

How YOU™ are like Shampoo



For **JOB** SEEKERS



The Proven **Personal Branding System**
To Help You Succeed In Any Interview And
Secure the Job of Your Dreams

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Brenda Bence

BRANDING EXPERT AND EXECUTIVE COACH

“Why should I hire YOU™?”

Employers want to know why you are the best choice for the job: Should they hire you or another candidate? The truth is that you’re more likely to be selected for a job based on your connection with the interviewer than based on your qualifications. By learning to master your Job-Seeker Personal Brand, you’ll have an edge over others interviewing for the same position, making the trademarked ‘YOU™’ the brand of choice for your next employer.

This groundbreaking book reveals a proven, step-by-step system for defining, communicating, and taking control of your personal brand before, during, and after a job interview. Modeled after the world’s most successful big-brand marketing methods, this guide takes you start-to-finish through proven *corporate* branding techniques never before adapted for *personal* use.

You’ll learn how to:

- Leverage the 6 personal brand positioning elements other job seekers don’t know
- Master the 5 everyday activities that best communicate your brand to potential employers
- Avoid the Top 20 Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™ that can hurt your chances for success
- Build trust and excitement before, during, and after your interview
- Command the highest possible salary once you’re offered the job you really want

**“If you want to prosper in today’s competitive job market, this book is for you!
Bence is a true personal branding guru who has created a unique,
no-nonsense framework for job search success.”**

—Doug Rath, Chairman, Talent Plus

Brenda S. Bence, MBA, is an internationally-recognized branding expert, certified professional coach, powerhouse speaker, and award-winning author of the *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., Brenda now travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and corporations to greater success through corporate and personal brand development.

Are YOU™ brand-ready? Take the Personal Brand Quiz at
www.HowYOUAreLikeShampoo.com

Part of the YOU™ Series



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Personal Branding and Your Job Search

Whether you're someone who wants out of a dead-end job or you're someone who has been out of a job for a while, defining your job-seeker personal brand can be the missing link to helping you find the kind of work you've been daydreaming about. Knowing who YOU™ are — the trademarked you — will give you renewed confidence and a clear edge in your job search. In fact, once you carefully define the job-seeker personal brand you want to communicate in interviews, you will be able to look at your job search with new meaning. It will help 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.)

The ultimate goal of this book is to eliminate once and for all that groan you emit when the alarm goes off in the morning (you know the one we're talking about). I want you to be in a job that keeps you happy, fulfilled, and motivated.

But it really is up to you. If you want a better job, a successful career, and a more satisfying work life, you have to do something about it. Otherwise, nothing will happen. I can almost hear you saying, "But Brenda, I have no 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 as though your job search is at the mercy of employers, a significant part of your job search success *is* in your control, and the foundation of that control is learning how to master your job-seeker personal brand. In *How YOU™ are like Shampoo for Job Seekers*, we will focus on the key 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 job-seeker personal brand. Every time you have gone on an interview, you've presented that personal brand, maybe even without knowing it. Now, it's time to take control and learn how to manage it, leading to better success in the interview process and — ultimately — landing a great job.

How YOU™ are like Shampoo for Job Seekers is a do-it-yourself, no-nonsense guide to getting the job you want through successful personal branding. It's simple, easy to read, and it works. I have designed the personal branding system in this book to take the guesswork out of figuring out your job-seeker personal brand and how to use it to help you get the job you really want. It's all about practical application. Through an innovative, proven step-by-step process which utilizes

exercises and worksheets, you will define a powerful job-seeker personal brand.

Most importantly, your brand won't just remain a nice idea in your head. After all, it would make no sense to spend time defining your brand and then just leave it in a desk drawer while you continue on the same as always, right?

No, you need a roadmap to help you communicate your brand to potential employers so that it serves you well. This is how you find that dream job you've always wanted. This is how you take the steering wheel of your career and drive it where you want it to go.

