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**Branding and positioning yourself
to get the job**

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BRANDING AND POSITIONING YOURSELF TO GET THE JOB

You may have heard that you need to “brand yourself” to be successful in your career. Branding is defined as: “the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another” (Seth Godin). Branding is about your reputation.

Many jobseekers do not realize they have a brand (even law students) — they just have not articulated it yet. Maybe you are known as “a creative problem solver who never shrinks back from a challenge,” or “the person who always lands a deal.” That is your brand!

To craft your brand, you must understand and be able to communicate what makes you exceptional and compelling. You must find a way to stand out in a crowded job search. If you are not known for something, you will not be known for anything. One size does not fit all.

Finding a job or making a career transition is about making a match between two parties (you and the organization and/or the role). It is not just about money — although that is important. It is also about helping the organization meet a need that it has and making sure that you are satisfied with the work you are doing (and where you will be working).

Understanding the emotional motivation behind a job opening is helpful to communicate your brand and make it relevant to the organization. What problem is the organization trying to solve? Solving the problem can be about saving time or creating expertise to fill a void. This is what positioning is about: helping others see your brand as the solution to a specific problem, want or need. Remember: employers hire for *their* reasons, not *yours!*

The question you want to answer for the employer is, “Why should you hire me?” You need to express: “I am this...” Someone who is reading your career documents or LinkedIn profile should be able to recognize you in it. You must get the reader’s attention quickly. Your positioning is often the first impression an employer has of you, so make it count!

If you are engaged in a career transition, you may not be able to position yourself until you have conducted informational interviews to get a better sense of what you are looking for, but you will be able to identify your brand, so keep reading.

Benefits of branding and positioning

Recruiters and hiring managers need help knowing what kind of position you are focused on. It is harder to find a job when you do not know what kind of job you want. Conversely, it is easier to find a job if you know what kind of job you want.

The ability to communicate “why you” is important in a job search or career transition. It can help you stand out from other job candidates. It can make you memorable. You want the interviewer to say, “Oh, I remember them!”

You will also use your positioning in many ways throughout your job search. Your full positioning statement can be included in your LinkedIn About section or incorporated in your cover letter. When networking, your positioning statement can be the answer to the question, “What do you do?” In an interview, your positioning can be used, in part, when asked, “Tell me about yourself.”

Many jobseekers develop their personal positioning when they are looking for a new job. But personal positioning can help you be more effective — and visible — in your current job.

In your current job, get attention for the work you are already doing:

- Offer to do a presentation showing your (or your group’s) accomplishments for the quarter.
- Contact your organization’s communications department to see if they are interested in doing an article for the organization newsletter on a recent project.
- Make sure you are keeping an “Accomplishments Journal” documenting your current career successes.

Develop your own communications plan in your current position. Increase your personal visibility by speaking, writing, and participating in social media. Once you have identified your personal positioning, see how you can incorporate it into your everyday work life. This will make you worth more to your current employer and make you more attractive as a job candidate when it is time for you to look for a new position.

How to develop your brand positioning

To identify how to position yourself for a particular position, posting or employer, it helps to examine the below issues. If you are in the middle of a career transition, you may not be able to address all these issues, but you should be able to identify your core abilities and values.

- *What organizational needs would I fulfill?* What specific problem is the target employer trying to solve with this job? Are they trying to make money? Save money? Save time? Keep existing clients? Expand a team?
- *What are my core abilities?* What special abilities do I possess that separate me from other candidates for this position?
- *What are my values?* What is my belief system that is inherent to me? How does this set me apart?
- *What is my connection to the organization’s need?* Do I possess something special that solves the target employer’s problem?

Questions to ask yourself (choose the ones that you can answer):

Why do I want this job or to work for this organization? _____

What can I offer? _____

What do I want my next employer to know about me? _____

I am the kind of person who _____

I am the person people turn to when _____

What are the top achievements in my career? _____

What can I do that others with the same job title cannot do? What makes me different from other people with my job title? _____

What part of my job makes me want to get out of bed in the morning and go to work? _____

How have I improved my work environment? _____

What part of my job do I like best? _____

Why am I good at what I do? _____

Am I willing to go beyond what is in this job description? What examples of this do I have?

What role do I play in helping my co-workers and/or clients achieve the results they are seeking? _____

What kinds of clients do I most enjoy working with? _____

What training do I have that qualifies me to specialize in this field? _____

What life experiences have I had that would be valuable to others? _____

Is there an area where I am better at something than others? How am I more productive and innovative than other candidates for this job? _____

Is there a specific result I can deliver in this job? _____

How does my work contribute to an employer's bottom line? _____

Additional resources to help you identify what makes you stand out:

- Performance evaluations
- Client testimonials
- Look through your emails to see what great things people have said about you and your work
- LinkedIn recommendations
- Letters of commendation from colleagues and supervisors
- Ask people you know (and people you work with) for feedback. How do others see you?

