

# PACKAGE YOURSELF FOR SUCCESS

—by Jill Klein, Iota Beta/University of Massachusetts



Talent, hard work, and smarts are important, but in today's ultra-competitive world and dismal economy, you need to distinguish yourself.

You need to **package yourself for success or, chances are, you won't get any.**

**MANY EXPERTS SAY** that finding a job in the current business climate is presenting the toughest challenge since the Great Depression. Substantial differences today, however, are the sophistication of the job-search process and the use of business concepts that weren't considered before, such as branding, or in this case, self-branding. According to Catherine Kaputa, brand specialist, speaker, and author of *"U R a BRAND! How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success"* (winner of the Ben Franklin award for Best Career Book 2007), "Many of us keep doing the same things long after they are not working anymore. Self-branding is about playing an active role in your career and life and learning how to position and market yourself to maximum advantage. In self-branding, you're searching for your different idea, a different idea that resonates with your target market and will help you compete and win."

#### Key Pieces in Your Personal Marketing Arsenal:

- A resume in several formats that differentiates you, gets you noticed, and has the keywords and buzzwords that get picked up by electronic

devices (formats include Microsoft Word, PDF, ASCII plain text, HTML, and several others)

- A bio that tells your story in a one-page narrative format
- Personal business cards for networking
- A personal/professional portfolio consisting of documents that support your resume and demonstrate your professional and/or personal accomplishments

And if you're a solo professional, speaker, or author, you'll need a creative marketing package that gets you business.

Today's successful resume—one that gets an interview—is not the same as yesterday's. Tory Johnson, workplace contributor on ABC's *Good Morning America*, wrote in *The New York Times*: "Just because you can do your job well doesn't mean you can articulate it properly on a resume. The worst offenders use boring language and have a format that's unappealing."

Most resumes are laundry lists of skills and jobs and aren't very interesting. View your resume as an ad for your brand. Use your resume to dif-

#### IN TODAY'S ECONOMY, EVERYONE MUST BE PREPARED:

- employed or unemployed
- entry, management/professional, or executive level
- graduating seniors searching for that first job
- those wanting to advance within their current company
- those wanting to change companies
- those changing careers
- those starting a new business
- women returning to the workforce
- retirees searching for part- or full-time work
- volunteers being considered for a board position or award

ferentiate yourself from the crowd in a way that presents a compelling reason to hire you—that tells a story of your achievements and accomplishments. Use keywords and buzzwords from the job descriptions of the positions you're applying for. Employers frequently use software



Marketing professionals might consider branding themselves with materials that reflect their creativity and potential value to a company: a brochure that’s a resume, ads and flyers that promote their abilities, and stationery that adds to the visual cohesion of the total package. Adaptable and easy to use, these and similar materials for many occupations and professions are available at [www.stocklayouts.com](http://www.stocklayouts.com).



to scan for those words and phrases. Identify what the organization or hiring manager needs and clearly show how you can meet those needs; it’s very important to demonstrate how you can contribute to the success of the company.

Be aware that, in general, women tend to downplay their accomplishments and men tend to exaggerate theirs. Social scientists call this the “male hubris, female humility” effect. The problem is that people will believe you. Women need to understand that they are not bragging, they are simply telling their story. Many high-achieving women also suffer from the “Imposter Syndrome”—the fear that people will find out that they aren’t that good (they really are, but that is their fear). These things can easily be reflected in how women market themselves. Don’t fall into these traps.

You will frequently be instructed to submit your resume electronically. One current school of thought is that sending your resume electronically limits and negates the importance of its appearance. Don’t believe it. There are still many instances when you will need an attrac-

tive hard (paper) copy to send to companies and those who request it, network and distribute it to contacts, take it to an interview, etc. In addition, a number of hiring managers have stated that even when a resume is electronically submitted to the human resources department, they’re impressed when they receive a hard copy directly.

“With all the competition, design has become much more important. Design is a way of adding sizzle to your brand. Choose a brand color for all your documents. You could even develop a distinct layout for your documents. You need to attract people to your ideas and abilities. You need to have that ‘something more’ so that people want you and no one else,” says Catherine Kaputa, whose most recent book is *“The Female Brand: Using the Female Mindset to Succeed in Business.”*

**Common Elements Your Materials Must Have:**

- A strong, yet distinctive, visual impression—materials that are different from everyone else, yet appropriate for your purpose

- Formatting and design that emphasize your message; good design is message-driven and makes a document easy to read and understand while at the same time it must be visually attractive to immediately capture your audience’s attention and keep their interest
- Clear communication; documents that are clear and well-written with no simple spelling or grammatical mistakes that can send you to the “No, thank you” pile

Nothing can guarantee success in today’s job market, but understanding what you face and “packaging yourself” appropriately can only increase your odds.

**About the author, Jill Klein**

After a diverse professional career including positions in the public, private, non-profit, and health care sectors, Jill Klein founded ClearComm, a communication design firm that works with businesses and individuals to create message-driven documents that get results using both visual and verbal appeal. You may contact Jill at [jsklein27@gmail.com](mailto:jsklein27@gmail.com).

