

Selling yourself

Level: Intermediate-advanced

Timing: 90 minutes plus

Summary: A lesson on how to brand and sell yourself. In this lesson, students will:

1. offer advice for improving a job search;
2. study a text about selling yourself and an interview with a personal-branding expert;
3. explore the use of social media and networking sites in a job search.

Material needed: One copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of the vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any

Job-seeking advice

Hand out the worksheet. The discussion question in activity 1 aims to introduce the topic of how best to search for a new job or position. It also gives students the chance to revise the language for giving advice. You can discuss the question as a whole class or have students exchange ideas in pairs first and, then, conduct whole-class feedback.

Suggested phrases for giving advice (which you could elicit during the discussion or feedback stage and write up on the board):

- I really think your job search would be more successful if you ...
- If I were you, I would ...
- One thing you could do is ...
- ... is usually worth a try.
- Something that really worked for me when I was looking for a job is ...

Key words

Students read the definitions in activity 2 and find the matching key words in the article. This task can be divided up among the students so that half look for key words 1 to 8 and the other half 9 to 16. Then, they can share their answers with each other, giving them

the opportunity to talk through the words, as well as read and write them.

Key:

1. convince; 2. persuasion; 3. modest; 4. boastful; 5. potential;
6. brand; 7. tailored; 8. candidate; 9. inundated; 10. alienate;
11. insecure; 12. lurking; 13. desirable; 14. volunteer;
15. board; 16. eludes

Expressions

Students should read the definitions and try to complete the expressions by filling in the missing word. Then, they should scan the article to check their answers.

Key:

1. affairs; 2. illiterate; 3. off; 4. commerce; 5. hours

Information from the article

a. Put students in pairs. Tell them to try to recall the advice given in the article in relation to each of the websites in the table. They should then complete the table with the advice. When they have finished, they should briefly discuss any additional advice they may have to add.

Key: (further advice and information can be added)

| | Do ... | Don't ... |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| LinkedIn | <p>... build a solid profile for yourself.</p> <p>... keep your network informed about your job search.</p> <p>... link to your blog.</p> <p>... use LinkedIn for company searches.</p> <p>... have a LinkedIn profile or potential employers might think you are technologically illiterate.</p> | <p>... forget to include a photo.</p> |

Selling yourself

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| <p>Facebook</p> | <p>... check groups for companies and their job listings.</p> | <p>... post anything that might alienate a potential employer such as your views on politics or religion.</p> <p>... post photos that show you in unprofessional situations or dress.</p> <p>... say anything negative about an employer or colleague.</p> |
| <p>Twitter</p> | <p>... tweet about current affairs relating to the work you do.</p> <p>... follow companies you would like to work for and interact with them.</p> <p>... find companies and contacts in your area via Twellow.</p> | <p>... use a funny name.</p> |

- b. The information about cold calling can be found in paragraphs 9 and 10.
- c. The information about volunteering can be found in paragraph 11.
- d. Encourage students to share their opinions and experiences when discussing the time that should be invested in looking for a job.

Similar words

Students look at the pairs of similar words from the article. They should find them in the article and underline the sentences in which they appear. Then, they should decide whether the words are interchangeable or have slightly different meanings or usages. To see the differences in usage more clearly, students should find other example sentences that contain the words. They could do this by using an online dictionary or corpus.

Teaching and learning strategy: homework tasks

Articles such as this can lead to a lot of discussion and, depending on how talkative your students are, you may well find that you don't have enough time to complete all the tasks in class. If you think this is likely to happen, prepare beforehand by identifying the tasks that could be set for homework. Just because a task is on the page, it doesn't mean it needs to be completed in class. Don't be afraid to leave some tasks out or set them for homework.

In this particular lesson, tasks 5, 6 and 7 lend themselves nicely to home study. Students can discuss their answers in the next lesson or via a class Wiki, forum or social network group.

Interview questions

- a. Students put the words in the correct order to make four interview questions. Check that students have the correct questions before going on to part b of the task.
- b. Students read the interview and complete each section with the correct question from task a.

Key:

1. Why is personal branding important? (para 2)
2. What should be included in a branding statement? (para 4)
3. What is personal branding? (para 1)
4. Who needs to make a personal-branding statement? (para 3)

LinkedIn summaries (Advanced)

This task is more appropriate for advanced students. Students read some excerpts from real LinkedIn summaries. They should discuss them and decide what they like or dislike about them. They should focus not only on the content but also the tone and style of writing. Then, they should try to write something similar for themselves. When they have finished, students could exchange summaries and give each other feedback.