Through reading this book, you'll learn specific ways to communicate your brand to potential employers before, during, and after your interviews. We will work together to:

- Define your personal brand using a Job-Seeker Personal Brand Positioning Statement format modeled off the six core elements used by the most successful name brands in the world.
- Communicate your personal brand through a Job-Seeker Personal Brand Marketing Plan so that potential employers will see you as you *want* to be seen. This will help you effectively master the five activities you do throughout your job search that most impact your personal brand and your ability to get the job you want.
- Avoid damaging your job-seeker personal brand by learning from the mistakes others have made in the job search process. This is one of the most unique and fun parts of the system — our top 20 most damaging Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™. These will help you bypass the most common pitfalls others have experienced while hunting for a job. In other words, you'll know what to watch out for before you even get there!
- You will hear the input of dozens of recruiters and human resources experts that I have interviewed for this book. They've been in the trenches and seen it all!
- We'll use the graphic labeled “The Proven Pathway to Getting YOU™ a Great Job” on page 16. It serves as a map to explain each step of our personal branding system. 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 “ah-ha!” 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 better job with increased income, job satisfaction, and exciting career progress.

Input Equals Output

How YOU™ are like Shampoo for Job Seekers is an interactive, action-oriented experience, but your job-seeker 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 job-seeker personal brand is exactly what you will get *out* of it. The more time and energy you devote to this process, the faster you will get the job you want.

Get ready to feel empowered as you take charge of your job-seeker personal brand and become the Brand Manager of YOU™. Let's discover how to help you get the job that will fulfill you for years to come.

Branding People?

I firmly believe that people—just like shampoo and other products—are brands, too. Let's use examples of people we probably 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 “Johnny Depp?” Both of these actors are good-looking leading men, but they create very different perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, don't they? Now, let's throw “Jackie Chan” into the picture ... you have different perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about him, too, right?

Think of any category of well-known people—how about singers this time? Think about Britney Spears ... Madonna ... Celine Dion. Again, they're all very different. That's because each of these individuals has a very specific personal brand that is absolutely unique and ownable as compared to the others.

“But, wait a minute,” you may be saying. “Those people are all celebrities, and they have the money and the means to hire full-time image specialists to manage their personal brands!”

Fair point! But you don't need that kind of high-priced help to define and communicate your job-seeker personal brand. The personal branding system shared in *How YOU™ are like Shampoo for Job Seekers* will help you build your personal brand without writing checks to a publicist. It's designed for the millions of job seekers all around the world who may not be famous and certainly don't plan on turning their personal brand into a global household name. What you want to do is define yourself in *your world* in order to achieve your ultimate personal career goal: to land the job of your dreams.

When it comes to job seeking, your personal brand is defined as:

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

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

Perceive: Perception is reality in marketing. When it comes to your job-seeker personal brand, it doesn't matter who *you* think you are. What matters is how the *interviewer* perceives you. If your potential employer 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 want to do some work to make sure you're presenting your best job-seeker personal 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 logical reasons we choose one brand over another. The same holds true when using personal branding for a job search—you need to consider what your potential employers will *think* about you. What are the logical reasons a potential boss would choose you over another candidate?

Feel: On the other hand, branding is also a very emotional process. Stop and think about that one brand you said you were intensely loyal to earlier in this chapter. What is the feeling you have about that brand? Trust? Reliability? We establish connections with name brands, and these connections go far beyond just what the products do for us. We are loyal to these brands based on emotional connections. It's the same in personal branding. The way potential employers *feel* about you has a profound influence on your success. The stronger the connections you create before, during, and after your job interviews, the more powerful your personal brand will be throughout your job search process.

