

## Career Building and Personal Branding

### By John Casey

The assumption is that you are marketing and selling a service – you. These recommendations are meant to help you get to the right company or organization in a job and ultimately a career that fits your needs and desires, where you will have fun working in a trust environment.

This Process addresses “networking” for a job. 75-85% of all jobs are found through networking, this is where you should devote the bulk of your efforts. Search firms look for a specific set of skills and experiences (Purple Squirrels) so it is a long shot that you will meet the criteria.

All three steps are designed to build your personal brand that will be yours for life. Most sales people know that the first two steps are to define **where you want to sell** this service and then what are the **key differentiators of this service**. This is accomplished by the Market Profile and Why Biography. The third step is to **build a sales network** to get where you want to go.

All three steps are designed to help you focus on interests, skills, values and targets. This focus builds trust because the network sees you have defined who you are and where you want to go.

### **STEP ONE: THE MARKET PROFILE: Where and to whom you want to sell You**

This defines where you want to sell yourself. We make these decisions by means of a series of filters that are designed to help us and our Network identify company targets where we want to sell ourselves. This is a difficult document because it only allows three sets of decisions.

Developing specific targets gets you around the “no fishing” rule in Networking. Good networkers can’t risk referrals to someone looking for information; their contacts don’t have time for “fishing.” They do want to be introduced to people interested in joining their organization.

Also giving your network three rifle shots allows your network contacts to think about alternatives: “I see you have DFW in all of your location filters. I know a great company that fits all of your criteria but you would have to move to Austin. Are you interested?”

| <b>MARKET PROFILE PART A: COMPANY TARGETS</b> |              |              |           |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Name: _____                                   | Phone: _____ | Email: _____ |           |
| Filters and Targets                           | Profile A    | Profile B    | Profile C |
| Title   |              |              |           |
| Industry                                      |              |              |           |
| Company Size                                  |              |              |           |
| Location                                      |              |              |           |
| Transition (1)                                |              |              |           |
| Ownership (2)                                 |              |              |           |
| Other (3)                                     |              |              |           |
| Culture (4)                                   |              |              |           |
|   |              |              |           |
| <b>Target Cos and Execs (5)</b>               | 5-15         | 5-15         | 5-15      |
|   | Targets      | Targets      | Targets   |

#### Notes to Market Profile: Company Targets:

1. **Transition** refers to the life cycle of a company or organization. So there are various stages including start-ups, high growth, mergers and acquisitions, mature, turnarounds and bankruptcies. Often you will find peers and service providers who specialize in one of these transitions.
2. **Ownership** includes family or founders, private equity and public.
3. **Other** is for you to think about other possible filters. International is an obvious possible addition.
4. **Culture** is the most important filter and the hardest to implement. Think of five to ten words that describe the kind of work environment and decision-making style you are looking for. My recommendation is that trust and fun are key aspects of any culture so lists of Best Companies to Work for and Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year program participants are great places to go for Targets.
5. **Target Companies and Executives.** Your goal here is to find 5-15 companies for each of the three sets of filters that you have defined and the executives in those companies that you would like an introduction into from someone in your network. You will be asking your network to add to your list of targets and sometimes to warn you that one of your targets that doesn't fit the filter set you have.

The second part of your Market Profile relates to the **Network Contact Targets**, Peers and Referral Sources that you would like to add to your Network of Trusted Friends with the help of a warm referral from someone reviewing your Market Profile. These can be Peers who are often the best and most powerful parts of your Network or Professional Service Providers who are aligned with you by functional area, industry, transition, culture or a relationship with one of your Target Companies. They can be bankers, lawyers, accountants, search firms and other consultants. You can find these by internet research and discussion with others in your network.

