The Importance of Personal Branding:

Uses of Personal Branding for Career Development and Success

A Senior Project

presented to

The Faculty of the Journalism Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

By

Brenna Collins

June 2012

ABSTRACT

The following study investigates how to develop and maintain a personal brand in order to further career development and success. With the current state of today's job market, it is becoming increasingly difficult for individuals to differentiate themselves from competitors. Personal branding is an important tool for jobseekers as it helps define their strongest attributes and sell themselves to companies. As defined by Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011), "personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (p. 38). This study focuses on the best practices to create and manage a professional self-image in order to achieve career success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on the various aspects of personal branding and how the development and maintenance of one is crucial for the development and success of future careers. With today's tough and competitive job market, jobseekers are struggling to stand out from their peers and are used to being passed over and forgotten about by potential employers. "Developing a personal brand ensures that [individuals] are not left behind and that [they] develop the competitive advantage that positions [them] for the career opportunities [they] deserve" (Horton, 2011).

Similarly to that of a consumer brand, a personal brand gives employers the recognition needed to make a valid distinction between qualities of various employment candidates. By creating and preserving a personal brand, individuals have the capability to use their unique qualities and skills to essentially market themselves to companies.

Background of the Problem

Personal branding has been an effective tactic in the workforce for the past few decades. With the recent development of self-marketing outlets, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, developing a strong personal brand is crucial to differentiate oneself from other competitors in one's specific job market. Greer (2010) concludes that, "in a business world that's increasingly dominated by social media, mastering the ability to sell [oneself] in cyberspace has become one of the most important skills a worker can possess" (p. 30).

1

Having a personal brand distinguishes an individual from their competitors and gives a personality to their resume. Since the use of a personal brand is increasingly crucial in today's job market, there is a pressing urge to conduct research on the best practices of personal branding how those can be used to achieve a successful career.

Purpose of the Study

With the recent development of social media websites, it is not uncommon for most individuals to unknowingly have a personal brand established. If an employer were to use a search engine to look for a potential jobholder, information about the candidate could be exposed that they may not want companies seeing. This can be detrimental to the future careers of those who don't have them properly managed.

By studying the creation and development of personal brands, one can use the information gathered to control their target audience's perception of their personal brand. While controlling their own personal brand, one has the power to create a desirable image of themselves and channel that to their publics. A public's perception of a personal brand is ultimately how a personal brand is defined and this apprehension of the brand can be used in future career development. Therefore, in studying the strategies and tactics used to create and maintain a personal brand, it will benefit jobseekers that want to maintain a certain image to their target audiences and help them further their career success.

Setting for the Study

This study will be completed with the use of data collection and interpretation at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California as a Senior Project.

Interviews will be collected from three experts in the following fields pertaining to personal branding: college career counselor, social media professional, marketing and branding specialist. These experts will be asked a series of interview questions designed to get a better understanding of how to create a personal brand for future success and career development. The interviewees will be asked the same set of questions and probes to get an adequate representation of data.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created to develop a satisfactory representation of the requirements of a personal brand. The research questions were crafted specifically to collectively acquire the best practices in creating, maintaining and utilizing a personal brand in order to further career development and success for the purpose of the study.

1. What is a personal brand?
2. Why are personal brands important?
3. How does one develop a personal brand?
4. How does one use and maintain a personal brand?
5. How does one use a personal brand in successful career development?
6. How are successful personal brands evaluated?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are presented to the reader to clarify repeating topics of the study and assist in further knowledge of personal branding.

Brand Identity: how the marketer wants the brand to be perceived (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011).

Brand positioning: the part of the brand identity to be actively communicated to the audience (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011).

Brand Image: how the brand is perceived by the marketplace (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011).

Self-presentation: a way for an individual to convey information to others (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011).

Brand: an emotional response to the image or name of a particular company, product, or person (Deckers & Lacey, 2011, p. 6).

Personal branding: the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leverage it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal (Schawbel, 2010, p. 6).

Personal brand biography: overall sales pitch to prioritize and figure out the most important aspects of a personal brand (Deckers & Lacey, 2011, p. 21).

Self-promotion: promoting one's self, events, accomplishments, victories, defeats, problems, lessons learned to increase one's visibility to and awareness by others (Deckers & Lacey, 2011, p. 5).

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 includes a background of the study, a purpose of the study, and a definition of terms. Chapter 2 will determine the strategies and tactics in developing and

maintaining a personal brand by reviewing the current literature regarding the topic. Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will summarize the responses of the interviews in the data collection of the experts in the fields of personal branding. This data will be analyzed and compared against the findings in the review of literature. Chapter 5 will finish with a summary of the study and include recommendations for future professionals to study the development of personal branding in order to further future career development and success.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of literature defines personal branding and focuses on how one is used and maintained in order to develop and continue within a career.

Defining a Personal Brand

Similar to a commercial brand, a personal brand is a collective representation of how one is perceived by their publics. As defined by Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011), "personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (p. 38). Personal branding has become an effective way communication between a person and their respective publics, differentiating them from their competitors based on uniqueness and distinct values (Morton, 2011). With personal branding, one is able to establish themselves beyond a resume and further determine who they are as an individual and how they can be an asset to various corporations. "Self-branding is about thinking of [oneself] as a brand – a product that can be viewed strategically and creatively in a competitive market to bring maximum value to [an individual] and [their] company," (Barnett, 2010).

Personal branding goes beyond cyberspace to include a personal representation on oneself. "[Having a strong personal brand] is about projecting a strong consistent 'personal brand' image for [oneself] through the way [they] talk, the way [they] behave, [their] body talk and sartorial, and grooming skills, and then taking control of [their] visibility to manage [their] own PR," (Everett, 2008). Personal branding includes a representation of a personality through a variety of mediums.