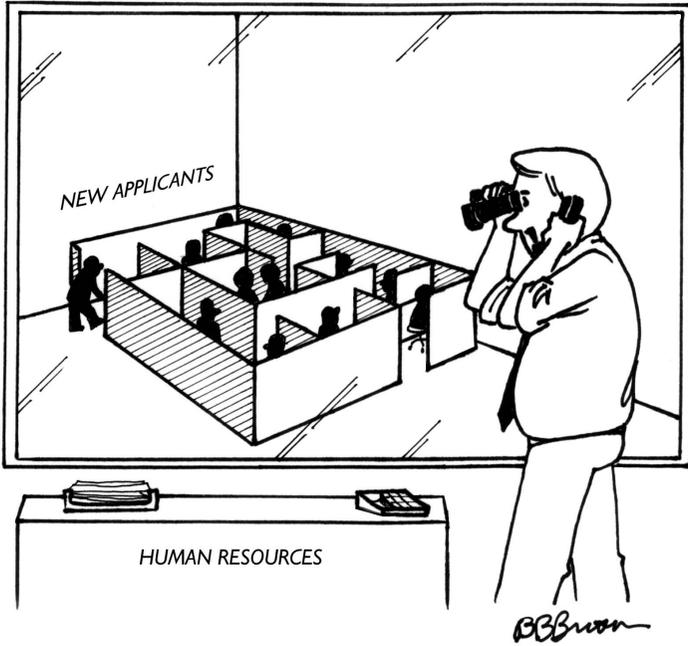
Colleagues' Brands at Work

Still don't believe the average person has a brand? Think of someone from your current job or your most recent job who you really enjoy working with—the kind of person you look forward to seeing and speaking with every morning. Stop for a moment and consider: How do you perceive this person? How does this person make you feel? What do you think about this person?

Now, consider a different person you work with or have worked with in the past ... and let's be honest ... who you really *don't* enjoy all that much! It's that one person who seems to cause you problems and tie your stomach in knots every time you have to work with them. How

does *this* person make you feel? What do you think about this person, and how do you perceive him or her?

Can you see how these people 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. If they haven't taken the time to define their best possible personal brand, they may be seriously limiting their success by presenting themselves in a way that differs from how they want to be seen.



"Hire the woman in there selling maps!"

10

Taking YOU™ On Interviews

We would rather be in the company of somebody we like than in the company of the most superior being of our acquaintance.

— Frank Swinnerton, English critic and novelist

Here's a startling truth about interviews:

**The best, most qualified candidate doesn't always get the job.
It's the best *interviewee* who almost always gets the job.**

No matter how great your resume, if you don't communicate your personal brand effectively in the job interview, there's a good chance you'll be out of luck — and, unfortunately, out of a job.

This happens time and again. A great candidate on paper may have trouble getting a job because he or she just isn't all that good at interviewing. It can be incredibly frustrating to candidates who aren't chosen when they know their qualifications are perfect for the job. But if they've spent more time perfecting their resume than focusing on how to define and communicate the great job-seeker personal brand they want to communicate in their interviews, their qualifications may simply not be enough.

The Likeability Factor

Here's another 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 to work with people you like?

It's no different with employers. They hire people they believe they will 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 is where Step 2 of our job-seeker personal branding system comes in. It will show you how to intelligently and effectively communicate your personal brand in interviews. It will teach you how to be a great interviewee and to really connect with your interviewers. That's what personal branding is all about—communicating who YOU™ really are.

Bring On the Heavy Interview Artillery

Yes, I know that interviews are stressful, but there is an entire arsenal of things you can do to feel more confident and master the interview process. The upcoming chapters will outline the five core activities that are designed to help you have non-stop successful interview experiences and—yes—walk away from interviewers knowing that you were “liked.” This is how to make sure the best parts of YOU™ are communicated in the strongest way possible to potential employers. And that, of course, leads to your ultimate objective: an inspiring, exciting new job.

“ *That’s what personal branding
is all about — communicating
who YOU™ really are.* ”

Don't Fake It! If you truly don't know the answer to a question, absolutely avoid making something up. How's that going to help the "authentic" YOU™? Tell the interviewer you're not sure of the answer, and volunteer to find out so that you can call the interviewer back as soon as possible with a response. Explain that you'd rather do the research to find out more than to answer in a way that might be misleading. Most interviewers won't see this as a negative; they may even see it as a sign of integrity.

Another caution about "faking it" is to pretend you understand a question when you really don't. You shouldn't feel badly about asking the interviewer to repeat or clarify a particular question. You might think you'll look "stupid" by doing so, but the truth is you'll only look stupid if you answer the question in a way that doesn't make sense.

React to Your Reactions. If your nerves cause you to get a bit tongue-tied during an interview, don't be afraid to acknowledge it, make a joke, and move on. You could simply say something like, "Wow! I guess my nerves got the better of me there for a moment!" There's nothing wrong with being honest about feeling some nervousness in an interview situation — everyone does. As long as your nerves don't prevent you from effectively communicating your job-seeker personal brand, a small acknowledgement here or there won't do YOU™ any serious damage.