If you think about it, you are also selling yourself into these Network Contact Targets just as much as into Company Targets. It is important to treat each connection with a Referral Target with the same respect you would as if you were interviewing with one of Target Companies' executives. They will carry forward that impression on to their clients who might very well be the hiring authority you want to see.

| MARKET PROFILE PART B: NETWORK CONTACT TARGETS |           |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|  | Profile A | Profile B | Profile C |
|  |           |           |           |
| <b>Service Providers and Peers</b>             |           |           |           |
|  |           |           |           |
|  |           |           |           |
| <b>Networking Contacts by:</b>                 |           |           |           |
| <b>Target Companies</b>                        |           |           |           |
| <b>Functional Area</b>                         |           |           |           |
| <b>Industry</b>                                |           |           |           |
| <b>Transition</b>                              |           |           |           |
| <b>Culture</b>                                 |           |           |           |

## STEP TWO: THE WHY BIOGRAPHY to differentiate your services

This **Why Biography** is designed as a quick read that **builds trust and confidence quickly in your network of referral sources and peers**. It is not designed for Search Firms which require the standard Resumes. This trust leads to referrals to individuals who are aligned with your interests, principles and values, exactly the kind of people you would have fun working with.

My **Why Biography** is attached at the end of this document as an example of a Biography driven strongly by values and principles. You may decide to use a mix of value and achievement stories as discussed below.

The first element you will notice is a **PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPH**. This is important for two reasons:

1. Pictures of you double the time that you are “top of mind” with the individuals receiving your Biography and so they are thinking of you and how to help twice as long. A rough estimate is that this “top of mind” period increases from four to eight weeks.
2. Research indicates that chemistry with hiring authorities and their trusted referral sources are often biased by what a candidate looks like. So candidates are eliminated up front because they do not “fit” the image of the individual that the hiring authority or referral is seeking. Therefore it is important to think about what you are trying to convey with the photo. A professional cameraman can help make sure you have the look that communicates the image you desire.

The second element is the **graphics** that holds the different elements in place. This Why Biography is one example. You do not have to use this particular format but you should have a format designed by a graphics designer who will also help you select the type that will communicate the kind of individual that you are. One only has to think about an Art Director and a CFO to understand the kinds of different communications possible.

Across the top is your **NAME AND TITLE**. Be as specific as possible but you might be more general if your Market Profile includes more than one title, e.g., Marketing and Sales Leader.

The first column below the photo and contact information is called **CORE COMPETENCIES**. This includes all the key information needed in networking from your resume so that it can be grasped quickly by a network contact. Typically this section includes details concerning:

1. Leadership including titles
2. Functional Skills
3. Industry Experience
4. Geography for work and living
5. Education including certificates (CPA, CMA, CPM, etc.)

The key is to keep the entries to less than one-line, simple bullets like headlines.

The second column starts with your **VALUE PROPOSITION** which is key to developing your differentiated value proposition to your network. This is the equivalent of the Elevator pitch and consists of just two sentences: your “**Only Statement**” and “**How I Can Be Helped.**”

#### **“Only Statement”**

The idea is to string two to three personal or professional characteristics or experiences that when taken together paint the picture of someone who is different from others looking for similar positions. In my case there are many search executives who have been CFOs or CEOs or who attended Harvard Business School. I am “the only search executive” who has done both. These parts of my background are specifically chosen to build my credibility and trust in me as a search executive, i.e., I have been a CEO and CFO and therefore understand the issues facing the key hiring authorities in my business. I also have some level of expertise from my MBA at HBS.



You should also have some fun. You want to be memorable. One lady called herself the “Lamp Lady.” She worked late so her staff gave her an oil lamp in jest, to have in case the lights went out at night. I was known as the “Cheerleader CFO” because I was always encouraging my staff to get to the next level. This is an area where you want to be memorable to your network.

### **“How I Can Be Helped”**

In networking you are always looking for warm referrals or information from peers and professional service providers. So here you define the industry and positions of the people who align with your networking goals. In my case I am looking for introductions to CEOs, CFOs and VPs of HR working in retail, consumer products, manufacturing, oil & gas and financial services companies. As with the Only Statement, this has to be short and focused.

The last section is your **BACKGROUND**, a series of short paragraphs about your values, principles and/or achievements. There are two kinds of stories to tell, **What Stories** and **Why Stories** with advantages and disadvantages for each that we will discuss now. You may end up doing some of each but Why Stories generate the most trust and lead to faster referrals.

