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# Capitalize on Emerging Opportunities: Develop Your Professional Brand

*Donn LeVie Jr./ Donn LeVie Jr. STRATEGIES, LLC*

With the economy on the upswing and the job picture improving, it’s a great time to reassess your career goals, determine if a job change or a new career is around the corner and rethink how your peers and hiring managers perceive you as a professional in the marketplace. The times, they are a-changin’.

In 1982, best-selling author John Naisbitt wrote in “Megatrends” about society being in a “time of parenthesis” — the time between eras, a time of change and questioning; a reconceptualizing not just of society but also culture. Certainly, the 2008 recession — the worst since the Great Depression of 1929 — and the global COVID-19 pandemic — created another period of change and questioning for citizens of this globe, but they also created opportunity for many.

When I worked for Intel Corporation, one of the key strategies that contributed to the company’s success and ability to withstand the onslaught of economic downturns in the semiconductor industry during the years 2001 through 2004 was its strategy to accelerate product development when all its competitors were cutting back on R&D budgets.

Intel understood that, eventually, the recession in its sector would end, and rather than ramp up product development when the bad times were fading in the rear-view mirror, they were poised to take advantage of the improved market by launching new products at the first sign that the economic recovery was a trend and not just a single data point.

The recent recession has only magnified the rapid changes already underway in global demographics, economics and technology. These paradigm shifts are influencing the restructuring of domestic and international corporations and their allocations of all forms of capital. One of the important strategic and tactical shifts is in the workforce arena — the effects of which reverberate through the entire employment chain. Hiring managers now seek candidates who have quantified their achievements as problem solvers and "game changers" — those who’ve tackled challenges in mature and emerging economies.

Creating and promoting your professional brand will help you take advantage of opportunities you can’t even see yet. My leadership positions within the technology field have taught me that building brand value involves two important components: (1) Making others aware of the brand (your expertise) in question and, (2) creating a brand image that generates positive associations with that brand.

The same principles apply in the workforce arena regardless of your situation. If you’re looking to move up the rungs in the company, profession, or industry for which you work, or promoting your own business and seeking clients and customers, here’s your task:

* Create**positive associations**among your quantified accomplishments, professional skills, knowledge, and experience and the people with a need for that expertise.
* *Others* will enhance and polish your brand based on your perceived professional and personal reputation valued expert. So, take the initiative and give them the right components.

Here are a few ways to get your name embedded in the “associative memory models” (imprinting your branded value and expertise in the minds of decision makers):

* Write articles for journals in your profession
* Give presentations or workshops at association meetings and conferences and with other related associations.
* Network with other professionals in your field.
* Use a targeted social media strategy (blogs, YouTube video, Twitter, LinkedIn are the channels decision makers in your target market likely frequent) to expand your circles of influence. Be sure you have something valuable to contribute; the virtual world is already overflowing with mindless blather.
* Write a book that addresses key issues, challenges, or glimpses into the future of your profession or industry.

Intel Corporation offered me a position back in 2000 based on a single phone call from a director. This director who phoned read one of my articles that had been published in an industry journal, read my articles in management newsletters, and had heard me speak at several national conferences in the industry. So, he contacted me to see if I’d be interested in a management position at a new chip design center in Austin, Texas.

He told me over the phone, “I’ve read your articles and papers for a couple of years and have heard you speak at conferences … it’s as though I feel I know you already. Are you looking for other opportunities?”

Without knowing it, I’d created brand awareness in this director’s mind, which enhanced my brand equity. I went on to enjoy a successful six-year career with Intel from that one phone call.

A positive brand image helps solidify your position in any job or career opportunity. It can differentiate your expertise from your competition and move it toward “preferred candidate” status. A positive brand image can command a higher salary and encourage decision makers to seek you out, but your brand must be visible in the marketplace (and social media channels) where these individuals frequent.

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