Your Reactions *After* the Interview

Write It Down. As mentioned in the Actions chapter, immediately after the interview — while the experience is fresh — find a quiet space and "unload your mind," writing down all you can remember from the interview. Just write and write and write. Don't think about how well the interview went until you have all of your memories down on paper. Then, and only then, ask yourself: How effectively did I manage my Reactions? How well did I answer any difficult questions? Did I keep my cool? What Reactions can I work on improving for my next interview? This is how you continue to improve your Reactions over time.

Use Every Experience to Improve. If things didn't go exactly as you planned, don't be too hard on yourself. Just focus on what you did well and what you can improve on in the future. Remember: No one

is perfect. The key is to learn from your mistakes, figure out what you would do better the next time, and add it to your Marketing Plan as something to work on.

Don't Let a Rejection Get You Down. If you get a “no” response after an interview, that’s okay. In fact, look at it as a way to save you time and money. Why? Because you can now focus on other target companies or jobs where you have more potential. Nora Bammann of The Kroger Company says: “Rejections are tough but (a) you got interview practice, and (b) you can use the experience to further refine your job search criteria.”

When a “no” happens, take the time to evaluate what you would have liked the most about that position and what you would have liked the least. You can then use this information as you continue to hone in on the best companies and jobs for YOU™. It can also help you to come up with better questions to ask in future interviews. Think about what retired professional basketball player Michael Jordan said: “I’ve missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot ... and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” The truth is that we learn the most, and uncover what we need to improve upon, primarily through failing.

A “No” Can Still Be a Connection. Don’t throw away any of the information about your interviewer! You never know what can happen from the connections you make during an interview. You may be called in for a different job with that same company at a later date, or the interviewer may get a new position elsewhere and remember you.

Here’s a personal example of how important this is: When I was looking for my very first job right out of college, I interviewed with a company that was offering a position I really wanted. After a couple of (what I thought were good) interviews, I was told the crushing news: I didn’t get the job. I was incredibly disappointed, but I resigned myself to the bad news and wrote a thank you note anyway to the person who would have been my boss. In the note, I said I was very interested in the company and that I’d like to be considered for any future openings. One month later, the person who had just been hired for that original job was fired. One

phone call and one more interview later, I got the job. I learned firsthand that a “no” doesn’t have to be forever. So, hold on to your interviewers’ information — you never know when it might come in handy again.

Ask for Feedback. If you receive a “no,” use it as an opportunity to learn how you could increase your chances the next time. If you feel comfortable with it, ask your interviewer politely if he or she would be willing to share a reason or two why you were turned down. You can explain, of course, that this will help you to improve in your next interview. You might ask if there was anything in particular from your interview or perhaps something about your background or experience that drove the decision. Would they consider you for any other jobs where your qualifications might be appropriate? This is a great example of how you can succeed by failing — just like Michael Jordan.

Don’t Relax Too Much in a Second Interview. If you get called back for a second or third interview, it’s easy to get lulled into believing you’re just a signature away from “You’re hired!” But this can be dangerous. Most HR experts agree that it’s actually in follow-up interviews that a large number of candidates fall out of the hiring pool. Remember: Be watchful about communicating your job-seeker personal brand in *every* interview, not just the first or second one. Once you have the formal hiring letter and you’ve signed it and sent it in, consider yourself hired; until then, it’s key to keep a steady course and never stop communicating YOU™.

Putting Your Reactions into Action

Now, let’s check in on Jamie and Marcia to see what Reaction plans they will use in their Job-Seeker Personal Brand Marketing Plans.

Your Sound Before the Interview

All of the above suggestions can be used before, during, *and* after an interview, but there are certain strategies for your Sound that you should specifically take care of before your interviews. Don't forget, for example, that your Sound is about more than just your voice, and it can have an impact on your job-seeker personal brand before you even speak to anyone at your target companies.

Your “Written Sound.” It's one of the biggest mistakes that job seekers overlook: Forgetting that even though cover letters and resumes are written, they still reflect your Sound, just like they reflect your Look. So, when you prepare your cover letters and resume — which are incredibly important introductions to YOU™ — keep them simple. Leave out large, fancy words. While you may think it makes you sound smart to use big words and share lots of information, those very same things may also make you sound like you're trying too hard.

