



CAREER CORNER



## What You Need to Know: Your Career Brand

[By Ron Proul

What do you need to know to successfully build and position your career brand?

Companies spend tremendous amounts of money on advertising, brand management, product placement, sponsorships, and a whole host of strategies to build their brands. Careful thought is put into branding, and some of the world's most successful companies are immediately recognizable worldwide as a result.

You can create a branded career, and if you can, why shouldn't you? If you are reading this article, you probably are already someone that can benefit from these strategies. But what are the benefits? —

### Brand Advantages

- Advance your career both internally at your current company and externally.
- Build job security.
- Create career choice.
- Derive greater career satisfaction.
- Reduce job-search time.
- Facilitate income negotiations and potential.

### Identify and Create Your Brand

What is it you do, and where do you want to go with it? Career planning is necessary and could be considered part of your market research. How could a successful

company launch a product without market research and a long-term strategy? As you are a professional, a market exists for your services. You want to position yourself in the right place in that market. Develop a relationship with a mentor you respect, gather advice, and research your industry and profession.

Career goals may change, but a branded individual will have the ability to make transitions easier and at his or her discretion. A target market, self-assessment, and plan will help you keep your message on track and communicate your brand effectively. Consistency in your work product and behavior can help reinforce your brand. Make sure what you are communicating is what you really are and where you want to go with it.

Elements to consider when creating your brand:

- Industry
- Expertise
- Size of market
- Size of employer/client
- Career path
- Work/life balance
- Functions
- Skills
- Personality strength

### Career Co-Branding

I cannot stress enough the power of creating a brand image through association. If your

employer or department has a reputation, you can leverage that as part of your brand. Candidates get interviews just because of the reputation of the company, industry, or products they are associated with. Hiring authorities have images of companies and industries. Many assume that if you worked with one of these companies, you may possess the same success factors.

Your employer already spends time and money on marketing; you can capitalize on it. In no other business relationship can you more freely use the branding and name of a company without consent. Ask yourself, "Is this a thought leader, leading company, product, technology, or service that would reflect favorably on my brand through association?" The company doesn't have to be the largest, but a strong reputation, strong internal team members, and visibility in their business sector can create a co-branding effect. Internally, within your company, you need to be associated with products, projects, departments, and initiatives that are successful and accept responsibility for contributing to success. What companies or projects are you signing on to work for?

### Communicate Your Brand

Self-promotion in the course of your professional development is a great avenue for branding yourself. You should develop a professional network of individuals where you are resources for one another. Expertise in any specific function or industry can go



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a long way toward identifying you as the key individual. Take on a challenge, and sponsor initiatives that will create real accomplishments and display your brand.

Get your message out through:

- Networking
- Expert advising and specialization
- Pursuing advanced credentials and education
- Career/industry associations
- Continuing professional education
- Third-party endorsements (references)

- Interviewing
- Performance evaluations

**Brand Your Resume**

Your resume is an advertisement for your brand. Include your highlights, accomplishments, associations, and career progression. Make it straightforward and easy to digest.

Some of the key ingredients are:

- Accomplishment driven
- Comprehensive in description yet concise
- Consistent form for each position

- Chronological
- Highlight strengths

Brand identity takes continued development and communication. It is a product that consistently delivers what it promises and keeps itself relevant in the market.

What is your brand?

**About the Author**

Ron Proul is CEO of El Segundo-based Century Group, which provides executive search services for permanent positions and places executives for project and interim engagements in the accounting and financial fields. He may be reached at [rproul@century-group.com](mailto:rproul@century-group.com).

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