What many people do not realize is that with today's advancement of online media and the Internet in general is that unbeknownst to them, they may already have some form of personal brand. According to Bitti (2007), if someone types their name into a Google search bar, they will most likely be able to find a list of several results containing their name; this contributes to their personal brand (Bitti, 2007). Regardless if an individual is actively seeking any type of work, the necessity of a personal brand has become of the utmost importance.

The Importance of Personal Branding

"Developing a personal brand ensures that [an individual is not left behind within the job selection process] and that [they] develop the competitive advantage that positions [them] for the career opportunities [they] deserve," (Horton, 2011). With the limited positions available in today's job market, having a strong personal brand is what can open many doors for a variety of job opportunities. Personal branding has become an important aspect for candidates within job searches (Horton, 2011).

While many companies are using the opportunity of search engines and social media as hiring tools for future employees, personal branding has become a crucial part of the hiring process. "Online tools have allowed personal branding to become an important marketing task for everyday people. The premise for personal branding is that everyone has the power to be their own brand and a person's main job is to be their own marketer," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). With this concept in mind, jobseekers have the opportunity to brand themselves into anything they desire, as long as it fits within their target audience.

Developing a Personal Brand

One of the most important aspects of developing a personal brand is differentiating between important terminologies within the branding spectrum. According to Labrecque, Markos, & Milne (2011), the first step begins by establishing a brand identity and communicating that through brand positioning to a specific target audience. "Brand identity is defined as how the marketer wants the brand to be perceived," (p. 44). Brand positioning uses that specific brand identity to differentiate the person from other candidates within their target audience by highlighting important values and aspects of the brand identity. The brand image is then noted as a reflection of the person from their audience. This reaction is "generally based on visible behavior, nonverbal behavior, and other observable cues," (p. 45).

In order to begin the process of establishing a brand identity, one must acknowledge what it is about themselves that is worthy of branding. Morton (2012) suggests that to start the branding process, it's necessary to develop a processional biography that includes a personal brand statement, which includes visions, goals, and passions that help employers decide what they are looking for. Then comes the brand profile, which expands on the concepts within the statement and establishes the person as a whole. Once those two are completed, a resume should be established and if the personal branding efforts have proven successful, an interview will follow to show how the personality matches the personal brand. Morton also notes that "a personal brand should not be an austere representation; [an individual's] soft attributes will make a lasting impression," (p. 70). One of the main goals in developing a personal brand is to show the personality behind the

product. A personal brand will be successful if it is able to show differences between two completely similar candidates.

Maintaining a Personal Brand

With the current rise of social media, management of one's personal brand has gotten easier. Many individuals choose to utilize various outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs, and LinkedIn, to develop and maintain their own brand. The key to maintaining a successful personal brand is keeping the consistency of the brand across all mediums. "Clarity and consistency are essential to creating an effective brand, "(Morton, 2011).

After establishing a target audience, and honing in on an area of specialization, one can use social media tools to manage and preserve their brand. "Creating original content is always the best way to keep [an] audience engaged," (Allen, 2011). It's crucial to follow current information within the area of one's specialization in order to become an "expert" within a certain field. When one begins to publish their own content about a certain subject matter through various mediums, others will begin to follow that personal brand. "[Being relevant] is how [to] keep an audience engaged and coming back for more information, in essence becoming the expert of the topic," (Allen, 2011). By creating blogs and commenting on others, people start to consider one's personal brand as a recognized authority (Bitti, 2007).

Using a Personal Brand for Career Success

Although personal branding is beneficial to an individual, it is also an important aspect of their professional environment. "Self-branding is not just good for [personal reasons], it is good for the company, too. Branding teaches [an individual] how to be more strategic by staying relevant to the market and the latest thinking" (Kaputa, 2005). Staying up to date with current market information makes both the company and the individual look better to all followers of the personal brand. A personal brand can also be a living reflection of a person's company and everything it stands for. According to Schawbel (2010), "when consumers associate a particular product with a certain corporation, they tend to think of the corporation more positively," (p. 53). Strong personal brands reflect both the value sets of the company as well as the individual.

Personal branding can also aid in the growth of a personal network, which is a great tool for furthering career success. Networking is an essential part of jobseekers today. Most people won't get jobs unless they know someone personally in their desired field of work. According to Schawbel (2010), after developing a strong personal brand, "[the]network will be the only differentiator, when all expertise is equal. The size, activity rate and reach of [the] network is becoming a job qualification, especially in this competitive environment," (p. 86). Having a large, and strong network will help an individual stand out amongst competition when applying for jobs. When an employer know someone in their personal network, they are more likely to trust the individual, which leads to higher employment rates. "Business success is about accessibility. Networking gives you accessibility," (Kaputa, 2005, p. 138).

Evaluating a Personal Brand

"Success is not determined by individuals' internal sets of skills, motivations, and interests but, rather, by how effectively they are arranged, crystallized, and labeled – in other words, branded" (Cheney, Lair, & Sullivan, 2005). The strongest personal brands and those that are consistent across all mediums. "Personal branding is about making sure [one's] personal package always reflects [one's] desired values and those of [one's] organization," (Everett, 2008).

