

8 Hot Tips to Build Personal Branding Into Your Executive Resume 2.0

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Executive Resume Branding

A really great resume – one that captures attention, gets interviews, and lands jobs faster – has always been all about differentiating that job seeker and their promise of value from others competing for the same jobs.

Personal branding is the best career marketing strategy today to get you there. And branding generates the kind of chemistry that helps hiring decision makers pre-qualify you as a good fit and sound hiring investment.

Resumes these days often take the form of an online social networking profile or part of an online career portfolio. Whether online or on “paper”, follow these 8 tactics to brand, power up, and extend the value of your executive resume for online brand identity-building:

1. Lead with a personal brand statement.

Forget about an anemic “objective statement” outlining what you want in a job. Nobody cares what you want. They want to know what you will do for them. Use this prime real estate, the first thing people will see, to tell them about the unique value you offer that no one else does.

Placing a stand-alone brand statement at the top of your resume, in itself, is a powerful differentiating feature. Not many job seekers are doing it. A dramatic element like this that links your personal brand with your value proposition and ROI will immediately draw in the reader.

Craft a statement of 3-5 lines that comes from your own voice, gives a feel for who you are, and lays out your brand attributes, pivotal strengths, and vitality. If a stand-alone brand statement on your resume doesn't feel right for you, instead it can easily become part of your career bio and the foundation for your 30-second elevator pitch.

2. Format your resume with the readers' needs in mind.

More and more hiring decision makers are reviewing resumes on the go – on PDAs, netbooks, or other small screens. Brief, brand-driven statements of value surrounded by enough white space to make them stand out will have the greatest impact. Long, dense paragraphs make it hard for the reader to quickly access and digest important make-or-break information about you.

3. Tell your story above the fold.

People reviewing your resume may have to look at hundreds or more resumes for any given position, so they don't have much time to spend on each one. In fact, they may only give your resume *10-15 SECONDS* to capture their attention. If you don't draw them in immediately and hold them, they may move on to the next resume and forget about you.

- ▶ Showcase your most important and compelling information at the top of page one, since this is the first, and possibly only, section that will be read. *Consider this:* if you tear off the top of the first page, it should stand on its own as your career branding communication.
- ▶ Include 2 or 3 achievement statements or standout contributions you've made to companies, leading each with the quantified WOW! results. Show them the numbers! These provide evidence to back up your personal brand.
- ▶ It's okay to move certain information from the second page to above the fold on page one, such as

special training, hot certifications, or career milestones – especially if they're relevant to your job target. If you have an MBA, don't hide it at the bottom of the last page. They may never get there!

4. Keep your resume to 2 pages.

It may be difficult and painful, but you can do this. The purpose of your resume is to generate interest in you, compelling decision makers to want to talk with you. A resume is not a comprehensive career history covering every job you've ever held. It's a career marketing document that needs to say **just enough** about you to do its job. So precision-writing is the key. And in most cases, there's no need to go back further than 10 to 15 years.

To keep it brief, pare down and consolidate your value proposition and all your great achievements to just the essentials.

You can put together deeper slices of contributions, "success stories", and your softer side in collateral 1-2 page documents (Leadership Initiatives Profile, Achievement Summary, Career Biography, Reference Dossier with Accolades, etc.).

5. Highlight your key areas of expertise just once.

Instead of taking up precious space repeating obvious lists of responsibilities under each position, consolidate them in the form of relevant key word phrases at the top of the first page. For best impact, position them in nicely formatted columns or a shaded graphic box, titled something like "Key Areas of Expertise". Or, depending upon space, sprinkle these relevant key words throughout your achievement statements.

For the header "Professional Experience" or "Work History", consider using a relevant keyword phrase, such as "Senior-level Management Experience" or "IT Management Experience". Fill out the section with short statements of key contributions to each company and achievements that provide evidence of the value you will bring to your next employer.

6. Transform your executive resume and supporting collateral documents into an online career portfolio with a VisualCV (<http://www.visualcv.com>).

This is a great way to extend the value of all your career marketing communications (resume, brand bio, achievement summary, leadership initiatives, references with accolades) while quickly building online presence. Everything you want recruiters and hiring decision makers to know about you is easy-access, with one click.

With interactivity and the ability to embed all kinds of files in a VisualCV, your web career portfolio will pack a powerful punch. And your VisualCV will land high in search results when people Google "your name". Given the fact that more and more recruiters and hiring decision makers are researching viable candidates online before even considering them, a VisualCV will increase your visibility and position your on-brand information front and center when they are vetting candidates like you.

7. Your branded executive resume = an on-brand LinkedIn profile.

This is a great way to extend the value of your resume while building your online presence and brand reputation. I'm sure you know that recruiters and hiring decision makers are searching online to source candidates and to pre-qualify those they're considering. If you're invisible online, you don't exist to them. And of course, LinkedIn offers endless networking benefits.

Everything in your branded resume can be copied and pasted into appropriate sections of your LinkedIn profile. Here are a few tips:

- ▶ An abbreviated version of your personal brand statement becomes your LinkedIn professional

headline – the first thing people will see, along with your photo. You can pack quite a punch with the allowed 120 characters.

- ▶ The top half of your resume, before the “Experience” section, becomes the “Summary” section for your LinkedIn profile.
- ▶ Remember to break up dense chunks of information and add plenty of white space, just as you did with your resume.
- ▶ LinkedIn may not accept some graphic bullet points that you used in your resume, but you can get visual impact with various characters that are right on your keyboard, such as: * ~ > = - <>
- ▶ Once your profile is all done, LinkedIn lets you easily convert it to a PDF file.
- ▶ Include a link to your LinkedIn profile on your resume, along with your contact information at the top.

8. Take advantage of Google Profiles’ search results power.

In April 2009 Google Profiles trumped LinkedIn and other social networking sites for building brand-solid search results, by adding a customized listing that includes your photo on page one of results for “your name”. Check it out by typing “meg guiseppi” in a browser window and scrolling down the page until you see my photo and link to my Google Profile. That’s an attention-grabber!

Google makes it very easy to set up a Google account and put your profile together (<http://www.google.com/profiles>). Cut and paste your resume into the body of the profile, add your photo and an on-brand headline under your name, and pop in links to your other online profiles, websites, blogs, etc.

Google Profiles is now a must-do online branding strategy and another great way to extend the value of your executive resume.

For more in depth strategies to brand and differentiate yourself in executive job search, see my series of blog posts:

10 Best of Personal Branding Strategies, Lessons, and News
(<http://executiveresumebranding.com/10-best-of-personal-branding-strategies-lessons-and-news/>)

Best of Executive Resume Branding Tactics and Advice
(<http://executiveresumebranding.com/12-best-of-executive-resume-branding-tactics-and-advice/>)

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A C-level/Senior-level Executive Branding and Job Search Strategist, Meg Guiseppi loves collaborating with forward-focused corporate leaders to define their unique value proposition in targeted career marketing tools and strategically position them online and offline for job search success. Meg is one of only a handful of career professionals to hold both the Reach Certified Personal Branding Strategist and Master Resume Writer credentials. She is also a Certified VisualCV Creator and Certified Professional Resume Writer. For a wealth of insider tips on personal branding and executive job search, visit her Executive Resume Branding Blog/Website (<http://www.executiveresumebranding.com>). Follow Meg on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/megguiseppi>).