of Starbucks coffee, you can taste the kick of a Mentos when you pop it in your mouth, you can hear the newest ring tone on your iPhone, you can feel an ice cold can of Red Bull in your hand, and you can see the golden arches of the McDonald's logo, but you can't *touch* a brand. The smell, touch, or sight of a product is really just a representation of that brand. The brand itself is invisible. Its power only exists in your mind.

So, can these untouchable things called "brands" actually change the way we act and think? Let's see...

## Powerful Brand Images

Great brands are like people. They have a personality and a character all their own. Stop for a second, look around you, and find two doorways that you can see from where you are. In the first doorway, imagine that Mercedes Benz — the brand — is standing there as a *person* (not the car, but the brand of Mercedes Benz itself.) What kind of person would the Mercedes Benz brand be? Is it a man or a woman? What does this person do for a living? How is this person dressed? What is this person's income — low, medium, or high? What does this person do for fun?

Now, look at that second doorway, and imagine that Ferrari — the brand — is standing there as a person. What kind of person would

the Ferrari brand be? Is it a man or a woman? What does this person do for a living? How is this person dressed — more formally or more casually than Mercedes Benz? Is the income of this person higher or lower than Mercedes Benz? What does this person like to do for fun?

Now, compare the answers to both sets of questions. They're very different, right? Even though Mercedes Benz and Ferrari are both high-end luxury cars that get you from one place to another, the brand images of Mercedes Benz and Ferrari aren't the same. Why is that? It's because you *perceive*, *think*, and *feel* differently about these two brands. Your perceptions, thoughts, and feelings have been carefully created in your mind by smart marketers who understand the art and science — and the power — of branding.

That's right. Branding, whether we're talking about a product or a person, is both an art *and* a science. On the one hand, brands appeal to our logic — they're "rational" in terms of how we think about them, and that's where the science comes in. But branding is also an art form because brands make us feel a certain way about them.

Take a minute and think about the brands you're loyal to. Maybe you've even traveled out of your way to find and buy that one special brand that you just *had* to have. What if you could grab hold of that same kind of power in your own job search as you get ready to graduate? How would *you* like to have that kind of influence over a recruiter or a potential boss?

## Branding People?

I really believe that people — just like shampoo and other products — are brands, too. Consider some examples of people we all know — starting with celebrities. What do you perceive, think, and feel when you hear the name "Brad Pitt?" What do you perceive, think, and feel when you hear the name "Will Smith?" Both of these actors are good-looking leading men, but you don't have the same perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about them, do you? Now, let's throw "Johnny Depp" into the picture ... you have different perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about him, too, right?

Think of any category of well-known people — let's try singers this time. Think Taylor Swift ... Pink ... Beyoncé. Again, they're all very different. That's because each of these singers has a very specific personal brand that is absolutely unique and ownable as

compared to the others. And, it's not just because they all *look* different!

“But, hold on a second,” you may be saying. “Those people are all celebrities and have a lot of money, so they can all hire full-time image specialists to manage their personal brands!”

Fair point. But you don't need high-priced help to define and communicate your personal brand as you get ready to join the professional world. The personal branding system shared in *How YOU™ are like Shampoo for College Graduates* will help you build your personal brand without handing bundles of cash to a publicist. It's designed for the millions of grads all around the world who aren't famous and who don't plan on turning their personal brand into a global household name. What you want to do is define yourself in *your world* to reach your ultimate personal career goal: to land that first great job that you really love so that you can get your career off to a fantastic start.

So, if Brad Pitt and Beyoncé have one, and you have one, too, just what is a personal brand anyway?

## Taking Your Brand on a Job Search

When it comes to looking for a job, your personal brand is defined as:

*The way you want potential employers to  
perceive, think, and feel about you  
compared to other candidates.*

Just as name brands exist in our minds, your job-seeker personal brand as a college grad exists in the minds of recruiters and potential bosses in the way they perceive, think, and feel about you when they compare you to other candidates. Let's dive deeper into this definition, and focus on three key words: perceive, think, and feel. They've been carefully chosen for a reason.

