

How to Market Yourself – Part Three

By Ron McGowan

Now that you know exactly what you have to sell to employers or clients and where you are going to sell it, we come to the final step in the process:

How are you going to sell it?

The sales cycle consists of two parts: marketing and selling. So before we go any further, let's make sure that you understand the difference between them (most people don't.)

First of all, marketing precedes selling. It refers to a wide range of activities that have as their objective getting the attention of potential buyers of a product or service. These activities can be anything from a sophisticated, expensive television commercial or infomercial to someone walking around a busy shopping area with a sandwich board strapped to them that is promoting a product or service. Selling is what happens when you get the attention of a prospective buyer and they call you, walk into your store or visit your web site.

Many employment seekers don't understand this and it is the main reason for their lack of success in selling themselves. No professional sales organization is going to let a sales representative get in front of a customer until they have proven that they know the product or service they're selling inside out and how it can benefit customers.

Employment seekers tend to jump straight into selling before they're ready to sell, and when that doesn't work assume that they're not salespeople and never will be.

You need to spend the majority of your time in the marketing phase and only when you have mastered that can you begin the selling phase. To succeed in selling, you must first succeed in marketing. Parts One and Two were all about marketing and most of this section is about marketing. You're not ready to sell yourself until you've done all the work required in these sections. Your success in selling yourself will be directly related to how hard you work at the marketing phase, how creative you are, and how willing you are to move out of your comfort zone. As you go through the marketing phase, your self-confidence and eagerness to sell yourself will steadily rise. You are going to be pleasantly surprised at how successful you can be at selling yourself now that you know how the process works.

Most employment seekers today use one marketing tool: a traditional resume or CV. It still has a place, if you're applying for a job, but it's the wrong tool for marketing yourself to employers or clients when you're approaching them on speculation that they might benefit from the skills and experience you have to offer. Today's tools can include a visume, a two-and-a-half-minute visual resume, a marketing letter, blog, web site, brochure and variations on the traditional resume or CV, which are marketing oriented. The generic, one-size-fits-all resume or CV, or any other such tool is a dinosaur.

You need to tweak your marketing tools to address the needs of the employer or client you're targeting. You must clearly indicate that you know something about them and imply that the experience and skills you have to offer will benefit them. You must indicate in your marketing tool that you will promptly follow up with them and make sure you do that. Some employment seekers are reluctant to follow up and that is a major mistake. According to a February 2006 survey by Robert Half International, 86 per cent of Canadian executives said that employment seekers should follow up within a week of submitting an application.

There's probably no other word that is used more frequently in relation to today's workplace and that is more abused, misunderstood and overused than "networking." That's unfortunate, because if you understand what networking is really all about and you're prepared to invest the time it takes to put an effective networking strategy together, it is probably the most powerful tool you can use to market yourself and find hidden work opportunities.

You first need to be clear about your motives for networking. Successful networkers are givers, not takers. If you only contact people when you need help, you're not a networker, you're a sponge. Successful networkers give generously of their time and expertise to their profession and their community. You will find them serving on the executive and committees of the professional associations they belong to and on the board of at least one non-profit or charitable association in their community.

Many so-called networking events are a waste of time. They attract employment seekers, recruiters who are looking for commission salespeople, personal coaches and the like. If an event is being marketed as a networking event, you probably should avoid it. It is highly unlikely that the people you need to connect with will be there. You need to determine what activities such as seminars, courses, trade shows and conferences are coming up in the next few months where the people you want to connect with are likely to attend and sign up for them.

You need to be patient and not expect immediate results from the networking events that you attend. If you're on the executive or committees of the professional associations you belong to, if you are on the board of at least one non-profit or charitable association in your community and your motive for networking is not self-serving, you will have your share of success. Write some articles for the journals or newsletters of the professional associations you belong to, volunteer as a speaker at events where people can benefit from your expertise, or start up a new association or special interest group in your area and you will be on the radar screens of the people you need to connect with.

Ron McGowan has helped thousands of college/university grads and experienced people to find work for over ten years. His book "How to Find Work in the 21st Century" <http://www.trafford.com/00-0131> is currently in use at over 200 colleges, universities and secondary schools.