

Chapter Nine:

Developing An Image

Hopefully, you have spent some time on the material presented in the previous chapters, enough at least to get an idea of your personality type and what you would most like to do in your career. Having done that, it is now time to turn our attention to the development of the image or images that you would like to project to the business community. Many people are turned off by the sound of the phrase "develop an image," thinking that it sounds too false like you are making something up just to get a job. Get rid of that idea, because that is not at all what I have in mind. Let me give you an example of why it is important to develop an image in the sense that I will be using the term.

Ed came to me several months ago, frustrated and dismayed over his inability to find employment on the level for which he was trained. He was a computer systems analyst with very impressive credentials a Ph.D. from a prestigious Eastern university, and had worked for a large company as a systems analyst for almost twenty years. The company had merged with a larger company already having a full complement of analysts and so he was (reluctantly) let go. He also produced sterling letters of recommendation from his previous employer, explaining why he was let go, and heaping praises upon him for outstanding performance. To my amazement, he kept producing documents: awards from different trade associations for excellence in his field, articles he had written in trade journals, community services awards, etc. I was amazed, because I couldn't imagine this man not finding an excellent job immediately. Then he showed me his resume.

First, it was typewritten (by a computer systems analyst!) and then photocopied on cheap, paper. It was one page long, and two thirds of that page was filled with what I consider irrelevant detail: age, wife's name, employment dates. Towards the end he did talk about his experience, but it was all jumbled together in a long paragraph that would have put an insomniac to sleep. Of course, to jam all that information on one page, the margins were one quarter inch all around and the type was elite. There was no mention of his awards or publications. It turns out that he, not deeming himself competent in business matters, had turned his resume writing over to his wife. She had heard somewhere that resumes should not be over one page in length and had proceeded to cram as much as she could into that format. She simply didn't have room for information on his awards and publications.

*Career Search Myth #6:
Resumes should never exceed one page in length.*

The image that Ed was portraying to the business world through his resume was not at all indicative of what he had to offer. Most people, beginning to read his resume, would have promptly set it aside and labeled him "undesirable." He had sent out almost fifty of these resumes and had not had a single interview to show for it. Ed needed help in developing an image. I spread his resume over four pages with lots of white space; bulleted his achievements, awards, publications, and degrees; printed copies on 100% cotton cream-colored bond in 12 point Times Roman; and added a title page with a few well-placed graphics. We printed off sixty copies. He had fourteen interviews within three weeks, and was working within six, at a job that was significantly better than the one from which he had been laid off.

Ed is a good example of why you need to develop an image. You don't have time to go and present yourself personally to one hundred companies. Instead, you have to rely on those few pages of a resume to get the people within those companies to want to know more about you. There is nothing dishonest about making sure that you portray the correct image of yourself and your abilities to the company for which you would like to work. "Developing an image," then, is nothing more than putting together a resume that accurately portrays you and your abilities to the business world.

Throughout this manual, I continually stress the importance of approaching your career search from the sales point of view. It follows that advertising is extremely important, since we cannot personally contact every potential employer and the numbers-game rule is in full force. As I pointed out above, this means that you have to trust a piece of paper to get your initial message across. The importance of the resume is not to be underestimated. It is your only form of introduction to most companies a personal advertisement. Given this, it is difficult to comprehend the casual approach taken by most people when preparing and mailing them. And they almost always look alike, yet another fact which I cannot even pretend to understand. Does Ford want its advertising to look like Chevrolet's? Of course not. Then why should you want your resume to look like everyone else's?

Remember the resumes you have seen in the workshops and in your consulting meetings. Remember, the prime prerequisite in selling something is to get noticed (of course, it must also be in good taste). You must ask yourself if your advertising will get noticed in the marketplace?

Graphics on a resume may seem unconventional, but they are the wave of the future. More importantly, graphics may help your resume stand out from the crowd. The key is to get noticed! Yes, some people will be turned off by graphics on a resume, but some people will be turned off by your resume no matter what.

*Career Search Fact #1:
You will never please everyone with your resume.*

It is a big mistake to try to please everyone with your resume. You never will, so don't even try.