Read through your cover letters and resume again, and keep the overall “Sound” of your job-seeker personal brand in mind. What is coming through? If it's not the “Sound” you want it to be, what tone would someone with your personal brand use in a letter or resume? Would it be warm? Assertive? Enthusiastic?

Have someone you trust and who knows you well read through your cover letters and resume to let you know if they really reflect YOU™. A friend of mine — who was incredibly fun-loving, gregarious, and charming in person — asked me to read through his application for a job. If I hadn't known him, I would have thought he was a completely different person based on what I read. He sounded incredibly stuffy and pompous! His writing didn't do his personal brand justice at all. So, if you need a hand getting your job-seeker personal brand across in writing, find someone who is a good writer who can help you. Remember: YOU™ will get you the job, but your cover letter and resume are responsible for getting YOU™ the interview.

Your “Virtual Sound.” E-mails reflect your written sound just as much as your cover letter and resume. It's a fascinating truth of modern-day communications: We pay close attention to what we write in a letter that will be printed up and signed on a piece

of stationery, but we can be very careless when it comes to writing e-mails. Isn't that true? I've seen people agonize over what will be printed on letterhead, but those same folks will send out rapid-fire e-mails without paying much attention to content or errors.

It's critical to remember that your personal brand comes through in your e-mails just as much as it does on the phone, in person, and in your cover letter and resume. And just as with speech, communicating your Sound via e-mail is as much about what you write as it is about how you write it.

For example, do you start your e-mails with a nice greeting, or do you just write a one-line response to the previous question with no sign-off? If you phoned the person you are writing, you wouldn't just state your one-line response and then hang up without a hello or goodbye, would you? It's interesting, but for some reason, we seem to communicate differently in e-mails. But that can be a huge mistake! E-mails run the risk of coming across flippant and rude if we're not careful.

Remember the job-seeker personal brand that you're trying to communicate, and think about how you can use your e-mails to support that. For example, take an extra ten seconds to start and end all e-mails with a simple but nice greeting, as well as a warm closing. It's an opportunity—often before the first interview—to build a professional “connection” with an interviewer. And trust me: You'll certainly stand out from others who take less care with their e-mails. It's just one more way you can build a great job-seeker personal brand in the eyes of your interviewers. This is especially true of e-mails that you send prior to your interview. If your e-mails are off-putting, it will be hard to get past that first impression when it comes time to meet your interviewer in person.

Here are some other things to watch out for in your e-mails:

- You would never dream of sending a cover letter that contains no capital letters or punctuation, but for some reason, a fair number of people do this in e-mails. Professional job-seeker e-mails need to contain capital letters and punctuation, too.
- In your e-mails, include a signature that has your name and telephone number in it. This reminds the interviewer of who

you are and makes it easy for the interviewer to contact you. Never require an interviewer to search through your e-mails for the one e-mail in which you included your phone number.

- Be sure to use spell check on all computer communications. With today's technology, spelling errors in interview documents are not acceptable. All that said, don't rely on spell check entirely because it doesn't pick up every mistake. So, be sure to have a careful look yourself before hitting that "send" button.
- If writing isn't your strong suit, admit it, and ask a friend who is a good writer to read through the important e-mails you've written before you send them out.
- Make sure your subject lines are clear and to the point. They should reflect exactly what your e-mail is about. Think of your subject head as a title of a document, which means at a minimum, the first word of your subject line should be capitalized.
- Don't attach any files unless you have been specifically asked to do so. If you don't, your e-mail runs the risk of ending up in an interviewer's spam folder somewhere, and that's definitely not going to get you a job!
- Humor is great to include if you can and if it's consistent with your personal brand, but be careful with jokes. It can sometimes be hard to get the real intention across in an e-mail, so you run the risk of being misunderstood.
- Emoticons might be fun in personal e-mail communications, but don't use them in a professional e-mail, particularly if the e-mail is being sent to an interviewer or if it is at all connected to your job search.

Your Sound *After* the Interview

The same Sound tips we've talked about throughout this chapter still apply just as much after an interview and in a follow-up interview as they do before and during an interview. Don't let your "Sound" go just because you've gotten to that coveted second interview or because you've developed a more comfortable relationship with the interviewer. Stay the course, and keep up the consistency with your job-seeker personal brand Sound. It's key to represent your personal brand well in *all* of your communications from e-mails to telephone calls to in-person meetings.