### **What Stories**

These are restatements of your achievements from your resume. What you did and how you accomplished your objectives. Short and succinct. These are fact based and professional, therefore you can feel comfortable building a What Biography using these statements. They will generate some level of trust in your network and therefore generate referrals based on your accomplishments.

The problem with What Stories is that people hire people whom they trust and these stories only generate some trust so they are not as effective as the Why Stories.

### **Why Stories**

Why stories describe validated values, principles and personal characteristics. They describe the individual “behind the resume.” These **generate trust** and lead to **deeper referrals and faster** through your network. The problem is that they are typically more personal and we feel uncomfortable being personal and not professional. The issue is that people hire people because they believe their values and personal beliefs align with theirs. **Why Stories are three times as effective as What Stories** in building your network, getting referrals and a new job. At the very least produce a What/Why Biography that uses as many Why Stories as possible.

It is important to include only **validated** characteristics, If you believe yourself to be entrepreneurial, you should see examples of that characteristic in your adult life and while growing up. I started a restaurant chain and CEO Netweavers but was also starting organizations in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, high school and college.

## **STEP THREE: BUILDING A NETWORK based on Netweaving and Servant Leadership**

The Profile and Biography are key branding documents and you want to get them into your Network as quickly as possible. How you build your network and who you include in your network are equally important in building your brand. So there are four key things to remember as you complete Step Three:

1. **Netweaving is givers giving to givers.** You build your network by listening to your network and finding ways to help. The first step is to ask each individual what their value proposition is and how you can help them. When meeting a networking contact for the first meeting, keep the conversation on them. That separates you from



most everyone else out there who is looking to get something rather than giving. Relationships are built with the belief that “the more you give the more you will get. But it is important to give first without expecting anything in return.

By listening to and asking questions about your network contact you are demonstrating critical trust building characteristics that all hiring authorities are looking for:

- Relationship focused
- Long term
- Selfless, giver not a taker
- Active listener
- Connected
- Team Player
- Caring

At the end of your first meeting, a true giver will insist on asking how they can help you. Ideally, this is when you ask them for permission to send your Market Profile and Biography. Ask for suggestions based on those documents. If they don't offer to help at the end you might consider dropping them from your network because you want a network of givers.

2. **Small.** Your network should be a network of 100 to 150 peers and service providers. You need to find ways to reconnect at least every two months, even if it is just sending links to related subjects or books you have read. If you have a large network, it will be weak.
3. **Focused and Aligned.** You want people who are in your space somehow by any of the following:
  - Job Function
  - Industry
  - Transition
  - Culture
  - Targeted Companies

The other category is anyone you know who trusts you. These can be connections from family, Church or Synagogue, community, former supervisors, employees, suppliers or clients. In every case you are looking for those who are well connected and are givers.

You will find new members for your network from other members of your network and from research on the Internet. You always want to start an introduction with a warm referral from a trusted relationship but if that is not possible, it is possible to reach out by phone and email, always starting with the desire to learn more about them and how you can help.

4. **Built on creating new relationships.** Introductions are the glue of a netweaving network. As you get to know and trust your contacts, making introductions among trusted members is the most powerful way to energize your network.

#### **Two Footnotes:**

1. This approach puts you in charge so you are looking for opportunities that you want, not waiting for jobs to find you. Since you are listening and helping others, it is also a very rewarding way to search for a job. Many people, even Dr. Albert Schweitzer, have found this process to be fun and delightful. Dr. Schweitzer says it best:



**JOHN CASEY & ASSOCIATES**

*Bringing people together for winning results.*

**"I don't know what your destiny will be but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."**

2. In keeping with the spirit of this document, please feel free to share your thoughts or recommendations for additions or changes to this document by contacting me at [john@jcaseyassociates.com](mailto:john@jcaseyassociates.com)

## **Defining Your Personal Brand**

**Look for Other Ideas.** Examples from Amazon Books on Personal Branding:

- [Start with Why](#)
- [BrandED](#)
- [Just Do You](#)
- [Road to Recognition](#)
- [Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself](#)
- [Seven Figure Social Selling](#)
- [The Brand Mapping Strategy](#)
- [Branding Yourself](#)
- [Career Rehab](#)
- [Personal Branding for Dummies](#)