When determining a personal brand, it is important for the individual to create objectives to plan a direction for the image they wish to obtain. According to Schawbel (2010), setting goals are an effective way of measuring the success of a personal brand. "By creating your goals, you are giving yourself something by which to measure success. Alignment between long-term and short-term goals is critical to their achievement," (p. 102). As said by Kaputa (2005), an example of a goal for a strong personal brand is to maintain a positive relationship between the brand and target audiences. "[One] will only be 'branded' if [they] are constantly on view to [their] target audience. The goal is to extend or reinforce the brand at every opportunity without negating it," (Morton, 2012).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter will be used to discuss the methods of data collection containing data sources, collection and presentation of the data, and delimitations.

Data Sources

For this study, the experts in the fields of career counseling, social media, and marketing and public relations, were chosen and interviewed using a single questionnaire. This questionnaire follows the original research questions used to find the best practices to develop and maintain a successful personal brand for career development.

Participants

The career-counseling expert was Charlotte Rinaldi, Career Counselor for the College of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California. The social media expert chosen was Kathleen Lee, Designer and Office Assistant at Hearsay Social, a start-up company for software and social media management, based out of San Francisco, California. The marketing and public relations expert interviewed was Jennifer Saxon, Communications Manager at Mind Body, a software company based out of San Luis Obispo, California.

Interview Design

The following questions and probes were asked to each of the experts as part of data collection for the study:

1. How would you, as an expert in your field, define and describe a personal brand? Please give an example of a successful personal brand.

2. What is the most important aspect of a personal brand? How can they be used to improve one's career?

3. How does one develop a personal brand? Please provide examples of tools and tactics that can be utilized in creating a personal brand.

4. What are the best practices in personal branding maintenance? Please provide examples of the tools and tactics that can be utilized in maintaining a personal brand.

5. In what capacities would a personal brand be used? How can one use personal branding in a professional environment?

6. In your opinion, how does one use a personal brand in successful career development? Please provide examples.

7. How would you measure the success of a personal brand? Please provide examples.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was three individual interviews with experts in the personal branding field. The interviews were administered during May 2012 and lasted essentially 30 minutes each. "Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either within an individual or group" (Dicco-Bloom, 2006). While being interviewed, the experts were asked a series of questions from a single questionnaire based off of the original research questions designed

to get the most accurate answers in developing and maintaining a personal brand for future career success and development.

Data Presentation

During each interview the data was collected using a standard audio recorder then transcribed into written verbatim notes that could be used to additionally describe the responses of the experts. Paraphrasing was also used to clarify the context of the responses. This method of data collection guarantees the most accurate representation of the interviews and data.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study based on the amount of time available for research and data collection. The quarter system, utilized by California Polytechnic State University, is comprised of three trimesters that are ten weeks long. Extensive research on the subject was limited due to time constraints by the university.

Delimitations

Due to these time constraints delimitations were also present in this study in regards to the amount of interview respondents gathered. Since there was only a certain amount of allotted time for the study, only three interviewees were gathered for data collection. They were personally selected based on certain fields pertaining to personal branding, and the data is based on their personal opinions. If more time was provided,

more interviewees would have been chosen in a variety of fields that are consistent with

expert knowledge of personal branding.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will provide explanations of the experts in their respective fields as well as their answers to the questionnaire. The data will be summarized in the form of direct quotations and paraphrased responses. Their answers will then be compared to each other as well as the research findings from the review of the literature in Chapter 2.

Description of Participating Experts in Related Fields

Career Counseling.

The career-counseling expert chosen for this study was Charlotte Rinaldi. Rinaldi has been the career counselor for the College of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, for the past 13 years. Her main task is to help students develop resumes and cover letters that pertain to their desired field of work. She helps them discover the unique qualities about themselves to make them stand apart from their competitors. Rinaldi also conducts workshops that aid students in advancing career options.

Social Media.

Kathleen Lee was the social media expert that participated in this study. Lee is a graphic designer for a start-up company for software and social media management called Hearsay Social, in San Francisco, California. Immediately following her graduation from California Polytechnic State University, Lee also worked as a project coordinator for LEVEL Studios in San Luis Obispo, which is a marketing agency focused on selling brands and products. In her free time, Lee is a member of the "Orange and Black Attack" team for the

San Francisco Giants baseball team, which is an interactive fan team to help maintain loyal followers to the Giants.

Public Relations and Marketing.

Jennifer Saxon was selected as the public relations and marketing expert for this study. Jennifer is currently the communications director at Mind Body, a software company based out of San Luis Obispo, California, which handles business primarily in the health and wellness industries. As the communications director, she is the head copywriter for all marketing materials and develops content for the web. When her company is pursuing public relations efforts, she is their expert on the marketing team.

Personal Branding Questionnaire

Each expert was asked to complete the following questions regarding personal branding development for career success and development:

1. How would you, as an expert in your field, define and describe a personal brand? Please give an example of a successful personal brand.

   Question #1 was asked to gain insight in what the experts believe to be the definition of a personal brand. Since personal branding is such a broad topic, the question was designed to provide a collective understanding to the definition of a personal brand for reader.

   - Charlotte Rinaldi: "To me it's what separates one person from everybody else, and really what a personal brand is, is how you define yourself, and the ways you communicate that to everybody, in everyway," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "I think a personal brand is sort of considering yourself a product or a service and how you'd preserve that. It's about selling what values you have and providing that emotional connection and you can do that through the way you present yourself through a lot of ways," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "A personal brand is very much like a corporate brand...it encompasses everything from your reputation to someone's first impression of you, to their expectations of you moving forward," (Appendix C).

2. What is the most important aspect of a personal brand? How can they be used to improve one's career?

Question #2 was created to get an understanding of why personal branding in important for career development. Due to the recent increase among personal brands in the workforce, this question was important to find out why it is a necessary means for jobseekers and jobholders to develop a personal brand.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "Consistency and authenticity are the two most important pieces of a brand. It helps improve a person's career because it provides focus and direction," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "I think the biggest thing is consistency... I also think that for your career it's important to be authentic," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "Identify what is called your value proposition or your positioning statement. What makes you unique, to really hone in on that and be able to explain that and sell that to the people that you're talking to," (Appendix C).