**Perceive:** In marketing, the way you perceive something is reality. When it comes to your job-seeker personal brand, it doesn't matter who *you* think you are. What matters instead is how the *interviewer* perceives you. If a potential boss sees you as very different from who you actually believe you are inside, you're probably not communicating the personal brand you want. You'll

need to do some work to make sure you're presenting your best possible brand in interviews.

**Think:** On the one hand, our brains have a lot to do with how we *think* about brands, so branding is a fairly rational exercise. There are some good solid reasons we choose one brand over another. The same holds true when it comes to personal branding for a job search — you need to consider what your potential employers will *think* about you. What are the reasons a potential boss might believe you are better for the job than another candidate?

**Feel:** On the other hand, branding is also a very emotional process. Stop and consider that one brand from earlier in this chapter that you said you are intensely loyal to. What do you feel when you think about that brand? Trust? Reliability? We establish relationships with name brands, and these relationships are based on much more than just what the products do for us. We're loyal to these brands because of the emotional connection we have with them. It's the same in personal branding. The way recruiters and potential bosses *feel* about you can make or break your success.

Here's the stark reality: Interviewers hire people they like. In fact, some recruiters estimate that as much as 40% of the hiring decision is based on whether or not you were liked in your interview. If you think about it, this is also the case with name brands. After all, you buy name brands you like, right? The same holds true on the job. Don't you prefer being around people you like and if the hiring decision were up to you, wouldn't you hire someone you'd like to spend time with?

It's no different with employers. They hire people they believe they'll like working with, and YOU™ are no exception. The truth is: Interviewers will hire you because they like you and because you've made a connection with them. This doesn't mean, of course, that you'll be hired if you're completely unable to do the job, but even if your skills aren't as good as someone else's, you could get hired if you hit it off with the recruiter.

The stronger the connections you create before, during, and after your job interviews, the more powerful your personal brand will be throughout your entire job search process.



## Your Brand Doesn't Just Exist on Web. 2.0

If potential employers are having perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about you, trust me: It isn't all happening just on the internet through social media networks. While you definitely want to make sure your personal brand stays intact on Web 2.0 applications like Facebook and MySpace, remember that your brand is out there everywhere you are — in person, in e-mails, *and* on the Internet. Later on in the book, we'll talk more about how to protect your brand online, but don't make the mistake of thinking that your personal brand is *only* your brand on the computer. Personal branding is much more than that!

## Your Professors' Brands

Still don't believe the average person has a brand? Think of your favorite professor — the one prof you actually looked *forward* to listening to. Stop for a second and consider: How do you perceive that professor? How does he or she make you feel? What are your thoughts about him or her?

Now, consider a different professor you've had ... and let's be honest ... who you really *didn't* enjoy listening to all that much! It was that one professor who was so boring that you almost needed intravenous caffeine just to stay awake. Or maybe it was a teacher who was an incredibly hard grader. Just the thought of turning in a paper to this professor tied your stomach into knots. How does *this* person make you feel? What do you think about this teacher, and how do you perceive him or her?

Can you see how these teachers have very different personal brands? And their brands have nothing to do with who *they* think they are. Their brands exist in *your* mind, based on how you perceive, think, and feel about them.

## Taking Control of YOU™

Now, apply this thinking to you and your job search. As I said earlier, you already have a personal brand even if you didn't think you needed

or wanted one. Your job-seeker personal brand may be out there doing its thing, creating perceptions about YOU™ without you even being aware of it. Recruiters may be think and feel about you in ways that aren't at all how you want to be perceived, just like Alfred Nobel before he created his prizes.

