



Cathy Alfandre's E-Letter

Create greater joy and fulfillment in your working life.

September 2008

Greetings!

"It's time for me – and you – to take a lesson from the big brands, a lesson that's true for anyone who's interested in what it takes to stand out and prosper in the new world of work. Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding.... To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You."

--Tom Peters

Now's the Time: Your Personal Brand

The unsettling economic situation compels me to reinforce a message I have shared in previous e-letters. Whether you are searching for work, or happily employed, or somewhere in between, there's no time like right now to clarify your *personal brand*. The notion of a personal brand was first coined by Tom Peters in *Fast Company* magazine* more than a decade ago; today, with constant organizational change, lack of job security, and a tight labor market, your brand is a key tool to help you stay confident, competitive, and successful in the working world.

So what is a personal brand? As defined by Kirsten Dixson and William Arruda in their book, *Career Distinction* (2007), it's your "unique promise of value." In other words, *what makes you special and how it makes a difference to your current or future employer.*

The challenge with personal branding is that it's hard at first. It takes some time to figure out, and you may resist discovering how special you are. Some symptoms of this syndrome: under-appreciating your talents ("everybody can do that"), under-recognizing your experience ("I was just a volunteer when I did that" or "other people have done this kind of thing for more years than I have"), and not fully seeing the impact/contributions you have made. But I urge you to push through the initial barriers and find those words.

The key is to uncover what is *authentically YOU* and how people consistently experience you. This is NOT about "spin" or coming up with something you think others want to hear. Some helpful tools for gathering insights into your brand include: past performance reviews, results of personal assessments (like Myers-Briggs, Strong Interest Inventory, and others), 360-degree feedback, and self-examination/reflection. You can also answer questions like these (and ask others to give you input too):

- What makes you different from others who do work that you do (or that you want to do)?
- What do you do (or have you done) that you are most proud of and/or can brag about?
- What do people compliment you on? What do people turn to you for?
- What have you developed a reputation for?

- What do you *really* enjoy?
- What do you want to be famous for?
- What do you do that adds measurable, distinctive value?

Ultimately, what you're shooting for is to distill all the ideas/information and arrive at a clear, concise statement of your brand - your unique promise of value. The whole process can take some time; you have to dig deep, past the quick and easy points, and allow the most meaningful insights to emerge from all of your reflection, discussion, and writing.

With time, your brand becomes both a way to orient/present yourself when you're searching for a job (it shows up in your resume, cover letters, networking conversations, and interviews) and also a tool to help you communicate (and believe in) what makes you special and valuable *every day* at work.

I hope you'll make the investment of time and energy to uncover your personal brand. It will help you be more confident, competitive, focused, and effective -- important qualities in today's marketplace.

All the best --

Cathy

*Tom Peters, "The Brand Called You," Fast Company, August 1997 (click [here](#) to read the article)

Upcoming Courses in CT

"Finding Fulfilling Work": A two-session course to help participants discover and define what they want, deal with the barriers that may be getting in the way, and put together an action plan to move forward.

- **Tuesdays, October 7 and 14**, 7:00-9:00 PM, Fairfield Continuing Education
- **Mondays, October 20 and 27**, 7:00-9:00 PM, Trumbull Continuing Education

"Writing a Great Resume": A one-night course that covers 5 key strategies for writing a top-notch resume, provides loads of tips, and includes individualized feedback on each participant's resume!

- **Tuesday, October 28**, 7:00-9:00 PM, Fairfield Continuing Education
- **Thursday, November 6**, 7:00-9:00 PM, Norwalk Continuing Education
- **Monday, November 10**, 7:00-9:00 PM, Trumbull Continuing Education

Please visit [Current Happenings](#) for information on the courses, including how to register. I hope to see you one night this fall!

This bi-monthly e-letter is intended to offer ideas, tips, resources, and questions to ponder on careers, fulfilling work, and career-life decisions. I welcome your reactions and your suggestions for future topics.

To my new subscribers: Welcome! If you would like to see copies of my previous e-letters, please go to my website where they are posted in the "Contact" section.

To all readers: Please feel free to share this e-letter with anyone you think may find it helpful! (Rest assured, though, that I will not share YOUR email address with anyone!)

[Read on...](#)

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