

Boomers Blooming



Sharing Our Experience To Mentor, Educate & Fulfill Your Life Transitions

How To Brand Yourself

It's odd. Seems most marketers have no qualms about sitting down to create a new brand positioning for their company, product or service.

On the other hand, when it comes to creating a unique positioning for themselves, well, that often proves to be a far more daunting task.



We note this observation because recently we've been asked by a number of friends and business colleagues to help them "rebrand" themselves. Because many of them hadn't updated their career biographies for quite some time, they were looking for feedback on how to reposition themselves, or at least how to write an updated bio that reflected their current level of experience.

Creating your unique mark

So, while our strength is not as career consultants, we thought you'd appreciate our two cents on how to make your mark and upgrade your "brand" as well as a few tips on creating effective bio stories.

We checked out a variety of assessment websites for information, as well as pulled from our bookshelf a title we enjoyed: "Be Your Own Brand" by David McNally and Karl Speak. Here are some quick tips we learned.

Guidelines for writing your bio

A bio is written in complete sentences in the third person, unlike a resumé, which is written in an abbreviated first-person style (on a resumé, "managed company" stands for "I managed the company"). A bio tends to be written more tightly than a resumé. It is often compressed into a single page and emphasizes selected roles and achievements rather than offering an inventory of your entire career.

A well-written bio has a "voice." As a pitch-piece, it makes a targeted, persuasive argument about what to think about you. This is a departure from conventional resumes, which should come across as dispassionate factual recitations that allow readers to draw their own (hopefully inescapable) conclusion.

Repeating your name builds familiarity

A biography repeats your name throughout, making readers feel they know you on a first-name basis. By its very nature, this document can get away with using more stirring language than is appropriate for a resumé. As Carleen McKay, a consultant with Right Management Consultants in Atlanta, notes, “A good biography is a factual document, a great bio is a factual and creative document, and an exceptional bio is a factual, creative and memorable document.”

That said, the tone of your bio shouldn't cross the line from being confident and positive to inflated puffery, unsupported self-praise or a wowie-zowie sales pitch. It should never compromise your image of professionalism merely to grab a reader's attention.

Thought-starters to outline your bio

Here are a few questions think about and answer (if appropriate).

1. What makes you as a person special or interesting?
2. What kind of effect have you had on the world? Other people?
3. What are the adjectives you would most use to describe yourself as a person?
4. What examples from your business or personal life illustrate those qualities?
5. What events shaped or changed your life?
6. Have you overcome obstacles? Taken risks? Gotten lucky?
7. Would the world/the business/the charity be better or worse if you had not lived/worked/participated? How and why?

To come up with some adjectives that might help you describe yourself, consider two exercises:

One, you can complete a psychographic profile of yourself using DISC®, a highly regarded personal assessment tool based on the 1928 work of psychologist William Moulton Marston.

The second exercise, found in the book “Be Your Own Brand” asks you to identify and organize your value statements.

Getting back to the DISC profile tool— here is a sample of keywords we generated for Sandra, a colleague who does fund-raising. (You can visit (www.onlinediscprofile.com) and for \$50.00, create a assessment of yourself.)

For example, for our friend Sandra, we used the DISC profile to describe her as:

- Likes a fast pace, new activities, change, and variety
- Enjoys challenges and competition
- Can move forcefully to get results
- Uses direct, action-oriented approach to solving problems

By contrast, here's how we described Sandra from the profiling exercise in the “Be your own Brand.” The book approaches a profile by addressing your competencies (our role with others), then your standards (how we do it) and then your style (how we relate to others).

“Sandra tends to be forceful, direct, and is likely to convince others of her point of view. She tends to be independent and confident of herself. She may enjoy challenging tasks and is not likely to shy away from difficult jobs. She tends to like competitive situations, new activities, and feeling important.”

