

## Differentiating Yourself in the Marketplace

*The power of connection*

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The single biggest obstacle to selection or promotion is the inability to differentiate yourself from your competitors. Older workers find this the most difficult. You have a multiplicity of life and professional experiences. Yet, when your resume is placed alongside ten others with like functional backgrounds, job titles, companies and industries, there isn't a nickle's worth of difference. Resumes at this stage of your career are remarkably the same.

What is the compelling reason to choose *you* over anyone else? Most often, it comes down to who you know, your network. But, you can expand your chances by focusing on outcomes, identifying and "selling" the talents and abilities that made it possible for you to achieve in the past and that create a brand promise for the future. It's the concepts behind the decisions you have made, your EQ (emotional intelligence) rather than your IQ that led to the accomplishments you are proudest to present.

***"Inside every older person there's a younger person wondering what happened."***

You are unique. There is no one else quite like you and your success has been largely determined by this uniqueness. There are 2-3 threads that run through your career that have determined your success. It's *who* you are, *how* you tackle challenges and interact with others that makes the difference. We don't hire statistics; we hire people and until you can present yourself effectively as a human being, it matters little how you present yourself as a doer of tasks, an accomplisher, that will convince a prospective employer of your worth.

You've come a long way and, regardless of your level of position, you're going to be expected to bring a modicum of wisdom to the role. It will always require more than technical expertise and experience can come across as a detriment as well as an asset depending upon the viewer. Too often, it smacks of rigidity and a mind set in concrete, a person less likely to ask questions than to proclaim the answers, someone who will be

difficult to work with and difficult to lead. Always think from the prospective customer's perspective, when they ask themselves:

- How will I be richer, smarter, more successful if I hire or promote you?
- How will you make this possible? Will you fit the culture?
- What is your guarantee?
- What credibility do you have?
- Do I believe...trust?

You have to stand for something bigger, more expansive, more focused on the future than a canned recitation of the past. The customer reacts from three perspectives:

1. Head: Logic and reason
2. Heart: How does it compel them, touch their emotions and feelings?
3. Instinct: Gut reaction, belief, faith, hope. It just seems right.

Language, whether written or verbal, must speak to all three and create a promise of a better future. When you have created this expectation, their next question is, "What will it take to get you?"

You have three powerful sales tools: Your resume is the story of your professional past. It should engage the reader, compel them, provide a word picture of you in the business environment so they feel they know you. The interview is about them, their hopes and dreams, challenges and opportunities. It is about the future and the potential for both of you to be more successful by partnering together. The cover letter is your sales piece, the persuasion, the argument of, "Why you?" It should acknowledge their needs and show how you will not only meet but exceed their expectations. The resume and the cover letter set you up for success in the interview. If you have done them well, you have anticipated their questions and concerns and presented what is essentially a behavioral interview in writing. Then, in the interview, you can focus on them, because you are set up as the lead candidate.

You're unique...and so is everyone else. Differentiating yourself in the marketplace begins with recognizing your own uniqueness, consciously identifying your brand promise and living it each and every day. When you understand what makes you tick and what makes you successful, it's much easier to educate your potential customer.