Putting the pieces together

The next step is a brainstorming exercise. Make a list of possible attributes, values, and differentiators based on the exercises above. Brainstorm first — do not judge or evaluate. If you are engaged in a career transition, you may not feel ready to do this part of the work; you can always return after conducting informational interviews. It may be worth your while to try now though. You may have a breakthrough in developing more clarity about your career by looking at things from a different perspective.

Look through the words and phrases you have identified above (under **How to develop your brand positioning**) and see what stands out. You may be many things but pick *one* to emphasize. It may help you to ask yourself: *If I were creating my ideal career, I would _____.*

If you are still having trouble identifying your positioning, use this idea from Brian Kurth, author of "Test Drive Your Dream Job." Create a collage of your interests — quotes, photos, words, and inspiration from magazines, newspapers, and materials you find

online. You can even create a Pinterest board for this. Then, mine that information to find the “theme” to your personal positioning.

Now, it is time to create your positioning. Your personal position has two parts: A tagline and a full positioning statement.

Tagline

Your tagline is one sentence – ideally, 5-10 words in length. It should be easily understandable and easy to remember.

This formula can be used to create your tagline: Job Title → Differentiator

This may be expressed without pronouns. For example:

- Human Rights Advocate | Anti-Gender Based Violence Expert
- Lawyer Specializing in Construction, Surety and Procurement | Ability to Practice in Both French and English
- Law Student at Osgoode Hall Law School | Lover of Human Rights

Personal positioning

Your personal positioning should be authentic, relevant, compelling, and differentiate you from others. It should have an immediate focus supported by a few points that further emphasize that focus. This positioning statement could be used throughout your career documents, LinkedIn profile, and the interviewing process.

Here is a sample formula for your personal positioning statement:

Job title → Target audience/what you do → Industry/field → Achievements/results

This is expressed as:

I am a (job title/profession) who (works with target audience OR who does X/Y/Z) in the (industry/field) to (highlight accomplishments or results).

For example:

I am an experienced litigation paralegal with a history of working in eDiscovery, helping law firms streamline, project-manage, and scale their documentary discovery process.

Be sure to include:

- *A target audience* — who are the clients or customers you work with?
- *Your employer/industry* — where do you want to work? Who do you want to work for? You can even include your desired employer’s name.

- *A point of difference* — what sets you apart? What is the most compelling reason to choose you as a candidate? (This can be included in the “Achievements/Results” section of the personal positioning statement.)

But do not try to stuff too much information into the statement. The positioning statement is “overstuffed” if you have more than one conjunction per sentence, or more than two punctuation marks (commas or semicolons).

Also, do not confuse big words with effective positioning. Choose your words carefully. When possible, incorporate in keywords — nouns or phrases that can be picked up through online searches and are prominently used in applicant tracking systems.

Dos and do nots for positioning

Here are things you should do:

- Do make sure your positioning reflects your personality.
- Do incorporate keywords (nouns, industry-specific terminology, and skills) into your personal positioning.
- Do be authentic. Make sure your personal positioning reflects your personal values, qualifications, and attributes.

Here are some things you should not do:

- Don’t go on and on. Don’t tell your whole life story. Get to the point quickly.
- Don’t be too general. One of the biggest mistakes with your personal position is not being specific enough. The more specific you are, the more effective your personal positioning will be.
- Don’t be boring. You need to get the reader’s attention!

Checklist

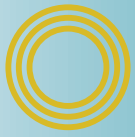
- Identify which of your skills are most marketable to a prospective employer. Make a list of your skills: client service, sales, technology, communication, labour law etc. Clarifying your skills will not only help in your job search, but will also help you identify which skills, training/education, and experience you emphasize on your resume.
- The next step is to align your job search with your positioning. Make sure your resume and interview preparation supports this and makes your case.

Resources

- [What is the Difference Between Branding and Positioning?](#)
- [The Job Search And The Art Of Successful Market Positioning](#)
- [B is for Branding for the 21st Century Lawyer](#)
- [J is for doing Justice to your brand throughout the post-hireback process](#)

- [Navigating a Job Search in a Hot Market as an Associate](#)
- [C is for Parlaying a Career Change](#)

Now that you have a tagline and positioning statement, your career documents are ready to be shared. Check out the next guide: [What to do with your resume!](#)



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