

# Rebrand, Reinvent, and Repurpose Your Anti-Fraud Expertise

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STRATEGIES, LLC

ENGAGE. POSITION. INFLUENCE. CONVERT.



## Rebrand, Reinvent, and Repurpose Your Expertise

*Achieving the career of your dreams is more than just a matter of luck. Creating a strategy and executing a plan for cultivating your personal brand can help establish your skills and expertise, while differentiating you from others in the field. Here's how to get started.*

When I speak at association conferences, I always meet people who want to rebrand themselves but don't quite know where to start. In some instances, these are association members who want to transition from the public sector to the private sector. But often it's more of an issue of professionals finding difficulty articulating the value of their existing brand to others in a way that invites deeper conversations and engagement.

Most people aren't interested in pursuing a complete career change, but a slight course correction might reveal new opportunities their current expertise and accomplishments could address.

A slight course change was how I got my best break with energy company Phillips 66 after working there for about a year on oil and gas exploration projects in coastal Texas and Louisiana. I had my sights set on the offshore Atlantic exploration team, which had a company-wide reputation for working in frontier areas where data (geological and geophysical information) was scarce.

I would chat with the group's director at lunch or in the hallway so that he became familiar with who I was and my story. When he learned that I had three years' experience working on global oceanographic research projects, he didn't waste any time requesting my transfer to the offshore Atlantic team, where I became responsible for interpreting organic geochemistry data and writing assessments with recommendations on the oil and gas potential up and down the eastern offshore continental margin.

This director didn't have to ask me if I wanted to work in the offshore group. Our conversations piqued his interest, all according to my plan — and thankfully, he was my advocate who helped make the transfer happen.

## **“Do you have a system?”**

If you asked for my help with your rebranding efforts, I'd first want to know: “Do you have a system for conveying your value and expertise to others?” The problem as I've heard it many times is that most people don't have a reliable, scalable system for their own professional development that increases the odds of repeatable results. They return to square one when recovering from a layoff, considering a job or career change, or dealing with the fallout from a global pandemic.

When engaging decision makers, you should have an idea about the position in a company, organization or profession you occupy where people look to you for expertise. That's known as your **platform** and involves four elements: (1) your visibility; (2) your authority; (3) your influence; and (4) whom you serve. These are some questions we would discuss to build and/or polish your platform:

- Who knows you and your work?
- Who knows your successes?
- What platforms or channels are you regularly visible on?
- Which forums, communities and associations are you an active member in?

### **Authority**

- Do you have solid credibility?
- Do you have solid credentials and are they current?
- Do you have the experience behind the authority?

### **Influence**

- Do you speak at conferences?
- Are you published in industry or association journals?
- Do others call you an “influencer” or “thought leader”?
- Can you demonstrate proof of value?

### **Whom you serve**

- Are you visible to the people in your audience/decision makers?
- How do you reach them?
- Are you building/strengthening your brand and value there?

### **The mentor that threw me a lifeline**

After being out of work for a year in the oil and gas industry, a small technology company hired me to manage their pipeline mapping software team. This company hosted a user conference and invited former CEO and best-selling author Harvey Mackay as the keynote speaker (whose books include *Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*, *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*, and several others from MJF Books/Fine Communications, NY). The company needed volunteers for the user conference, so I volunteered to be Mr. Mackay's driver for the weekend event, hoping to glean some free CEO counsel. (User conferences bring together users and potential users of a product/service to promote a company's brand.)

As soon as Mr. Mackay got in the car at the Houston airport, he began peppering me with questions about my background, my goals, and how I was adjusting to the industry change, among other inquiries. It turned out to be an invaluable half-day with Mr. Mackay that put me back on track with my system and my self-confidence, as I'd been struggling to feel comfortable in a field in which I had little academic training (software development).

I hoped he wouldn't notice that I always took the long routes between his hotel, the conference venue and the Houston airport.

## **The personal-brand path**

The late poet Maya Angelou best captured the guiding principle for creating or polishing a personal brand: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." (See "Maya Angelou: How you made them feel," NoteworthyNonsense, [tinyurl.com/ywt6eaxa](https://tinyurl.com/ywt6eaxa).)

That's the essence of engaging others. It's how the brain generates memory associations in the minds of others when it comes to certain elements of your brand. The more often (and quicker) those memory associations arise, the greater the chance people will prefer your particular brand, service or product.

