Self-Presentation and Your Career

Believe it or not, the way you present yourself could be costing you a great career. Many job seekers—and even those already employed—are ruining their chances at acquiring a new position by way of their self-presentation both on and offline.

Hyper self-awareness isn’t an easily adapted trait, but it’s highly necessary when it comes to seeking new employment, maintaining your current position, and the future of your career. The current state of the job market has created a highly competitive environment for job seekers and those individuals hoping for career advancement.

Self-Presentation and Career Success

Now, more than ever, self-presentation and overall brand image are being elevated to a new height—allowing them to either make or break your future career. Job seekers and workers alike owe themselves deeper evaluation and assessment in terms of how others view them.

Influencing the perception of your image is essentially managing how others come to understand and view you. This is a crucial factor during the job search. For many individuals who aren’t actively seeking a new position, self-presentation is still key piece of the career success puzzle. Carefully assessing and managing how others come to know and view you could mean the difference between a promotion or a layoff.

Online Presentation

Self-presentation in an online setting demands your interest and energy. If you aren’t paying attention to your online profiles and interactions, it’s likely you could be missing some very important clues to how others interpret your presence.

If you’re not actively working to build and maintain an online brand, it’s time to reconsider. Focus on building a presence on social platforms most applicable to your career field and continually interacting, monitoring, and maintaining them to showcase your knowledge. From Twitter to job-specific communities, this social effort will set you up for professional thought leadership, as well as being able to actively control how others not only gain information about you, but also perceive you.
What Your Professional Network Says about You

The most successful careers are fueled by a strong network. Those passive or active job seekers without a strong professional network may get passed by during the job search. A key portion of managing your presentation and image involves maintaining strong professional relationships within your industry. This tells potential employers, hiring managers, and recruiters that you’re invested in your industry and value your professional relationships.

While online networking is a focus for many individuals, it’s the face-to-face interaction that provides a chance to manage your self-presentation more effectively. Develop stronger networking efforts by becoming active within professional associations, attending conferences and seminars, and actively networking to find your place within your local and national industry.

Presenting Yourself via Your Professional Materials

Your resume and portfolio are often the first materials made available during your job search. This presents them as key pieces in your brand’s puzzle. If either of these two professional materials are misrepresenting you—you’re out of a job.

Similar to your online presentation, your professional materials should also effectively portray your personal brand. Extending the truth or blatantly lying about your qualifications can not only put you in negative light to a potential employer, but also brand you negatively throughout your entire industry. But with a strong focus on self-presentation and personal brand development, your application materials will be able to sell you as the dream candidate. Ensure this by customizing every resume to the position you’re applying for, as well as highlighting your company-matched core values and skills.

The Long-Term Effects of Self-Presentation

When your overall brand and career history is laid out on the table—you’re being judged. Sometimes it’s too late before an individual realizes the long-term effects of their misrepresentation. Whether during the hiring process or in the face of a raise or promotion, your self-presentation matters—and it all stems from your professional image, online brand, qualifications, and who you know.

If possible, start early. Managing how others view you isn’t always a walk in the park, especially if your career history has a few blemishes. Potentially negative aspects to watch out for are poor online presentation, job hopping, and previous terminations. Without the careful management of these aspects, it’s easy to limit your future success.

Have you found unique career success through proper self-presentation?

Afifa Siddiqui is the COO and Co-founder of Careerleaf, an all-in-one job search platform that cuts the time to apply in half. Connect with Afifa and Careerleaf on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn