

Personal marketing: Ditch the CV to stand out

We all know that the most effective marketing is the type that stands out from the clutter, with a clear and concise message, and a strong unique selling proposition (USP). The strange thing to me is that we don't apply this knowledge when marketing ourselves. Some of the most creative and innovative people in the workplace miss out on great opportunities because they don't apply their talents to marketing themselves well.

 By [Donna Rachelson](#) 1 Oct 2012

A prime place to start is with that tired old CV. Of course the CV has a function. It's meant to sum you up so that prospective employers or clients can get an idea of your skills and experience. But there are much better ways available to showcase your talents and the best projects you've worked on than a chronological list of what you've done at work over the past few years and your Matric subjects, all squished into an MS Word template.

In my own case, I have developed what I call a personal branded bio that I use in place of a CV. A branded bio focuses on the individual holistically as a brand, rather than just stringing together a list of skills s/he has. A personal branded bio creates an emotional connection where a CV does not, points out your USP and highlights your areas of specialisation and key projects in which you have been involved.

It's like a CV in that it gives employers the information they will need to form an opinion about you, but it does so in a far more persuasive way, and it's more enjoyable to read (and write).

If you're scared of ditching the CV entirely, think of your personal branded bio as a massive reformatting exercise. Start with the bio upfront and list the normal CV requirements (work history in particular) underneath. Just remember to keep the document to two pages (three at maximum).

Creating your personal branded bio

Tips for creating your own personal branded bio:

- Define the key message you want to convey. Keep it short, sharp and to the point. No waffling allowed. If you had two minutes to sell yourself to your potential employer, what would you want them to know? That's what needs to go into your branded bio.
- Identify your USP. What is it that sets you apart from others in your profession with similar experience and qualifications? Perhaps you're a business consultant, but you have an ability to not only develop corporate strategy, but implement that strategy better than anyone you know. Or maybe you're a web developer with a special talent at creating user-centric websites that help companies to meet their customers' needs and generate loyalty. Think about what you can offer that nobody else can and focus on your USP in your branded bio.
- Underscore your key projects and relevant achievements. That doesn't mean listing the sports trophies you won in junior school. Showcase projects you've been involved in where you made an impressive and tangible difference. For example, you might have led the IT team that overhauled the company's systems, resulting in increased efficiency in operations and logistics management. Or perhaps you came up with the idea for a viral marketing campaign that resulted in your client attracting 2 000 new Twitter followers in a week. Think of practical examples from your career that demonstrate your

strengths and talents and focus on these. Consider including testimonials from credible people involved in these projects.

- Profile what makes you distinctive and compelling. What are the most interesting things about you that set you aside from potential competitors? Do you have a talent for spotting trends before they take off? Are you passionate about training and development? Think about strengths you have that may lie outside of the traditional lists of courses completed and software you use, and find ways to convey the value you add for your clients and organisation.

ABOUT DONNA RACHELSON

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