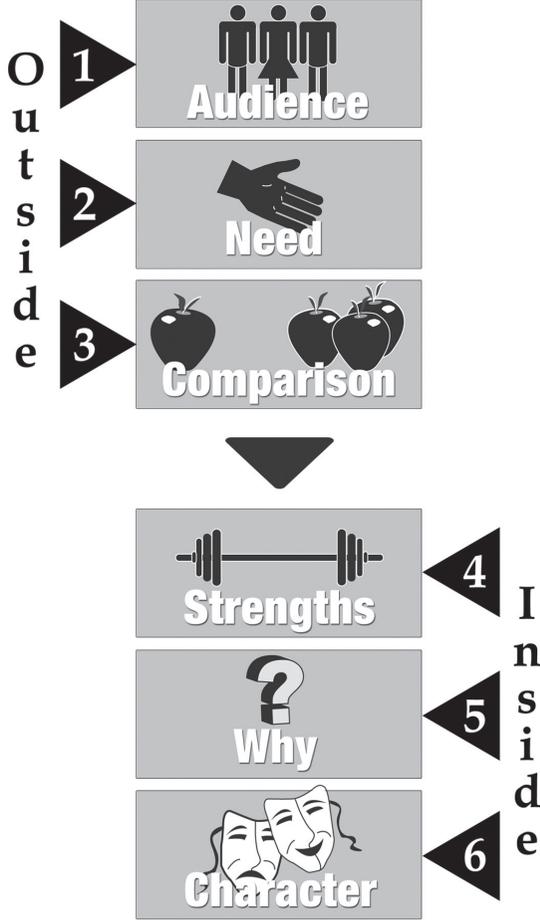
Most people I've met find this idea pretty exciting ... and a little bit scary. They don't like the idea that their personal brands may be running wild — maybe even preventing them from getting the job they want — without knowing what to do about it.

So, how do you take control of YOU™ during your job hunt if your job seeker personal brand exists in the minds of your potential bosses? What can you do to make sure your personal brand is what you want it to be in interviews and beyond? And how do you want potential bosses to perceive, think, and feel about you? What steps can you take to make your personal brand something that is definable and that you can own? Then, how can you communicate that brand effectively — before, during, *and* after a job interview?

That's a lot of questions, but these are exactly the ones we'll answer as you move through the steps of our college graduate personal branding system. Once you carefully define your job seeker personal brand and put it to work, you'll truly be able to stick out from the pack of other job applicants. And, just like you pay more for a Starbucks than you pay for a standard cup of coffee at a local café, you can also create a premium-image personal brand for yourself that brings you a better job, higher starting salary, nicer perks, and — in the end — a great start to a more satisfying career.

Think of it this way: Your personal brand in the job search process is what you want to stand for in the minds of potential future bosses. Who is \_\_\_\_\_™? Write your name in the blank, and let's get started!

# Step 1 Define it



## 2

# Defining Your Personal Brand

*I always wanted to be somebody,  
but I should have been more specific.*

— Lily Tomlin, Actress and comedian

**N**ow you know you can't touch your personal brand because it exists in the minds of others. So, if you can't touch your brand, how can you take charge of it in a way that actually helps you get the job you want as you get ready to leave college? It may seem like an incredibly tough challenge, but name brands have been successfully created in the minds of millions of consumers for years and years. You can absolutely take control of your job-seeker personal brand, too. Just like smart marketers have helped buyers choose one brand over another, you can use the same strategies to help college recruiters choose you over the next candidate. The key is to do what all great brands out there do as a first step: *Define it*.

Fact: Every name brand you know and love uses six “positioning elements” to carefully define that brand. It doesn't even matter if the people in charge of managing those brands know about these elements. Trust me: All six are a big part of what makes the brand tick, and it's a tried-and-true formula.

You've already asked yourself the question, “Who is \_\_\_\_\_<sup>TM</sup> — the trademarked YOU<sup>TM</sup>”? And maybe you're saying, “But Brenda, give me

a break! I have no idea how to answer that question!” If this is the case, don’t worry. We’re going to work with a step-by-step formula that borrows from those same six positioning elements used by the most successful marketing experts around the world. That formula will help you pinpoint the best possible personal brand for you as a college grad — a personal brand that will present your best talents, strengths, and attributes and that helps you distinguish you from other people applying for the kind of jobs you want most.