As you can see, any of these words and phrases can be used to add energy, tone and personalization to a bio. Here are more keywords to describe Sandra, our fund-raiser:

Thought-starters to outline your bio

- Communications specialist
- Friend
- Wife
- Mentor
- Leader
- Fund-raiser

Standards: How we do it

- Enthusiastic
- Energetic
- Professional
- Humble
- Collaborative
- Friendly
- Outgoing
- Fun
- Compassionate
- Open-minded

Style: How we relate to others

- Out of the box thinker
- Demonstrates attention to detail
- Savvy
- Innovative
- Thorough
- Results-oriented
- Smart
- Superior performance
- Highly flexible
- Extremely disciplined approach

The idea is to use these three categories of headings to generate words associated with the personality of our fund-raiser Sandra. When done, the final step is to translate these words into a Brand Platform and Brand Promise for Sandra.

Here are two possibilities:

1: Sandra’s personal brand platform= e.g. Enthusiastic – Brand Style
Sandra’s personal brand promise = e.g. “Enthusiasm that will make your day”

Or

Sandra’s brand platform = e.g. Disciplined Approach – Brand Standard
Sandra’s personal brand promise = e.g. “The discipline to achieve second-to-none results”

Here are three examples of biography styles for executives. Two are standard length descriptions, the third is an abbreviated "shortie."

Consultant's Biography

Dr. Judith Smith

FINANCIAL BUSINESS, TAX AND ESTATE PLANNING

For executives and professionals, owners of closely-held businesses and other clients requiring expert assistance with financial, business, tax or estate and retirement planning, Dr. Judith Smith brings a wealth of experience. For more than 15 years, she has earned a reputation for providing skilled and practical guidance as a business consultant, attorney, financial planner and nationally recognized authority on individual, business and estate taxation.

Prior to starting her own consulting firm, Judith was director of estate and business analysis for London Life., specializing in meeting the business development and planning needs of closely-held business owners and professional organizations. Her areas of expertise include:

- Executive Compensation Planning
- Individual Financial, Tax and Retirement Planning
- Evaluating Investment and Insurance Products
- Asset Allocation and Portfolio Management Strategies
- Planning for Business Continuity and Transfer

Earlier in her career, Judith was associate professor of taxation at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., where she taught courses in estate and gift tax planning for the CLU and CFC programs. While there, she wrote Estate and Gift Tax Planning Guide, a text still in use today, and she authored and edited Income Taxation Guide, published by the College. She also is the author of a comprehensive split-dollar manual presently used by Union Labor Mutual Life agents nationwide.

Judith previously had worked as a Tax Supervisor with a Big-Eight accounting firm, with responsibility for developing its financial and estate planning department. For several years she also ran her own law practice in Malvern, Pa., working primarily with small businesses and professional organizations.

Judith holds a Master's of Law in taxation from Princeton University and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. She earned her CLU and CFC designation from the University of Pennsylvania.

She is a member of the Association of Advanced Life Underwriters (AALU) and the National Association of Life Underwriters (NALU). Judith was past chairman of the Insurance Subcommittee of the ABA Tax Section Committee on Small Business and Closely-Held Corporations. She also serves on the Tax Section's Committees on Personal Service Organizations and Continuing Legal Education. She is a member of the Insurance and Lifetime Planning Committees of the ABA Real Property, Probate and Trust Section. Long active in community affairs, she has spoken throughout the United States on a variety of tax, insurance analysis and other financial planning topics.

Executive Biography

Executive Profile

Mark Smith

Mark Smith's 25-year career in real-estate and land development and investment and asset management has included general management, consulting and entrepreneurial experience with major national real estate developers, a Fortune 500 conglomerate with 30 operating subsidiaries, an international hospitality chain, a capital management firm and successful start-up businesses.

Mark served most recently as managing general partner of Green Willow Associates in Chevy Chase, Md., a limited partnership, where he directed site selection and acquisition of regional shopping center sites, negotiating financing and leasing, obtaining zoning, permits and regulatory approvals and recently structuring the sale of an integrated development "package" to Israeli investors for \$41 million.