Your Thank You Note. As mentioned in the Actions chapter, you absolutely, positively should write a thank you note to the interviewer within 24 hours after your interview. Statistics show that only about 10% of applicants write a thank you after an interview, so it's clearly a great way to stand out. And, the more you can distinguish yourself in your follow-up thank you note, the more memorable your job-seeker personal brand will be with the interviewer. All of that means you'll have a better chance of getting hired! In fact, if you're in the "maybe" pile when you leave the interview, a well thought-out thank you could easily move you to the "yes" pile.

Here are some tips for making your follow-up thank you a powerful statement for YOU™:

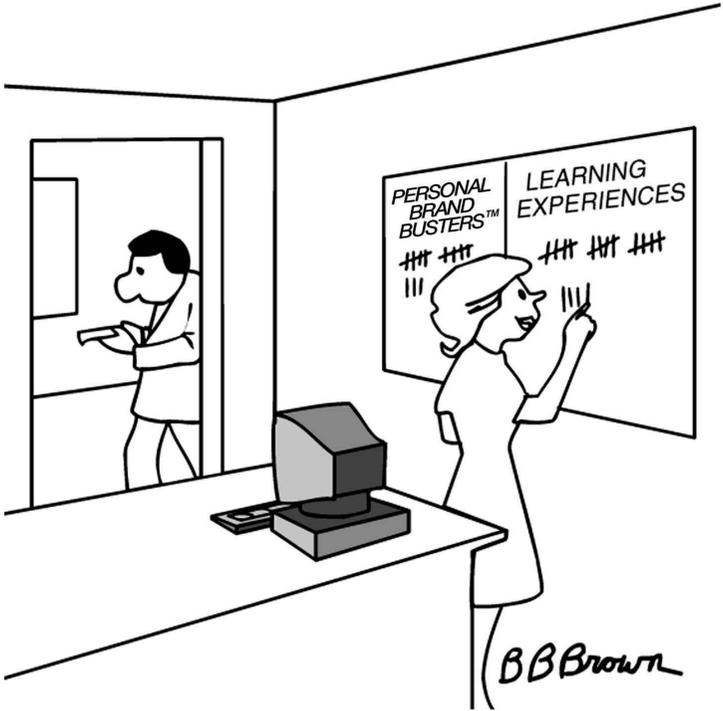
- Personalize your thank you note. If you send a "cookie-cutter" thank you that sounds like it's the same one you send to everyone after an interview, you could just as easily move from the "maybe" pile to the "rejected" pile. So, no cutting and pasting! Mention something specific that happened in the interview to help the interviewer remember you.
- Express your interest in the job, and be enthusiastic about it! Be willing to show your excitement and passion.
- Mention why you believe you're a great fit for the position, maybe even repeating a key Unique Strength or Reason Why that you talked about during the interview.
- If you interviewed with more than one person, send each of them a separate thank you.

- Triple-check the thank you note to make sure everything is correct — especially the interviewer’s name and title.
- If you know the company is going to make a quick hiring decision, send your thank you via e-mail. If they’re going to take a couple of weeks or longer to hire someone, stand out even more by sending your thank you note by snail mail. These days, snail mail is unexpected, so it can help you be remembered.

The Subsequent E-mail Trap. Don’t suddenly get casual with your e-mails to the interviewer or anyone else at the company. As one of the recruiters I interviewed cautions: “Don’t start forwarding jokes or funny e-mails to the interviewer or disclosing information about your personal life even if you begin to feel more comfortable with that person. It’s critical to keep a professional relationship with the interviewer no matter how friendly you may have become.” Acting too familiar too quickly could undermine all that you’ve worked hard to accomplish. Yes, you do want the interviewer to like you, but you don’t want to lose the job to someone else when you’re that close just because you’ve accidentally crossed the line.

Your “Sound” Marketing Plan

So, how does your job-seeker personal brand sound now? It’s time to explore the Sound portion of your Job-Seeker Personal Brand Marketing Plan. Let’s tune in to our two colleagues to see how each of them will use Sound to communicate their personal brands during their job search process.