Less advanced students can still complete this task with the help of dictionaries and their teacher. Aim for a lower level writing task while keeping the reading comprehension level as high as possible.

Selling yourself

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all of the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

The following lesson plans are on the topic of job interviews:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/esp/human-resources/job-interviews/>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/community/lesson-share/lesson-share-archive/speaking/speaking-the-job-interview/154560.article>

The following Business Spotlight lesson plan is on the use of social media in finding a job or selling a business idea:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/good-connections/552310.article>

Selling yourself

1 Job-seeking advice

Someone you know has been looking for a new job – so far, without success. All they have been doing is looking for job vacancies in their local newspaper. What advice would you give them to help improve their search?

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find the key words in the article to read them in context.

paragraphs 1–4

boastful
modest

brand
persuasion

candidate
potential

convince
tailored

1. make someone believe that something is true _____
2. the process of making someone believe in something _____
3. not liking to talk about themselves, their achievements or their abilities, even if they are successful _____
4. often talking proudly about things they have done or can do, especially in order to make other people admire them _____
5. possible or likely in the future _____
6. create a recognizable name and reputation for yourself or your company _____
7. made for a particular purpose, situation or need _____
8. one of the people competing for a job _____

paragraphs 4–8

alienate
insecure

board
inundated

desirable
lurking

eludes
volunteer

9. be sent much more of something than you can easily deal with _____
10. make someone dislike you or not want to help or support you _____
11. not confident about yourself _____
12. waiting and watching but not showing yourself _____

paragraphs 9–12

13. something with qualities that makes you like and want it _____
14. do some work without getting paid _____
15. a group of people who have the responsibility of managing important business activities _____
16. if something _____ you, you do not manage to achieve or find it

Selling yourself

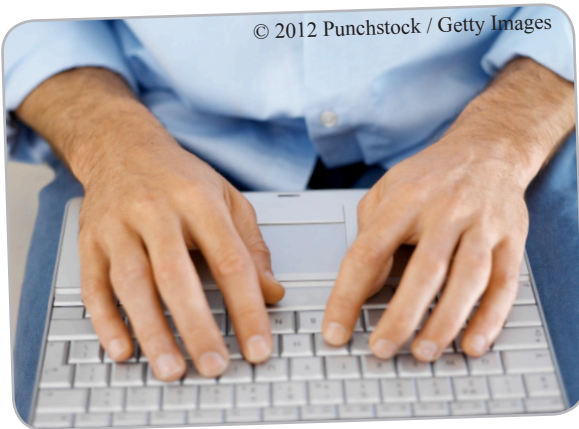
3 Expressions

Read the definitions and discuss what the missing words might be. Then, check your answers in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. current _____
current political, social and economic events discussed in news programmes and newspapers
2. technologically _____
unable to use a computer
3. laid _____
when your employment is ended because there's not enough work available
4. chamber of _____
an organization of people who own shops and businesses in a particular town or city; their aim is to improve conditions for business in their area
5. after _____
after the time when a place such as an office usually closes

Selling yourself

by Margaret Davis



Margaret Davis hears from experts on how to improve your job search, using online sources, volunteering and good old-fashioned cold calling.

1 Finding a job means you have to be a salesperson. But, instead of selling cars, shoes or milk, you are selling yourself – your skills, your experience and your character. And, just as successful salespeople are able to convince customers to buy their products rather than the many other similar ones on the market, as a jobseeker, you are in the business of persuasion.

2 “In many parts of the world, people are encouraged to talk positively about themselves and their talents from an early

age,” says personal-branding expert Michael Browne. “In stark contrast, in some countries, societal norms and pressures tell people to be modest or humble so that they don’t appear to be boastful or arrogant. But I tell clients from such countries that it is OK to talk positively about yourself and what you can do and offer, because, if you don’t, how will potential employers or customers find this out?” Browne believes that, in today’s highly competitive global market, “people can no longer afford to be ‘modest’ because they will lose the deal to those who know how to brand themselves effectively”.

Whether you are just out of school or university and looking for your first real job, or in mid-career, job hunting can often be frustrating and time-consuming. In fact, many careers experts advise that you treat a job search like a job: by spending eight hours a day researching potential employers and then producing a CV and covering letter that are specifically tailored to every job you apply for.