3. How does one develop a personal brand? Please provide examples of tools and tactics that can be utilized in creating a personal brand.

Question #3 was designed to understand the process in creating a personal brand. There are multiple ways to develop a personal brand and it was important to ask this question to find out the best practices in doing so.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "Determining where you're headed is the first step… Deciding your focus and your direction and what's important to you, then selecting experiences that develop that and strengthen your qualifications for the direction you're heading in," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "[I] started with developing an identity and that's like a personal sort of branding system," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "Well I think it would be the same as corporate brands. If you're building a marketing plan for yourself, first you need to do research, sit down and consider what your strengths and your weaknesses are… After you do the research, then you have to think about, what is my goal?... Build your brand on purpose, don't just let it happen, because it won't get you to where you want to go if you don't take control of it," (Appendix C).

4. What are the best practices in personal branding maintenance? Please provide examples of the tools and tactics that can be utilized in maintaining a personal brand.

    Question #4 was asked to find the best strategies in personal brand maintenance. Maintenance is the next step after developing a brand and it is essential to find the most influential ways to keep a brand consistent.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "One thing that we talk to students about is checking with people who know you, to see if [your image] is accurate…making sure that it's current," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "I think it's important to find a mentor that can help you define what your personal brand is going to be. Have them help you define what your strengths are, because sometimes it's hard to know your self, and what the industry is looking for… I think that's another way to help maintain it, to constantly be checking in with people who have experience.," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "I think just making sure that you are up to date, that you stay current… Consistency is a big deal. If you aren't consistent with how you approach what you do, then your brand becomes confusing to people, and they aren't quite sure what it is that you're promising," (Appendix C).

5. In what capacities would a personal brand be used? How can one use personal branding in a professional environment?

Question #5 was designed to see where and how one can use a personal brand. It's important to understand that personal branding can be used in all aspects of life, and it's important to hear that continually from all of the experts.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "I think in that way it can be really helpful, if people had thought through it well enough in advance to use it as their gage for certain choices that they make. I think that's the most fundamental way to use it… You use it in every email you send out, every interview you have, every resume you rewrite or cover letter that you send in with an application, the types of positions that you apply for and the companies that you try to work for, can all affect the way your brand plays out," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "You should think about your personal brand all the time… You should transfer your personal brand in everything that you do because it's all going to start weaving together as you get older," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "You can certainly use it to open doors in the right way, and to find people who will help you find those ideal jobs," (Appendix C).

6. In your opinion, how does one use a personal brand in successful career development? Please provide examples.

Question #6 was created to find out how personal branding helps career success. Personal branding has become so frequent in everyday lives, and especially in the workforce. Collecting data on how to use it for career development helps highlight the best way to make a personal brand more professional.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "Because you're consistent and professional and you have this focus, I think people are more likely to come to you as an expert on whatever that thing is. That always can be used to improve a career," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "It's really important when you're getting a job to have a defined personal brand that accurately reflects you and the job you're looking for…It's about being able to have your personal brand reflect the things that you've learned and the things you've picked up and have it mature with you, is really important," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "I think making sure that you network and that you build a network of people who know you and can vouch for you and they're willing to be references, that's super important…certainly for career development that continues throughout,

from year to year, networking is one of the most important things you can do,"

(Appendix C).

7. How would you measure the success of a personal brand? Please provide examples.

Question #7 was asked to gain insight to what the experts in their respective fields believe to be the best practices for measuring the success of a personal brand. Measuring the success of a personal brand is difficult due to the fact that it's qualitative analysis. The experts were asked to get their opinion on what makes a brand successful.

- Charlotte Rinaldi: "I would say how naturally implementing it comes to you would be one… I certainly would think opportunities being available to you would be an indicator," (Appendix A).

- Kathleen Lee: "Being recongnizable is one thing but also consistency is key… To put it in a nutshell, your network is the best way to measure your success," (Appendix B).

- Jennifer Saxon: "If you created a personal marketing plan and you had your objectives in mind and your goals in mind, you can obviously measure it that way…I think just feeling like you are where you should be, and you are where you want to be and that people respond to you in the way you want them to, can tell you if you're being successful with your brand," (Appendix C).

Personal Branding Research Questions

The following research questions were created to develop a satisfactory representation of the requirements of a personal brand. The research questions were crafted specifically

to collectively acquire the best practices in creating, maintaining and utilizing a personal brand in order to further career development and success for the purpose of the study.

Research question 1: What is a personal brand?

- "Personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011).

Research question 2: Why are personal brands important?

- "Online tools have allowed personal branding to become an important marketing task for everyday people. The premise for personal branding is that everyone has the power to be their own brand and a person's main job is to be their own marketer," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011)

Research question 3: How does one develop a personal brand?

- Morton (2012) suggests that to start the branding process, it's necessary to develop a processional biography that includes a personal brand statement, which includes visions, goals, and passions that help employers decide what they are looking for. Then comes the brand profile, which expands on the concepts within the statement and establishes the person as a whole. Once those two are completed, a resume should be established and if the personal branding efforts have proven successful, an interview will follow to show how the personality matches the personal brand.

Research question 4: How does one use and maintain a personal brand?

- "Clarity and consistency are essential to creating an effective brand, "(Morton, 2011).
- "Creating original content is always the best way to keep [an] audience engaged," (Allen, 2011).

