

## “Are you ready for your next BIG opportunity?”

Since the start of this year I have been approached by a dozen or more industry friends and colleagues who have either been displaced in their career or looking to make a change for one reason or another. In *nearly* every case they would like to be more prepared and not sure where to start or find the advice they need for the next chapter in their career. I understand this may not be the typical article you would find in a tech industry publication, but trust me, countless people in our industry are in the position described above. I want to share some advice that I have used to successfully help friends make the leap and find the next adventure in their career.



Most people pay very little attention to their Professional Branding and really sell themselves short. I have seen some marketing professionals with impressive careers, who do a terrible job at marketing themselves. The reality is that we never really know what is around the corner and when a change may be necessary, or an opportunity of a lifetime may appear. Why not create the best possible image now for your professional network audience? In fact, you can invest a very little amount of time and look better than 90% of your industry peers. I will tell you how!

Additionally, for those of you who are just starting your career or in your twilight years; wondering what you want to be when you grow up – this may be a daunting and challenging to process. How do you tackle this question and develop a direction for your future?

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*You never know when an opportunity may arise or your job (dynamics) may change. Prepare like the next best opportunity is today! Pete Baker explains.*

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Start with the following:

### 1) What do you want to be when you grow up?

A few years ago, I was planning to make a career change and a mentor of mine suggested I think about “*what are your assets or signature strengths and what do you like to do?*”

I went through the suggested thought process and took it a (slightly nerdy) step further. I created what I call an opportunity matrix. On the horizontal axis I listed my signature strengths or interests and beneficial elements to a certain job opportunity (401K, Health Plan, etc..). On the Vertical Axis I listed business opportunities or “jobs” that I may consider. I then added a numeric value from 0-10 for each element. In the far-right column a numeric value for that opportunity would be calculated upon rating the various elements related to the opportunity. This process was helpful to fully consider and evaluate each opportunity and make a more informed decision. Don’t be shy about exploring opportunities outside of the industry or becoming more adventurous: buy a franchise, start a new business, join the circus. If you can make a good income and find joy in that career path, don’t be afraid to explore it.

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If you find yourself un-employed don't "take some time off", get moving. Start networking and accept that your new full-time job is finding your next job or career opportunity.

My good friend and tremendously talented industry colleague; Petro Shimonishi, was faced with a challenge years ago when she was laid off. She and another industry colleague decided to develop a powerful resource for professionals who were out of work or looking to make a change. I would strongly encourage anyone in this position to visit: [www.nextphasenetwork.com](http://www.nextphasenetwork.com) for some amazing articles, resources, coaching, job board, forum, etc..

## 2) Polish up your image – Before you may need to ...

Invest a little time to create an impressive image for your professional career. The opportunity of a lifetime may happen tomorrow. What if that company or person searches for information about you online, on social media or elsewhere or asks you to provide them with some professional branding materials: CV, Resume, Professional Bio or references, etc...? Will you be prepared to present your best image, now?

The following are some Professional Branding A, B, Cs:

### A) Add some life to your resume

I have seen hundreds of resumes and CV's over my professional career and I could count on one hand the number that have jumped out at me and left an impression. When working on your resume, some of the suggestions I offer are as follows:

- **ACHEIVMENTS:** People don't care (generally) *where* you have worked, they care about *what* you have accomplished. Focus on what, not where. Identify your achievements and quantify them. Petro offered a great suggestion: "*update or document your accomplishments, monthly.*"
- **PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:** Instead of an Objective at the top of your resume, add a Professional Summary or elevator pitch of who you are and what you have accomplished.
- **RESUMEN ASSISTANT:** Microsoft just added a cool new "Resume Assistant" feature in Word, which leverages the power of LinkedIn. The Word-LinkedIn Resume Assistant includes examples of suggested skills and work experience summaries matched to your resume profile, to help you polish up the text and key words.
- **BENEFITS:** Think about why someone would want to hire you, then communicate the benefits you would deliver to them by highlighting signature strengths, skills and abilities that would be valuable and interesting to your prospective employer.
- **STAND OUT:** Add some color to the resume, or nice paper, to make it pop and stand out a little.
- **HIRE A PRO:** Hire a professional resume writer. You can invest a few hundred bucks to hire a professional resume writer to make you look like a million bucks. The investment you make in your resume and other professional branding can easily pay for itself by helping you to get the job (and compensation) you are looking to secure. A note of caution that there are a lot of scammers out there, so try to get a recommendation from someone you trust or a trusted resource: Search on LinkedIn, Monster, or google "Resume Writers" and you will find countless resources to explore.

## **B) Be Professionally Visible:**

Most of us have subjects that we are passionate about. Start writing and get the ideas out of your noggin and onto paper or online. There are many great opportunities to share your brilliant ideas or advice with others: you can publish free articles or “posts” on LinkedIn and other media platforms. Contact your favorite trade publication or newspaper and start creating some content to market yourself in your profession or industry.

Act as a volunteer for your organization, host a training course on a subject you are passionate about, which may be interesting and beneficial to your peers.

Any of these activities can be used to further market yourself as a professional in your industry and help to build your network.

## **C) Create some impressive professional branding tools:**

Invest some time polishing up your LinkedIn Profile. In many industries LinkedIn is broadly used and a very powerful platform to network and market your professional brand. There are incredible free articles available with LinkedIn Profile tips. A few basic tips are as follows:

- Sign up for the 30-day LinkedIn Pro free evaluation. This will allow you to edit your background banner and add a custom header which you can keep after the 30-day free trial period is over.
- Add a Professional Headline and Background (see my LinkedIn page and just copy the format I used (and copied from another LinkedIn pro)).
- Post an article or two about a subject you are passionate about. It is very easy to do on LinkedIn and it doesn't cost anything. This can help position you as an expert in your field. You can check out my articles on LinkedIn, my website: [www.thebigcorp.com/whats-new](http://www.thebigcorp.com/whats-new)
- Add some visual content. Any marketing materials you have created, images of you in action selling, receiving an award, giving a speech, etc...are great selling points.
- Include honors awards or certifications you may have, in the awards section, even if they are more personal than professional, like Scuba Diving for me. This just shows that you are an achiever...

Create a Professional Summary or Bio to help you stand out from the crowd further. This should include a photo and focus on career highlights, accomplishments and signature strengths. It can be used in addition or instead of your resume for less formal opportunities or communications. Maybe a door opener with a company you admire or a consulting project, etc..

The bottom line, you only have one opportunity to make a good first impression ... maybe tomorrow. Make sure you are prepared for the next BIG opportunity!

*If you would like some free materials that have been described in this article or have any questions, please email me at [pete@thebigcorp.com](mailto:pete@thebigcorp.com)*

**Think BIG!**

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