

Your personal brand: making yourself attractive to employers

A Badenoch & Clark guide

Your personal brand: making yourself attractive to employers

A Badenoch & Clark guide

Whether you're in the market for a new role or you want to secure your current position by impressing the boss, you'll need to concentrate on your 'personal brand'. How you are perceived by employers, both existing and prospective, can have a significant impact on your future in the legal profession.

In this guide we look at ten things you can do to position yourself as an attractive proposition to employers and enhance your personal brand.

1 Make yourself indispensable

To boost your value to an employer you need to get yourself noticed for the right reasons. You will need to look at ways of improving your skills, knowledge and attitude while also building on your relationships, both internal and external.

Understand your business and have a business-like attitude. Get under the skin of your customers, their challenges, drivers and goals. Look at ways of up-skilling – it will evidence your commitment to your development and to the organisation. Always look to be proactive, offering practical solutions to challenges.

Most important, and not to be underestimated, is your profile. Build on the relationships you currently have, expand your network and get involved in new cases. And don't forget your external profile – essential if you are customer-facing.

It's not a time for a scattergun approach though. Be targeted – engage with cases that will provide the opportunity to build on the skills related to your current role and those relevant to your career path. Select projects that allow you to get in front of key partners and always look to add value. Showcasing your knowledge and skills to these people will place you in a powerful position of influence.

But take heed – the more relationships you have the more you have to nurture. Damage one and it could be detrimental to your profile and career. Take the right approach and you will be in prime position to influence business decisions and protect your position.

2 Demonstrate, not assert

Any hiring, pay and promotion decisions are primarily based on individual performance.

Meeting targets, motivating a team, making good on development plans, being positive, loyal, being reliable and determined to succeed is what being a classic high performer is about. Many organisations make use of competency systems to support recruitment and promotion decisions. So, as well as being able to demonstrate your proven capability on the job, being able to put the secrets of your success into words is dynamite.

Whether or not you are actively job seeking, keeping your CV up to date and relevant is a sensible thing to do, especially if you make it competency based. Producing and documenting examples isn't as easy as it sounds. After all, how many of us naturally file our organisational experiences under competency headings? Instead, we are more likely to move from case to case, rarely pausing long enough to capture behavioural evidence from our daily working life. And that can be a problem when we are changing jobs. But when you do, it is worth finding the time to consider your skills in this way.

Write and talk in terms of action – having established the context, describe what you actually did to achieve certain results. Consider what happened as a direct result of your actions. Competency interviewers are very wary of answers that always refer to 'we'. A potential new boss wants to discover what you bring to the party, not how great the team is that you are planning to leave behind.

Get used to talking – even boasting a bit – about what you do. The great thing about a competency based approach is that it ignores job titles and takes no notice of how you might behave in a hypothetical situation, so if you've spent time re-filing your work life experiences in this way, you'll be ahead of the pack in any interview situation.

3 Do your research

As obvious as it may sound, doing your research for a role is crucial if you want to stand out.

Too many employers complain of ill-prepared interviewees who don't know anything about the sector, the position or even the company they are being interviewed for. To secure a new position, you need to have a CV that clearly reflects your skills and experience, and you also need to come across in interview as knowledgeable, enthusiastic and competent. Not only will it demonstrate your understanding but it will also show the employer that you're serious about the position and that you haven't just applied to lots of different legal jobs.

The more research you can do, the better you will come across in interview. Increase your market knowledge by reading the sector trade press and business news, and find out what the main issues are within the industry. Update yourself on the latest market trends on Badenoch & Clark's market commentary website www.market-talk.co.uk. If you can make reference to any market information in the interview, you will help to increase your credibility, and potentially raise your profile above the other interviewees.

Likewise, Google the company and its main competitors and the sector – you need to know what is going on, what people are talking about and what the latest news reports are on the company. Again, by demonstrating that you have a full knowledge and understanding of the company, you will give the impression that you are genuinely interested in its future and want to be a part of it.

4 Raise your profile

They say it's who you know that counts, not what you know. But generally one will lead to the other. Network and get to know as many of your peers as possible through corporate social events, industry networks and professional forums. A strong corporate profile, within your organisation and across your industry, will position you as a popular and therefore favourite person to know.

Having a prominent reputation will also ensure that your name springs to mind when career-enhancing opportunities arise. Contacts are often a great source of opportunity, from putting new experiences your way to giving you access to useful resources. Through them you might gain access to industry reports, topical events or practical solutions that will impress your boss or interviewer. Colleagues in other business units, sectors or regions might even involve you in cases that will further develop your competencies, skills and experience. But to become known you have to first invest effort in getting to know your peers. So start by giving them your support where you can, to receive a leg up in return.

5 Carefully manage your 'NetRep'

With a new generation of web sites and services, such as free blogging tools, wikis and social networks at an all time high your Internet reputation, or 'NetRep' as it's more commonly known, has never been so important.

People are leaving significant footprints of personal information across the Internet and many are unaware of the impact this may have on their employability. More and more employers are using online sites to check the truth behind people's claims and what they find may often present a very different picture to that which the candidate would like them to see.

And it's not just those seeking employment that need to be cautious. Employers are checking up on their employees in a bid to better understand their people and potentially separate the 'wheat from the chaff'.

Don't be fooled into thinking it's only the web savvy among us who could come across your profile. It's easy – all someone needs to do is Google the individual's name. Try it and see what you find. It might make you think otherwise about the information you upload. And remember, your friends can upload details about you so carefully monitor their activities.