- "[Being relevant] is how [to] keep an audience engaged and coming back for more information, in essence becoming the expert of the topic," (Allen, 2011).

Research question 5: How does one use a personal brand in successful career development?

- "Self-branding is not just good for [personal reasons], it is good for the company, too. Branding teaches [an individual] how to be more strategic by staying relevant to the market and the latest thinking" (Kaputa, 2005).

- "[The individual's]network will be the only differentiator, when all expertise is equal. The size, activity rate and reach of [the] network is becoming a job qualification, especially in this competitive environment," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 86).

Research question 6: How are successful personal brands evaluated?

- "Success is not determined by individuals' internal sets of skills, motivations, and interests but, rather, by how effectively they are arranged, crystallized, and labeled – in other words, branded" (Cheney, Lair, & Sullivan, 2005).

- "By creating your goals, you are giving yourself something by which to measure success. Alignment between long-term and short-term goals is critical to their achievement," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 102).

Personal Branding Data

For the purpose of this study, it was important to interview experts on the subject matter to help clarify some of the vagueness of personal branding due to a variety of ways in creating one for career development and success. To collect this data, Charlotte Rinaldi, a career counseling expert, Kathleen Lee, a social media expert, and Jennifer Saxon, a public

relations and marketing expert were selected to be interviewed. Each expert was asked a series of questions, based off of the original research questions, in an interview setting. The tables below provide their answers to the research questions and are based on their opinions developed from their specific area of expertise.

Research question #1: What is a personal brand?

This research question was studied in order to gain insight from the current literature about the definition of personal branding. According to most people, "Personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). Individuals use personal branding to set them apart from their competition. Personal branding is a tool that is used to highlight unique qualities and focus on the strengths of the person being branded. Many people relate personal branding to that of branded corporations. According to Barnett (2010), "self-branding is about thinking of [an individual] as a brand – a product that can be viewed strategically and creatively in a competitive market to bring maximum value to [the individual] and [their] company."

This question was developed to determine the background of personal branding and how it defines and reflects a person. Based on the literature, there is not a specific definition of what personal branding is, which gives vagueness to the term. It was important to ask this question to clarify exactly what personal branding is and how experts define it.

Table 1 summarizes the answers of the experts in how they would define personal branding. The table shows relatively consistent answers between the three interviewees

defining that , similarly to corporate branding, personal branding is a set a values that helps

distinguish an individual from others based on unique qualities. While all three mentioned

celebrities as examples of a personal brand, Rinaldi reference the current President of

California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, President Armstrong, and Saxon

referenced the university's previous president, President Baker.

Table 1

Defining a Personal Brand

Respondent	Personal Branding is…	Example of successful personal brand
Charlotte Rinaldi	Defining yourself; standing out from competitors	Will Smith, President Armstrong
Kathleen Lee	Selling personal values	Lady Gaga, Kim Kardashian, Beyoncé
Jennifer Saxon	Personal corporate brand	Lady Gaga, President Baker

Research question #2: Why are personal brands important?

This research question was studied to signify the most important qualities of a

personal brand and why it is necessary to create one. The literature on the subject

mentioned that due to the development and rise to social media and networking outlets,

personal branding is part of most individual's everyday lives. "Online tools have allowed

personal branding to become an important marketing task for everyday people. The

premise for personal branding is that everyone has the power to be their own brand and a

person's main job is to be their own marketer," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). Since

most companies today are using search engines and social media tools to search for future

employees, developing a personal brand is necessary to ensure that an individual is not left behind within the job selection process, (Horton, 2011).

This question was created to show the relevance of personal branding in everyday life. A variety of social media, and the Internet in general, have become primary resources for creating a personal brand. The literature shows that in order to stand out amongst other jobseekers, one must have some type of personal brand.

Table 2

Importance of Personal Branding

Respondent	Importance	How it can be used to improve one's career
Charlotte Rinaldi	Consistency and authenticity	Provides focus and direction
Kathleen Lee	Consistency and authenticity	Makes one unique among competitors
Jennifer Saxon	Developing a value proposition and positioning statement	Makes one unique among competitors

In Table 2, Rinaldi and Lee had very similar answers and determined that the most important aspects of personal branding are consistency and authenticity. Saxon maintained that developing a value proposition and a position statement are the most essential items in a personal brand. However, both Lee and Saxon agreed that being unique among competitors is how personal branding can help improve an individual's career.

Research question 3: How does one develop a personal brand?

This research question was studied to determine the most accurate way of developing a personal brand. According to Morton (2012), to start the branding process, it's necessary to develop a processional biography that includes a personal brand

statement, which includes visions, goals, and passions that help employers decide what

they are looking for. Then comes the brand profile, which expands on the concepts within

the statement and establishes the person as a whole. Once those two are completed, a

resume should be established and if the personal branding efforts have proven successful,

an interview will follow to show how the personality matches the personal brand. The goal

of personal branding is to show the personality behind the product. The more accurate

representation of the self, the more likely one will be seen as authentic and stand out

among competitors.

This question was developed to get a consensus from the experts on how the steps

for creating a personal brand for professional advancement. After determining the

importance of having a personal brand, it was necessary to find the correct method in

producing a successful personal brand.

Table 3

Developing a Personal Brand

Respondent	How to develop	Tools and tactics used for development
Charlotte Rinaldi	Deciding focus and direction, maintaining consistency	Consistent social media, check in with others to see if image is accurate
Kathleen Lee	Develop an identity	Utilize and monitor social media
Jennifer Saxon	Find strengths and weaknesses, build brand on purpose	Investigate industry, research target audience, draft goals

Table 3 shows that each of the experts rely on different ways to create their

personal brands. Although different, each response correlates with finding distinctive

qualities within the individual and deciding what direction to go and how to maintain the personal brand.

