

Puking Pink Slips? Jumpstart Your Personal Brand Today

by **Karen Post** February 2, 2009

Unfortunately, a lot of smart professionals are seeing pink slips and hearing the dreaded news: "Your position is being dissolved."

First off, don't take it personal. Many of these dismissals are consequences of the horrific economy and companies being mismanaged; not individuals doing a bad job. A confident attitude will get you a new job. Beating yourself up will just delay the process.

You've got to focus all your energies on steps forward; not being mad, resentful, or just plain peeved. Realistically, this life change could be your biggest opportunity in disguise.

Start by asking yourself

Do you want to stay in your field or try something new?

The answer to this question will direct your personal brand action plan.

If you like what you've been doing and want to remain in your industry and find a similar position, your mission is to sharpen your authoritative profile and your brand as an expert in your space.

Or, do you want to shift gears, try a new industry or seek a different professional role?

Then your game plan should aim to transform your skill set, expertise, communications, and branding tools to say clearly: "Yes, I can do that too."

Here are 10 things you can do to strengthen your personal brand to get the ultimate career position you want.

1) Update your resume so it reflects your brand.

Make sure it's concise and authentic to the real you. Address your experience, your points of distinction and your passions; what you love to do. If you are seeking a leadership position, highlight results and don't blab on about small tasks. If grammar is not your thing, invest in a professional editor to proof your document. Has there been business publicity on you? Have you had anything published? If so, consider including these as "mentions" in your resume and have them scanned and ready to present professionally.

2) Be overtly mindful of your attitude; it's one of your strongest brand messaging weapons.

No matter how upset you are about your recent career turn or how much you think your former company or boss did you wrong, a positive attitude will take you the distance. Whining or badmouthing anyone can kill your chances of getting your new opportunity.

3) Evaluate all your communication touch points and make sure they are "on brand".

If you are a creative person, make sure everything echoes that style. If administration is your strong suit, demonstrate your organized management attributes with how well you write and have solved problems. Touch points include: how you answer all of your

phones, what your email signature says and looks like, and what your thank-you notes say about you. Also, professional business cards that are consistent with your brand persona are a must.

4) Update all your social networking profiles and find niche networks relevant to your industry and desired career post.

Create a standard copy platform that tells your professional story accurately. Use the same photo on all your profiles; this is a great way visually brand yourself. And make sure it's a flattering photo that is appropriate for your desired line of work. Also, do not post anything you would not want a potential employer to read.

5) Secure your own name URL.

Like karenpost.com for me. For a few bucks, this is a good investment. When people conduct a search on you, you can control what shows up on the top results page. This home page can be a simple contact page; positioning a bio and photo all consistent to your personal and professional brand.

6) Have your ideal career pitch down.

Be articulate, both verbally and in written form. When you are out at events, you should be able to state clearly what you are looking for with confidence, and the same goes in written communications. Have your friends pop quiz you.

7) Be at the right events and dress the part.

Identify the networking events where the potential to meet the right people is great. While you may be comfortable attending events with your buddies, unless your buddies are writing you checks, that's a waste of time. Concentrate on the places your job prospects will be. Your wardrobe is part of your personal brand packaging—look the product that you are representing. First impressions are just that.

8) Follow up is a key opportunity to planting your brand further.

Handwritten notes show initiative and are another avenue for branded communication. Don't rely on email for your follow up. The cost of stamp and personal note is wise investment.

9) Surround yourself with credible fans and ask for professional recommendations.

Brand-by-association is a reality. Your choice of friends and colleagues can add or detract from your brand status. Make sure you have a good collection of recommendations on your professional profiles like LinkedIn. Then re-purpose these recommendations in your resume and other communication to hiring prospects.

10) Be proactive and goal focused.

It's unlikely the ideal career opportunity will show up at your door. Be assertive and proactive. Ask yourself every day, are my actions aligned with my goals and on brand.

Finding your next career opportunity does not have to be like a root canal without Novocain.

Your personal brand has a lot of power. It can be the tipping factor with a referral or employment prospect. Your personal brand, just like those of products and companies, is the sum of all you do. Leverage your brand, who you are, your distinct attributes, your purpose, your personality and your promise. It can help pave the way the best career chapter yet.

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