The internet has radically changed job searches. In the past, jobseekers checked newspapers and magazines for job advertisements. Although these are still a potential source, many positions are now announced via online employment sites such as Monster.com and Eurojobs.com. Jobseekers can also visit company websites to learn more about potential employers, while employers (or their HR departments)

Selling yourself

increasingly search the internet to find potential employees, a practice called 'passive candidate sourcing'. "Employers, who can be inundated with résumés when they post jobs, often seek passive candidates (qualified candidates who aren't necessarily looking for work, but who may be interested if the right job comes along)," writes US careers expert Alison Doyle on About.com.

5 The fact that employers search the web for potential candidates – for example, by checking LinkedIn, Xing, Facebook and blogs – is a strong argument for having your own social media presence. "LinkedIn is extremely professional and easy to use, so it is worth building a solid profile for yourself there," says Vicky Creevey, marketing manager at IdeasTap, a British charity that supports creative people. "Connect with people that you have worked with previously or met in a professional context to build a network. Twitter is a really useful tool, too," Creevey writes in *The Guardian*. "Try tweeting about current affairs relating to the sector you want to work in to help you to build a relevant following. Follow the companies you would like to work for and put yourself on their radar by interacting with them (responding to and retweeting their tweets)."

6 Opinions are divided as to whether it's a good idea to use Facebook as a way to promote yourself as a job candidate. If you decide to do so, then you need to be very careful not to post anything that might alienate a potential employer. That could mean posts that reveal your religious or political beliefs, as well as photos that show you partying on the beach in a tiny bikini or otherwise having too much fun. It is also a bad idea to say anything negative about a current or former employer, or about colleagues past or present.

7 While you need to be cautious about the information you reveal online, this does not mean you should avoid social networks altogether. Management consultant Rob Asghar says that not having a LinkedIn profile "sends a mixed signal" – either that you are completely satisfied with your current job or that you are "technologically illiterate". Your profile should include a photo, preferably a professional portrait, but, in any case, one in which you look pleasant and approachable. No drunken party shots, please. Not posting a photo "sends a negative message", Asghar writes in *Forbes*. "It may signal that you're unprofessional or insecure about yourself – or that you're mainly lurking on the network rather than connecting." LinkedIn or Xing can also be helpful for doing company searches. Check to see whether the company you want to work for is listed, and, if it is, look for people there who could hire or recommend you. Because personal connections can lead to jobs, you should keep your network informed about your job search, advises blogger Rachel Levy on About.com: "When I was first laid off, I sent a large email to everyone

in my LinkedIn network, letting them know of my situation and asking for any help or people they could put me in touch with." If you have your own blog, you can use LinkedIn to draw attention to it. Twitter is another potential source for jobs and recommendations, Levy says. If you want to make it easier for search engines to find you, use your own name as your Twitter name rather than something funny.

8 Instead of simply sending out multiple applications, take the time to find out as much as possible about potential companies. Lists of top companies can be found at the Great Place to Work websites. Chambers of commerce have lists of local companies, as do professional organizations. You can also check Facebook groups to see whether the companies that interest you have job listings. To search on Twitter, use Twellow, which describes itself as "the Twitter yellow pages", to find companies and individual contacts in your area.

9 Cold calling – phoning potential employers to see whether they have jobs available – is not for everyone, yet it can lead to employment if you do it right, according to career coach and blogger Marty Nemko. Start by listing 20 to 50 companies you would like to work for, he suggests. Then, call after hours to leave a voicemail message with someone who has the power to hire you, introducing yourself and saying that you will email them your covering letter and CV. If you haven't heard back in a week, call again during office hours.

10 Don't worry about sounding stupid or making mistakes, Nemko says. "Write a little script at home. Don't read it on the phone with the employer, but you can practise with the script and without the script until it sounds natural." Make the calls in reverse order, from the least desirable employers to the most desirable. That way, by the time you reach your top choice, you will feel and sound more confident.

11 Meanwhile, the more people you know, the more likely it is that someone will think of you when there's a job available. Nemko suggests volunteering as a good way to expand your personal and professional network. For example, you could volunteer to serve on the board of a small company or non-profit organization. Other volunteering options include political campaigns, religious organizations and community groups.