Research question 4: How does one use and maintain a personal brand?

This research question was developed to highlight the importance of continuing with maintenance after the development of a personal brand. Even though a personal brand is created, it still needs to be managed and updated in order to further career success. According to Allen (2011), "creating original content is always the best way to keep [an] audience engaged." It is necessary to continue with brand maintenance, otherwise an individual is at jeopardy to lose followers that could potentially help with career development. "Clarity and consistency are essential to creating an effective brand," (Morton, 2011). When a personal brand is consistent, others will continue to check up on new developments within the brand. "[Being relevant] is how [to] keep an audience engaged and coming back for more information, in essence becoming the expert of the topic," (Allen, 2011).

As before, this question was created to follow up with the previous issue of how to create a brand. Many times, people create a brand and don't understand the importance of maintaining the same brand consistently. Asking the experts for the best way to manage a brand gives insights to practices by other personal branding experts in various fields.

Table 4

Maintaining a Personal Brand

Respondent	How to Maintain	Tools and tactics used for maintenance
Charlotte Rinaldi	Check with people to see if image is accurate	Create survey to send out to friends and colleagues
Kathleen Lee	Find a mentor	Check in with others to see if image is accurate
Jennifer Saxon	Staying current, being consistent	Keep up to date with current social media trends

Again, Table 4 shows that each expert had their own way of managing a personal brand. Rinaldi and Lee had similar thoughts as to check in with other people to make sure the projected image is accurate. This relates to what Saxon suggested as remaining consistent with the brand as a whole.

Research question 5: How does one use a personal brand in successful career development?

This question was studied to discover how personal branding can aid an individual's career development. Many of the literature reviewed illustrated that by creating and maintaining a personal brand, one can develop their own network. According to Schawbel (2010), "this network will be the only differentiator, when all expertise is equal. The size, activity rate and reach of [the] network is becoming a job qualification, especially in this competitive environment," (p. 86). Knowing certain people in a desired field of work can assist an individual because it creates opportunities to be chosen over another person who is as equally qualified.

This question was developed to determine how personal branding is used in the professional environment and how it can be used to further career success. It was designed to get a professional perspective on successful tactics used by personal branding in the workforce.

Table 5 shows that the respondents feel differently in regards to the affects of personal branding on career success. Although they valued different qualities in defining career success from a personal brand, all experts noted that a personal brand helps both the individual and the company.

Table 5

Using a Personal Brand for Career Success

Respondent	How to use for career success	Example of success
Charlotte Rinaldi	Consistent, have focus, seen as expert in specific field	Jessica Simpson
Kathleen Lee	Reflects image and desired job	Hearsay Social CEO, Clara Shih
Jennifer Saxon	Developing a large, useful network	Strong resources in a network

Research question 6: How are successful personal brands evaluated?

This question was studied to understand the way experts and professionals in personal branding measure its success. "Success is not determined by individuals' internal sets of skills, motivations, and interests but, rather, by how effectively they are arranged, crystallized, and labeled – in other words, branded" (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005). As long as the image is branded in a way that collectively shows the personality of the individual, then a brand is considered successful. It also helps to develop goals and

objectives for what the personal brand should be. "By creating your goals, you are giving yourself something by which to measure success. Alignment between long-term and short-term goals is critical to their achievement," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 102).

This question was created to get the opinions on measuring the success of a personal brand from the expert. Since there is no specific way to measure a personal brand, this question allows flexible responses from the experts in order to define their way of evaluating a brand.

Table 6

Evaluating a Personal Brand

Respondent	Evaluating a personal brand	Example of measuring success of personal brand
Charlotte Rinaldi	Natural implementation of brand, opportunities available because of brand	Networking circles
Kathleen Lee	Being recognizable, consistency, network	Steve Jobs legacy
Jennifer Saxon	Meeting objectives and goals	Reached desired place

Table 6 shows that there are similarities between what the experts feel are ways to measure a successful personal brand. Lee and Rinaldi both agree that measuring the success is correlated with networks of the individual. Saxon's opinion is consistent with the literature in which she believes meeting goals and objectives evaluates the success of a personal brand.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was conducted based on the recent frequency of the term, personal branding. It has become part of everyday language and due to the rise in social media and networking sites, it is now a significant aspect for jobseekers. In order to find the best practices for developing a personal brand that can further career success and development, it was necessary to collect data from experts in the career counseling, social media, and marketing and public relations fields.

To find more information on current techniques and strategies used in developing a personal brand to further one's career, on expert in each field answered the following questionnaire based on research questions relating to the issue:

1. How would you, as an expert in your field, define and describe a personal brand? Please give an example of a successful personal brand.

2. What is the most important aspect of a personal brand? How can they be used to improve one's career?

3. How does one develop a personal brand? Please provide examples of tools and tactics that can be utilized in creating a personal brand.

4. What are the best practices in personal branding maintenance? Please provide examples of the tools and tactics that can be utilized in maintaining a personal brand.

5. In what capacities would a personal brand be used? How can one use personal branding in a professional environment?

6. In your opinion, how does one use a personal brand in successful career

   development? Please provide examples.

7. How would you measure the success of a personal brand? Please provide examples.

Slight alterations were necessary for each question based on answers from the respondents and the setting of the interview. Each response was similar to the experts themselves as well as the literature reviewed on personal branding for the development of career success.

Discussion

By comparing the data collected by the experts in Chapter 4 with the research of literature found in Chapter 2, the following conclusions can be made regarding the research questions below.