Personal brand qualities are components of emotional intelligence, the "soft skills," and are powerful elements that set you up for success. I think the following qualities function as strong trust magnets essential for today's business environment:

- **Authenticity.**
- **Differentiation.**
- **Consistency.**
- **Community.**
- **Commitment.**

One caution: The old saying goes that if you don't honk your own horn at work, no one else will. Well, there are ways to highlight your contributions without the social penalties and tripwires of doing so. In fact, I'd add "balanced humility" to the above list. Summarizing from the Harvard-Business Review May-June 2021 article "Savvy Self-Promotion" by Leslie K. John (see [tinyurl.com/y6yp7dyp](https://www.tinyurl.com/y6yp7dyp)), here are some effective ways to communicate your value without coming across as overly self-promoting:

- **Share when asked.** Research reveals that when someone details an accomplishment in response to a direct question, others don't judge that person as any less agreeable. But beware: don't try to set up such a scenario, or what is sometimes known as "boomerasking," as others can perceive this as worse than outright bragging.
- **Share when others are sharing.** Some environments, such as doctors' offices, attorneys' offices and office buildings, let employees successfully convey professional achievement without negative repercussions. For example, it doesn't seem unusual, or a form of bragging, to see diplomas framed on a wall in the background during video calls or when you visit someone's office.
- **Use an intermediary.** Using an intermediary such as publicist acting as an agent for someone is one way to remove the sting of egotism from any statements. It's one thing for Tom Brady to proclaim he's "the greatest of all time" but quite another (and slightly more objective) to read that as a quote from his agent.
- **Walk the line.** In other words, strike a balance. Even where you see clear sailing at the moment to tout your accomplishment, a little goes a long way and a lot will never go far enough. You get a credibility boost when you share both successes and failures.

## What's your "unfair advantage"?

What aspect of your expertise, brand or accomplishments make competing ideas or proposals "irrelevant"? What's your big differentiator that separates you from others? Can you articulate it in a way that has meaningful value for your audience?

When I taught my EPIC Results Masterclass (“EPIC” is an acronym for “engage, position, influence, convert”), one question that made some people uneasy was: “Are you uncomfortable with the phrase ‘unfair advantage?’” Some nodded affirmatively or responded with “It sounds unethical ...”

Then I asked: “What if decision-makers consistently presented offers to hire, to buy, to contract with you because they understood your branded value and expertise could help them get what they needed better than anyone else ... as long as everything was above board, ethical and legal, what’s unfair about that?”

“Because *you* have a well-established branded platform and a well-defined process sitting on top of a proven, reliable, repeatable system — and other candidates *don’t* — means *you* win; *they* lose.”

There’s nothing unethical about having a superior process that makes you the preferred choice among decision-makers. Creating that unique advantage is really about demonstrating that you are the best capable candidate for solving other people’s problems. That’s why others hire you, promote you, or buy from you.

***To rebrand, reinvent and repurpose your particular expertise frames your professional advancement not as a series of single, disconnected steps, but as a business process that’s built around how you solve other people’s problems.***



Donn LeVie Jr. is a respected leadership influence strategist/ consultant, award-winning author, leadership coach and mentor, and global speaker who focuses on how people speak (**linguistics**), how they think (**cognitive psychology**), and how they make decisions (**behavioral economics**).

In his roles leading people and programs for Fortune 100 companies (**Phillips Petroleum, Motorola, Intel Corp.**), government agencies (**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**), and academia (**the University of Houston Downtown College – Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics**), Donn has been directly involved with global oceanographic research projects, multi-million-dollar offshore oil and gas exploration programs, high-tech chip design initiatives, and teaching fundamentals of petroleum exploration and production to undergraduate students.

Donn stepped away from the corporate world in 2013 to launch his own firm: Donn LeVie Jr. STRATEGIES, LLC. Over his career he's spoken at more than 70 conferences and since 2011 has been a regular presenter and leadership strategist at the annual Global Fraud Conference sponsored by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

Donn's client and audience list spans organizations from the public, private and education sectors, including the FBI, Dept. of Education Inspector General's Office, New York Port Authority, National Science Foundation, FDIC, Enterprise Holdings, Ernst & Young, the City of Nashville, Franklin and Marshall College, and many more.

As an author, Donn's books have won the Global eBook Award and the International Book Award (*Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, 2012; *Strategic Career Engagement*, 2016). Donn's newly released books, *From the Underworld to the Boardroom: True Tales of Fraud, Corruption, Counterfeiting, and Cons* and *STACKING THE DECK: Career Strategies for Outsmarting the Competition* are available only through Donn's programs.

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