It doesn't mean removing yourself from the web – your 'NetRep' can also work positively for you. Including examples of achievements, demonstrating values that mirror your employers' and linking to well known influential people can all work towards a positive 'NetRep' and ultimately an attractive proposition for an employer.

6 Believe in yourself

In tough times, it's very easy to get despondent, particularly when you may have been made redundant or have been out of work for a while. But as competition for roles gets tougher, now more than ever it's crucial that you remain positive and confident. Take time to identify your skills and experience that make you valuable to an employer – there may be aspects of your experience that you have taken for granted in the past but will be highly valuable in certain roles, and will act as a real differentiator. Also look at what you personally bring to the table – character and personality can be highly relevant, and with a greater emphasis on softer skills now, it's important not to dismiss this aspect of your offering.

If you have confidence in your abilities and believe you can get that job or get that promotion, then this will show through. Likewise, a lack of self-confidence or self-worth can be easily identified and may make an employer suspect that you are not capable of the role. If you don't believe in yourself, then why should anyone else? Remember, you are your own salesperson, and it's up to you to highlight your attributes.

7 Be realistic

You're unlikely to impress your current or future employer if your career demands vastly exceed what they can offer for you.

While a clear focus and drive is essential, you need to be realistic

and put your career aspirations into the context of the current market. Career openings and opportunities are naturally limited in a downturn, likewise, the skills and competencies that employers demand may also adapt – what is in demand in a buoyant economy is often at the bottom of the list in a downturn. Bear in mind that market conditions are constantly changing, and consequently your expectations may need to fluctuate with the times. If you can remain flexible and open-minded, then your chances of fulfilling your longer-term plans are more likely to come to fruition.

8 Maintain momentum

In any market, and perhaps even more crucially in a tight labour market, it is important to keep your focus and energy levels up. It's been estimated that most of us work at just 65-70% of our potential so it's not hard to see that the real winners will be those who maximise their opportunities and keep themselves involved. Your lifestyle will help, so regular exercise, plenty of water, loads of fruit and vegetables and a good night's sleep are all essential. It's easy to have your confidence knocked so make sure you know where your strengths lie and make time every day to stay abreast of market trends. Knowing what your alternatives are can actually keep you more motivated in your current role – you won't feel trapped. Look to the future. There's no point getting frustrated or angry with your current situation unless it drives you to a better future. Use your strengths to help keep projects on track, honour every commitment and step by step work towards your ultimate career goal.

9 Build on feedback

Other people very often have a different perception of you, than you have of yourself. Where you believe you're really quite brilliant

at something, others might rate you less so, or vice versa. So it makes good sense to regularly check with peers what they see your development points as being. Ask your boss for regular appraisals if you don't already have them, debrief with your case team after every case, and ask your recruitment consultant for feedback on the best skills to demonstrate for your ideal step up.

More importantly, take constructive feedback and build on it. Seek out the best possible ways of addressing, developing and up-skilling your competencies. That way you'll soon fill the gaps in your ability and experience that might otherwise hold you back from your next career step.

10 Choose your recruitment consultancies wisely

Effective relationships are so important in any walk of life or business and when times are hard they become even more crucial, particularly with the increased competition for roles.

The type of relationship that exists between a candidate and their recruitment agency, without wishing to dramatise too much, could have a massive impact on your career. Sometimes less is more so when it comes to choosing the number of agencies or recruiters you want to use, do it carefully. Some may be better for certain sectors or levels of roles and will suit you better than others. Be mindful of the number you register with. Registering with several agencies may make it harder to build strong relationships with each of them. And in some circumstances you may lose control over where your CV goes. Plan who you are going to send it to and be very clear whether you have given consent to have it sent by an agency to a potential employer.

Related articles

Developing your career plan

A Badenoch & Clark guide, March 2009

High confidence, low commitment

Summer 2008 Issue, Connections, Badenoch & Clark

Digging the digital dirt

Winter 2008 Issue, Connections, Badenoch & Clark

How to use a recruitment consultancy

www.badenochandclark.com

Impress in your new job

www.badenochandclark.com

Tracking your career

www.badenochandclark.com

Other Badenoch & Clark resources

Podcasts

Listen to career advice on the move by downloading our podcasts on a range of topics from assessing a job offer to shining in your new role. See www.badenochandclark.com/for-candidates.

Workplace studies

Detailed analysis of current trends in employment. See www.badenochandclark.com

www.market-talk.co.uk

A quarterly electronic newsletter for customers of Badenoch & Clark reporting news and discussing employment trends in each of our core sectors.

Connections

Our unique magazine for customers and contacts of Badenoch & Clark, published three times a year. Packed with comment, opinion, news and analysis on recruitment, talent management and broader business issues. See past issues at www.badenochandclark.com

www.happinessatworkindex.com

A quarterly index tracking employee happiness across the UK office workforce.

Future guides

Throughout 2009 we will be producing a series of guides focusing on the key areas of attraction, retention and recruitment.

If you would like to get involved in any of these we'd be delighted to hear from you. Contact us at connections@badenochandclark.com

© 2009 Badenoch & Clark. All rights reserved. Badenoch & Clark accepts no liability for the accuracy of the contents or the opinions expressed herein.

Recruitment specialists for: Accounting & Finance, Banking & Financial Services, Change Management, HR, IT, Legal, Marketing & Communications, Procurement, Public Sector