Research question #1: What is a personal brand

All three experts answered differently to the question, however, collectively their answers made up the general definition of what a personal brand is. Rinaldi focused on defining oneself and standing out from competitors, while Lee prompted for selling one's personal values and Saxon insisted it is a personal form of a corporate brand.

The literature agrees with the experts in that, "personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). It also agrees with the definition as a personal corporate brand when you think of an individual as a brand – a product that can be viewed strategically and creatively in a competitive market to bring minimum value to the individual and the company (Barnett, 2010).

Overall, personal branding can be defined as a way to use an individual as a brand by selling one's unique and personal values in order to differentiate oneself from competitors.

Research question #2: Why are personal brands important?

The importance of personal branding drew similar conclusions from Lee and Rinaldi. They determined that consistency and authenticity are what makes personal brands important because of the fact that it provides direction for the brand and makes one unique among competitors. Saxon also provided a similar conclusion by stating that developing and value proposition and positioning statement allow one to differentiate themselves from others.

The literature also reflects the importance of differentiation from competitors with the use of personal branding. "developing a persona brand ensures that an individual is not left behind within the job selection process and that they develop the competitive advantage that positions them for the career opportunities they deserve," (Horton, 2011).

Overall, personal branding is important due to the fact that through consistency, it provides an authentic way to present oneself to its target audience and stand out among competitors.

Research question 3: How does one develop a personal brand?

Based on the respondents, developing a personal brand requires an individual to identify their desired direction, identity, and attributes in order to further themselves towards career success. Each expert provided a different opinion on how to create a personal brand; check in with peers and professionals to see if the branded image is an

accurate reflection of the self, utilize consistency over social media, and research the desired industry and target audience.

The literature gave similar results to what the experts found. Morton (2012) suggests the creation of a brand identity requires developing a personal brand statement, including visions and goals, to show personality behind the brand and to distinguish oneself from other potential job contenders.

Overall, the first stage in brand development requires identifying the direction, of the brand, the visions and goals of the brand, creating a brand identity from a personal brand statement, which will all help the individual remain different and unique for future employment endeavors.

Research question 4: How does one use and maintain a personal brand?

The experts provided similar responses in who to successfully manage a personal brand. Rinaldi and Lee suggested that with the help of a mentor who provides feedback of brand consistency, maintenance will easier. Saxon also recommended being consistent as well as staying current with trending social media outlets and news.

The literature also stated that the key to brand maintenance is making sure it's consistent overtime. "Clarity and consistency are essential to creating an effective brand," (Morton, 2011). Social media assists in brand maintenance by allowing different outlets to channel and network personal brands.

Overall, managing a personal brand requires the individual to identify their target audience and maintain a clear and consistent image through all brand mediums.

Research question 5: How does one use a personal brand in successful career development?

The respondents took on different approaches when answering this question. Rinaldi stated career success is measured by a personal brand when the individual is seen as an expert in his or her specific field. Lee answered that the best way to use a personal brand for career success is when the brand image reflects both the person and the job they through the things they have learned and adapted to. Saxon finishes by stating that by having a large and successful network is the best way to use branding for career development.

The literature matches Saxon's opinion by insinuating that personal branding can further one's career by developing a strong network. "This network will be the only differentiator, when all expertise is equal. The size, activity rate and reach of [the] network is becoming a job qualification, especially in this competitive environment," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 86). Having allies within the workforce who know an individual's personal brand, is useful in a competitive job market.

Overall, personal branding can further an individual's successful career development by using a consistent brand that is reflective of the person and the company through a variety of networking tactics.

Research question 6: How are successful personal brands evaluated?

The respondents provided similar answers for this particular question in the sense that a personal brand should meet goals and be easy to implement. Lee also mentions that a successful personal brand should be recognized by various members of a specific target audience.

The literature is consistent with their viewpoints of achieving goals and effectively branding oneself. "By creating your goals, you are giving yourself something by which to measure success. Alignment between long-term and short-term goals is critical to their achievement," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 102). Evaluating the success of a personal brand is not based on a set of skills and interests, but how well one is able to arrange them cohesively and brand them (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005).

Overall, the success of a personal brand is measured by the achievement of goals and objectives and how well a individual's personality and skill sets are branded.

Recommendations for Practice

With the completion of this study, substantial research has been conducted on how personal branding can further career development and success. After analyzing the information, it is important to emphasize the key elements in creating a successful personal brand for career development in the future. Recommendations for practice include maintaining a consistent and authentic brand throughout all mediums of management, consistently developing content in order to become an expert in a desired field, and networking a personal brand to professionals to help differentiate an individual from their prospective competitors.

Maintain a consistent, authentic brand

A successful personal brand needs to be consistent through all areas of brand management. When a brand exemplifies multiple identities to its target audiences, it can be confusing to its publics and deemed as less credible. As Morton (2011) mentioned, "clarity

and consistency are essential to creating an effective brand." The more visible and consistent a personal brand is, the more successful it will be

Morton (2011) also discussed that "the foundation of any personal brand is authenticity." It is important to stand out from those around you, especially when looking to further career development. Kathleen Lee, graphic designer for social media software company Hearsay Social, emphasized that through all mediums, brands should have a certain level of consistency. According to Lee, "You can't just necessarily have your professional version of your self and your regular version of your self [separate from one another]. You have to manage having one public persona. That's why it's important to be authentic."

Become an expert with published content

One of the ways to create a recognizable personal brand is by consistently creating and developing original and new content for a target audience. By doing so, followers on an individuals personal brand will keep referring back to their content and relying on them for valid concepts within their target audience. "Creating original content is always the best way to keep an audience engaged," (Allen, 2011).