12 Finding a job should be a priority and you should spend a serious amount of time on it. But British recruiter and author Simon Gray says it is a mistake to "make your job search your sole focus in life". Instead, Gray writes in *The Guardian*, "enjoy family time, eat well and exercise. Leave the house each day, volunteer, learn new skills, meet people and maintain a balance in your life. We all need interaction and variety: often, the harder you chase something, the more it eludes you."

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Selling yourself

4 Information from the article

a. Complete the table with the advice from the article.

| | Do ... | Don't ... |
|----------|--------|-----------|
| LinkedIn | | |
| Facebook | | |
| Twitter | | |

- b. Underline all the advice in the article that relates to cold calling. Discuss what you have underlined with your partner.
- c. Find the advice about volunteering in the article. Have you ever done any volunteer work to further your career? If not, is it something that would consider doing? Why? Why not?
- d. Talk about the advice given in paragraphs 3 and 12 about the time people should spend on active job searching. What do you think of the advice?

Selling yourself

5 Similar words

Look at the pairs of similar words from the article. Find them in the article, and read and underline the sentences in which they appear. Are the words interchangeable or do they have slightly different meanings?

Find other example sentences that contain the words and discuss how they are used.

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| 1. talent | skill |
| 2. modest | humble |
| 3. boastful | arrogant |
| 4. résumé | CV |
| 5. client | customer |
| 6. convince | persuade |

6 Interview questions

a. Reorder the words to make interview questions.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. is personal important why branding | 3. is branding personal what |
| 2. be what a branding included statement in should | 4. a who personal-branding to statement make needs |

b. Match the questions to the answers in the interview.

Personal-branding expert Michael Browne works as a career coach and intercultural communication trainer in Europe, North America and North Africa. He blogs for *The Huffington Post* (as "O'Brien Browne") and writes for international publications.

1 Your personal brand is your unique and special set of skills, talents, experience and know-how that informs others about your qualities and expertise. Perhaps your talents are languages or mathematics, social media research or listening skills. Your brand is something real, something contained not only in your CV but also in your heart and soul. It is a tool that helps people remember who you are and what you can offer.

2 A personal-branding statement shows that you understand your own skills and talents, which means that you'll be able to offer and use them for the benefit of those for whom you work. People like and are influenced by those who can talk with passion and confidence about their positive qualities. In a tough global marketplace, people have to stand out from the crowd to get noticed. If they can't brand themselves effectively, they will be passed over for those who can.

3 Everybody – from students to assistants, from jobseekers to executives. Every time we make a phone call, send an email, attend a meeting or give a presentation, we are branding ourselves. And remember: if you just sit quietly in a meeting or conference call and say nothing because you're embarrassed about your English, you will still be branding yourself as "the quiet guy" or "the one who never contributes" or "that guy who never has anything to say". In other words, if you don't brand yourself, others will brand you – and it could be in a very negative way that can hurt your career.

4 First, you need an interesting "hook" or opening that captures people's attention. For example: "As a global expert in app design, I..." Second, something that shows your experience: "For almost five years, I have been designing apps for mid-sized and large international firms..." Thirdly, mention your special skills and talents. Don't just say "I know Arabic and Farsi." Instead, say "I'm fluent in both Arabic and Farsi." People cringe when I say this, but it is OK to use adjectives like "very good", "superior" or even "excellent". Don't be shy – be proud.

Selling yourself

7 LinkedIn summaries

Read these real LinkedIn summaries. Discuss what you like and dislike about them. Then, write something similar about yourself.

“A high-energy, high-stamina communicator with extensive experience. Strong leader with ability to direct staff in the delivery of complex operations and programs.”

“Self-motivated, ambitious and digitally savvy individual with highly successful background in adult education. Accustomed to tight deadlines and comfortable with public speaking.”

“Digital-content strategist skilled at leading teams of other writers and editors working with emerging media.”

“Successfully coached hundreds of professionals applying to top global organizations across sectors in the UK, Europe and UAE.”

“Accomplished entrepreneurial professional in B2B and B2C media sales and marketing. Event sponsorships, brand and media partnerships, publishing, advertising, marketing, new business and new product development are key strengths.”

Selling yourself

Vocabulary record: Selling yourself

| verb | noun | adjective (+ opposite) | adverb (+ opposite) |
|----------|------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| convince | | | |
| | persuasion | | |
| | | boastful | |
| | | | technologically |
| | | | |
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Vocabulary record