## The Power of a Framework

Let’s take a look at the six parts of this formula and see first how they work for the name brands we all love and use every day. Then, you will see how to apply those same elements to YOU™.

THE SIX-ELEMENT BRANDING FORMULA	
Name Brands	Personal Brands for Job Seekers
<p><i>Target:</i> When it comes to name brand products, this is the Target Market. Who will buy the product — men, women, college graduates, people with high incomes or low incomes? What are their hopes, dreams, and fears? What attitudes do they have toward the brand or the type of product in question? What can you tell about them by the way they act toward a particular brand?</p>	<p><i>Audience:</i> Like a Target Market, your job-seeker Audience consists of the people you want to influence with your personal brand as you look for a job. Maybe your Audience is a single person - like a potential boss - or a group of people, like a department of a company. Who do you want to influence with your job-seeker personal brand?</p>

<p><b><i>Need:</i></b> What does the Target Market need? When a company creates a brand, they try to respond to a Need of ours that hasn't been met yet. Or maybe they aim at filling a Need we already have in a way that's better than the competition.</p>	<p><b><i>Need:</i></b> If your Audience is a potential boss, what does he or she need? Is there a gap that hasn't been filled in the company? For example, it's possible your future supervisor needs someone to take some responsibility off his or her shoulders.</p>
<p><b><i>Competitive Framework:</i></b> When it comes to name brands, competitive framework is all about the brands that compete for your attention. You have lots of brands all trying to get your attention — why do you choose one brand over another?</p>	<p><b><i>Comparison:</i></b> In personal branding, this is more about <i>comparing</i> than competing. Who will your Audience compare you to when it comes to meeting a Need you've identified? Even if you have less direct work experience, what do you have to offer that will set you apart from other candidates?</p>
<p><b><i>Benefits:</i></b> What does a brand offer its customers? Your toothpaste brand, for example, can make your teeth whiter.</p>	<p><b><i>Unique Strengths:</i></b> In personal branding, your Unique Strengths are the promises that you bring to the table. Just like with name brands, your job-seeker Strengths are the <i>benefits</i> you can offer to a potential boss.</p>

<p><b>Reasons Why:</b> Why should the Target Market believe a name brand will do what it says it can? These are a brand's Reasons Why. They can be based on a variety of things like what it's made of, what experience it has in the market already, how the product is created, or maybe a strong endorsement.</p>	<p><b>Reasons Why:</b> Why should a future boss believe you can deliver the Unique Strengths you promise? This is where you prove you can do what you say you can.</p>
<p><b>Brand Character:</b> Think of this as the personality of a brand. What words would you use to describe a name brand if that brand were a person?</p>	<p><b>Brand Character:</b> What is the Character of your personal brand? Think of it as your personality, your overriding attitude, and your temperament. Like the foundation of a house, it's the base of who YOU™ are.</p>

## Your College Graduate Personal Brand Positioning Statement

Hopefully, by now, you've asked yourself: "Who really is [insert your name here]™?" If you're not sure how to answer that question yet, stick around. We're going to walk through each part together in detail as you go through the book.

As we work our way through Step 1 — the "Define it" step — I'll share with you what you need to complete what I call your "College Graduate Personal Brand Positioning Statement." Your Positioning Statement will show you exactly how to define who YOU™ really are — which will help you to get the absolute best job for you upon graduation.

Bottom line: This is where "you" become "YOU™."

As we work our way through each of the next six chapters, you'll be able to fill in each portion of your College Grad Positioning Statement, just like the one below. Then, we'll get into how to communicate that well-defined personal brand before, during, and after job interviews. After that, we'll focus on how to avoid damaging the personal brand you've worked so hard to create.