A lawyer by training, Mark started his real-estate career as assistant general counsel for World Quality Suites International following four years on the staff of U.S. Senator Osgood Z'beard. At WQSI, Mark headed the Acquisitions and Development Committee before being recruited by SureStand Corp. in 1973 to manage its motel, apartment and residential development subsidiary. As vice president of development, Mark both structured developments of up to \$75 million and managed operations of the subsidiary itself. In 1984, Mark joined the Overture Division of Cascade Leisure Development Co. in Boise, Idaho, where he was responsible for all phases of shopping-center and ski-resort development, including debt financing, government approvals, tenant negotiations and construction management.

Mark later returned to his home city of Baltimore as executive vice president of property and acquisition for Ascutti Corp., a nationwide real-estate investment, management and development company. There he managed a \$420 million diversified portfolio of 60 apartment complexes, two 300-room hotels and commercial projects containing over 700,000 square feet of space. In 1994, Mark was named chief operating officer of Hartanft Capital Management, with full P&L responsibility. He also personally managed a diversified portfolio of office, strip and apartment projects, successfully turning around a score of distressed projects, and increasing portfolio NOI by over 14% on revenue increases of 7%.

Mark is a 1971 graduate of the Law School of the University of Maryland and earned an Executive M.B.A. from the Simon School in 1980 while working full-time. He holds a B.S. in Commerce (Accounting and Finance) from Montana State University.

A Shortie Executive Biography

Mark Smith

In the course of a diverse 25-year career in all aspects of real-estate development, investment and asset management, Mark Smith has proven to be a skilled executive, visionary entrepreneur and an adroit trouble-shooter and turnaround expert. He has worked on the staff of a U.S. Senator; served as assistant general counsel in charge of acquisitions and development for a world-wide hospitality chain, World Quality Suites International; managed a \$420 million real-estate portfolio for a nationwide real-estate

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investment subsidiary of a Fortune 500 conglomerate; and served as chief operating officer for Hartranft Capital Management, with full P&L responsibility.

Mark has developed successful ski resorts in Idaho, salvaged floundering apartment and strip shopping center projects from Atlanta to Philadelphia and packaged and sold a \$40 million shopping center development project to Israeli investors. He has created successful start-up businesses and, as a consultant, saved numerous enterprises and projects from failing. He has been tossed in the East Coast real-estate crash of the early 90's and survived to live another day. Few real-estate executives can boast the depth and breadth of Mark's expertise and experience.

Mark holds both J.D. and M.B.A. degrees, from the University of Maryland and the Simon School, respectively, and his undergraduate degree is in Accounting and Finance.

Conclusion:

Besides the self-marketing benefits of a biography, an advantage to writing this document is the actual writing of it. The process of thinking through, prioritizing, characterizing and expressing your career profile forces you to review everything you know about yourself -- and make it explicit. As you write, you see and log this vision of yourself into active, articulate memory. That done, you can retrieve it when you want and trot it out either with your pen, word-processor or your mouth.

Good luck building your business, and as always, if you know of someone who would benefit from this tip sheet, please pass it along to them, but then ask them to sign up for a free subscription themselves. You can do that here.

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The Marketing Chefs

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CULINARY TIP: *Take a deep breath, garlic anyone?*

The pungent flavor of garlic is caused by a chemical reaction, which occurs when the garlic cells are broken. As a result, the flavor is most intense shortly after cutting or chopping. This chemical reaction cannot occur after garlic is cooked, which is why smoked garlic is sweet and nutty rather than pungent. Which is how we love our garlic, in moderation, of course.

Got some sprouting garlic in your cupboard? Don't throw it out. Instead, plant the cloves fairly close together in a pot or in the garden (if your climate is suitable at the time). The new shoots that appear will have a mild garlic flavor and can be used in the same manner as regular chives.

What to do about the smell: To erase the smell from your hands after peeling or chopping garlic, simply wash your hands and then rub your clean hands on a chrome faucet. Strange, but proven effective.