Quiz: The Top 20 Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™

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

— John Peel, British broadcaster

Mistakes aren't stupid unless we don't learn from them. In fact, I side with Peel: Most mistakes are actually “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 Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™ are all about — the mistakes others have made during a job search that we can all learn from and avoid. If you keep them top of mind, they can keep you from damaging your own job-seeker personal brand. They are the pitfalls and traps to watch out for as you start to put your Job-Seeker Personal Brand Marketing Plan into action.

Through my interviews with human resources managers and recruiting experts from companies all over the world, I have compiled the top 20 most damaging Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™. They are divided into our five Job-Seeker Marketing Plan Activities: Actions, Reactions, Look, Sound, and Thoughts — 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.

Job-Seeker Personal Brand Busters™—Actions

1. **Lying on your resume or during an interview.** Studies show that a large number of people actually lie on their resumes. These lies range from exaggerating experience to actually falsifying “facts” — like a job title or dates of employment — that can be easily checked out by a potential employer.

When asked why, most job seekers 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 since computer technology has made it so much easier and quicker to check credentials. The potential result of lying on your resume? Someone is almost certain to discover it eventually. If the lie is uncovered before your interview, you won’t get the interview at all. If the truth comes out after your interview, you won’t get the job. And, if you’re found out after you get the job, well, frankly, there’s a good chance you’ll be fired. Just try explaining *that* to your next interviewer.

It’s normal to use your resume or an interview to frame any potential negatives in as positive a light as possible, but making up experiences or lying about something, like your education, will get you nowhere. There is 0% upside and 100% potential downside. Even if the lie feels “unimportant,” people will view 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 in your field of work amongst colleagues.”

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. It also just feels better knowing that you’re living a life of integrity. Out of that comes a greater sense of fulfillment and, when you’re consistently honest with yourself and others, your self-esteem increases, too. So, putting it frankly, lying on your resume is a lose-lose situation. Bottom line: Just don’t do it.

2. **Asking questions about pay and benefits during an initial interview.** Recruiters tell me they immediately read that kind

of question as a sign of someone with little experience. On top of that, it gives the impression that you're more interested in what the employer can do for you than what you can do for the employer. Don't forget that your *Audience's* Needs are key to success in personal branding! 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. So, while you should feel free to ask an employment agent or recruiter about salary and benefits, don't ask it when you're actually in an initial interview with a potential company. Michelle Lederman of Executive Essentials says: "It sends a signal that all you care about is the money. No company wants to hire someone who's interested in nothing but how big of a paycheck comes along with the job."

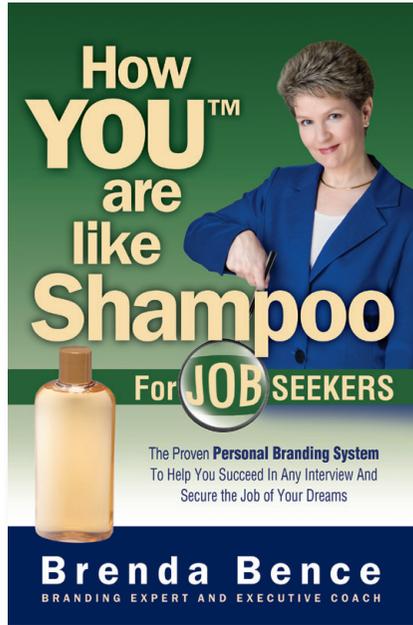
Before asking about the particulars of salary, etc., make sure the company and the job are a good fit for YOU™. Don't get me wrong: You definitely have every right to know what a company has to offer you eventually, but an initial interview isn't the right time to ask about salary or benefits unless 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.

3. **Not performing a "trial run" to find out how long it takes to get from home to the interview site.** Don't run the risk of being late for your interview! Michelle Lederman says: "Showing up late shows a lack of planning and prioritizing of time." And that's definitely not a good job-seeker personal brand.

Even if you're on time, you don't want to be out of breath and dripping with sweat because you had to sprint the last 50 yards. So, a trial run is key. Make sure to do your trial run around the same time of day as the interview. If you're scheduled for an interview during rush hour traffic, a trial run during late morning hours won't give you a good sense of how much travel time you'll really need.

How about arriving early? Well, it's certainly better to arrive early than to arrive late, but if you do arrive early, Erin Padilla says: "Wait in the lobby or outside of the building until ten minutes before your scheduled meeting."

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