## YOUR College Graduate Personal Brand Positioning Statement

### Audience

*My Audience is:*

*Company Facts:*

*Company Culture:*

*Division/Department Culture:*

*Interviewer/College Recruiter:*

*Potential Boss/Supervisor:*

### Needs

*Functional:*

*Emotional:*

### Comparison

***Job Title:***

***Desired Label: I want to be the brand of (the way I would like to be perceived):***

### Unique Strengths

***My Existing Unique Strengths are:***

***The Future Unique Strengths That I Want to Work on Are:***

### Reasons Why

***My Existing Reasons Why (why my Audience should believe I can deliver my Unique Strengths) are:***

***The Future Reasons Why That I Want to Work on Are:***

### Brand Character

*My Personal Brand Character (how I want my Personal Brand Character to be perceived, including my overriding attitude, temperament, and personality) is:*

By the time you've finished working with the six parts of your College Grad Personal Brand Positioning Statement, you'll be ready to put YOU™ into action. Armed and ready with that, you will be able to make clear to your ideal employers exactly what you can offer them. So, roll up your sleeves! Your personal brand — and that amazing job you want — is waiting....



# Quiz: The Top 20 College Grad Personal Brand Busters®

*I never make stupid mistakes. Only very, very clever ones.*

— John Peel, British broadcaster

**M**istakes aren't stupid unless we don't learn from them. In fact, I agree with Peel: Most mistakes are “very, very clever” because they open doors to help us get better and better at communicating our personal brands. As we said in the previous chapter, that's what College Grad Personal Brand Busters™ are all about — the mistakes other grads just like you have made during their job searches that you can learn from and avoid. They're the pitfalls, traps, and banana peels to watch out for as you start to put your College Grad Personal Brand Marketing Plan into action. If you really think about these mistakes and remember them, they can keep you from damaging your own personal brand before, during, and after the interview process.

Through dozens of interviews with human resources managers and college recruiters from all over the country, I have pulled together the top 20 most damaging College Grad Personal Brand Busters®. They are divided into our five Job Seeker Marketing Plan Activities: Actions, Reactions, Look, Sound, and Thoughts — with four Busters each. Do you recognize yourself in any of these? After you have finished reading

them, take the quiz located at the end of this chapter, and test yourself on these Busters. How well do you score? You will then know exactly what to avoid as you progress through your job search and stay on your toes during every interview.

## College Grad Personal Brand Busters® — Actions

1. **Lying on your resume or during an interview.** Studies show that a large number of college grads actually lie on their resumes. These lies range from exaggerating experience to changing “facts” — like their GPA — or exaggerating what role they played in a campus organization. The problem is that these “facts” can be easily checked out by a potential employer.

When asked why they lie on their resumes, most grads say: “Come on — one little white lie won’t hurt, will it?” Well, according to every single one of the experts I spoke with, it could hurt a lot — especially now that computer technology has made it so much easier and quicker to check these types of things out. The potential result of lying on your resume? Someone is almost sure to discover it eventually. If the lie is found before your interview, you won’t get the interview at all (and you may never even know why they didn’t call you). If the truth comes out during your interview, you won’t get the job. And if you’re found out after you get the job, well ... there’s a good chance you’ll get fired. Just think about how you would explain *that* to your next interviewer.

Let’s be honest: It’s normal to use your resume or an interview to “position” potential negatives in as positive a light as possible. But making up experiences or lying about something like your GPA will get you nowhere. There is 0% upside and 100% potential downside. Even if the lie feels “unimportant,” people will think of you as dishonest if you’re caught. And who wants to hire somebody with a dishonest personal brand? Erin Padilla of Talent Plus explains it like this: “Lying on your resume says to an employer that you have bad integrity. Believe me, word will spread....”

If you’re remaining true to who you are, there’s no reason to lie, and you’ll be hired because of what YOU™ have to offer — yes, even if you’re just starting out with little experience. It also just feels better knowing that you’re telling the truth. Besides, it’s actually more stressful when you lie because it will make you constantly look over the shoulder,

afraid someone will find out. When you're consistently honest with yourself and others, you'll just naturally feel better about yourself. So, the bottom line is: Lying on your resume is a lose-lose situation. In this case, do the opposite of what Nike says: "Just *don't* do it."

- 2. Asking questions about pay and benefits during an initial interview.** If a college grad asks this type of question, recruiters tell me they immediately read that as a sign of someone who's more interested in what the company can do for them than what they can do for the company. Kaylea Dunn, an HR Coordinator at Olsson Associates, says that when a grad asks right away about pay, benefits, or time off, it "shows they are only interested in the best offer." She says, "Show you are interested in the opportunity versus how much you will make or how much paid time off you'll get." The interviewer doesn't want to feel like you're comparing offers from companies (even if you are.)

Don't forget that your *Audience's* Needs are key to success in finding a job using personal branding – not yours! Asking about pay in your first meeting may also make your interviewer think that you'll leave before long because you'll always be looking for the next better paying job.

Before even considering asking about salary, etc., make sure the company and the job are a good fit for YOU™. Don't get me wrong: You definitely have every right to know what a company has to offer you eventually, but — as a college grad — an initial interview isn't the right time to ask about salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings it up. When the company finally makes you an offer, that's when you can get more specific about salary and benefits. In the meantime, focus on showing the interviewer what a great contribution you can make to the company.

## College Grad Personal Brand Busters® —Look

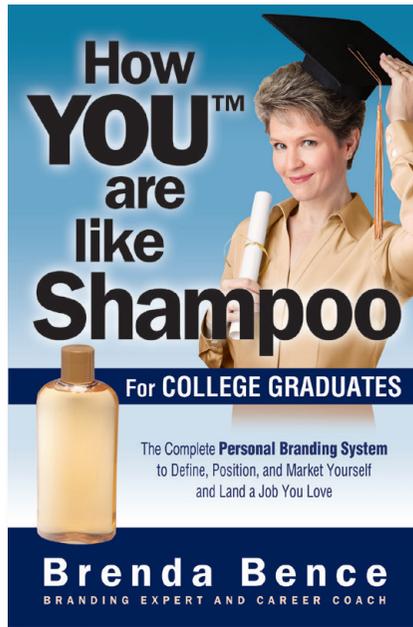
- 1. Not paying attention to YOU™ on the Internet.** A recent study done by Harris Interactive revealed a pretty amazing statistic: 45% of employers now look at your social media profiles when you apply for a job. That's up from 22% just one year before that, so you can be sure that more companies are checking out social media every day. And more than 1/3 of those companies — 35%! — in the study

said they ended up not hiring someone because of what they saw on those social networking sites. Ouch! These employers were especially turned off by sexy photos, someone whose photos show drug use or heavy drinking, and negative comments about employers or co-workers.

Chances are your interviewer or future boss will do a “Google search” on you, too, before your interview. If you’re not careful, a search like that could actually stop you from even getting an interview. The “Look” of YOU™ on the Internet could hurt your personal brand in a lot of ways. Think twice before posting those wild photos from spring break on your Facebook page or a picture of you passed out on the frat house floor on your MySpace profile. That goes for the pictures that your friends post of you online, too. Ask your friends to do you a favor and not post any pictures of you that don’t represent the brand of YOU™ that you want.

It isn’t just pictures and videos that can cause you problems, though. If you blog or use Twitter, be careful about what you say. Don’t write negative comments about other people and definitely don’t use dirty words, share strong opinions about politics, or talk about potentially embarrassing personal information. One of the HR recruiters I interviewed told me a story about an engineering student who was a top candidate for an entry-level job ... until she posted something negative about her HR interviewer she had with that person on Facebook. One of the firm’s employees saw her post and told the interviewer about it. Guess who went to the bottom of the pile and never got a second interview? So, remember: Privacy doesn’t exist on the Internet. As soon as you post it, your secret is out, and you may accidentally damage your job-seeker personal brand faster than you can click your mouse!

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