Allen (2011) also discussed that by being relevant with the content produced, followers of the individual's personal brand will keep referring back to their work for more information on the subject, essentially deeming them an expert of the topic. Charlotte Rinaldi, career counselor for the College of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University, mentioned that being as expert in a certain field can be used to improve one's career. According to Rinaldi, "to be seen as an expert or especially knowledgeable about a certain area can be used to improve a career. It can help you move ahead to more focused

areas of a company or business and even more general, depending on the direction you're

trying to head in. By being focused you're more likely to make intentional choices and more

purposefully move in the direction you're trying to head in."

Develop a network of professionals

With the current state of today's job market, it is difficult for jobseekers to stand out

from their competitors. Many won't even be considered for a certain position unless they

have connections with professionals in their desired field of employment. "Networking is

an essential, effective communication skill – both in business and in one's personal life. A

big part of the employee recruitment process is professionals connecting and forging

potential mutually beneficial relationships," (Schawbel, 2010, p. 83). By creating a network,

an individual is a step ahead of their competitors in regards to their connections with

multiple professionals

As Schawbel (2010) said, having a network filled with professionals in a desired

field can help differentiate and individual from their competition. Jennifer Saxon,

Communications Manager at Mind Body, mentioned that by having a network of people

who know you, who can vouch for you, and who are willing to be references, is extremely

important for furthering a personal brand. Saxon states that part of developing this

network has a lot to do with personal values, like trustworthiness and integrity. "You need

to be trustworthy and all those things because most people aren't going to give you two

cents if they don't think that you are a good person, or a hard worker."

Study Conclusion

Given the findings of the study, there is a need for qualitative research to be conducted on the use of personal branding for future career development and success. Regular data collections should be enforced to include current and accurate strategies and tactics to develop a successful and professional personal brand. For this study, the data collection was gathered by means of interviewing experts in specific fields of personal branding, such as marketing and public relations, career counseling, and social media. These interviews, as well as the research obtained from reviewing current literature on the subject matter, were opinion based and therefore the study and recommendations for practice cannot be applied to all individuals and professionals seeking to construct a personal brand to enhance a career. The study does serve those who are seeking to further develop a professional personal brand. It especially is useful for college students and recent graduates who are seeking to differentiate themselves from their competitors to their target audience. Moreover, this study can be helpful to any person interested in gaining insight for the development of a personal brand to further career development and success.

References

Allen, P. (2011). Building Your Brand via Social Media. *Sportsturf, 27*(9), 20-21.

Barnett, C. (2010). Managing your personal 'brand' online. *Quill, 98*(2), 23.

Bitti, M. T. (2007). Online career branding; Clean cyberspace identity. *National Post,* p.

  WK1.

Cheney, G. , Lair, D. , & Sullivan, K. (2005). Marketization and the recasting of the

  professional self: The rhetoric and ethics of personal branding. *Management*

  Communication Quarterly, 18(3), 307-343.

Deckers, E. , & Lacy, K. (2011). *Branding yourself: using social media to invent or reinvent*

  yourself. Indianapolis, IN: Que.

Elmore, L. (2010). Personal branding 2.0. *Women in Business, 62*(1), 12.

Everett, L. (2008). Corporate marketing taking control of 'Brand Me'. *Accountancy Ireland,*

  40(3), 53-54.

Grant, T. (2008). Building a personal brand: A serious proposition or passing fad? An

  interview with Cathy Sims. *Business Communication Quarterly,* 71(3), 380-383.

Greer, J. (2010). The art of self-marketing online. *U.S. News & World Report, 147*(5), 30.

Horton, T. (2011). Branded for success. *T+D, 65*(8), 72.

Kaputa, C. (2006). Creating a brand strategy. *T+D, 60*(4), 90.

Kaputa, C. (2005). *U R a brand!: how smart people brand themselves for business success.*

    Mountain View, CA: Davis-Black Publishing.

Labrecque, L. , Markos, E. , & Milne, G. (2011). Online personal branding: Processes,

    challenges, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25*(1), 37-50.

Morton, R. (2012). Bringing Your Personal Brand to Life. *Healthcare Executive*,

    27(1), 70, 72-73.

Noble, C. , Bentley, J. , Campbell, D. , & Singh, J. (2010). In search of eminence: A personal

    brand-building perspective on the achievement of scholarly prominence in

    marketing. *Journal of Marketing Education, 32*(3), 314-327.

Schawbel, D. (2010). *Me 2.0: 4 steps to building your future.* New York: Kaplan Publishing.

Sills, J. (2008). Becoming your own brand. *Psychology Today, 41*(1), 62-63.

What's in a brand?. (2009). *Black Enterprise, 39*(12), 42.

Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Charlotte Rinaldi

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions about personal branding in the career counseling industry, based on a questionnaire about personal branding for career development and success

Interviewer: Brenna Collins
Respondent: Career Counselor for the College of Liberal Arts at California Polytechnic State University (Charlotte Rinaldi)
Date of Interview: 5/21/12

Interview Transcriptions:
Brenna Collins: "How would you, as an expert in your field, define and describe a personal brand, and please give an example of a successful personal brand."

Charlotte Rinaldi: "I always refer back to Price Water House Cooper's [definition], but they call it the 'X Factor' which I thought was a cool way to look at it. To me it's what separates one person from everybody else. And really what a personal brand is, is how you define yourself, as a professional in this case, and the ways you communicate that to everybody, in everyway. Whether it's how you communicate, how you dress, how you write, emails, websites, everything. Anything you put out to other people represents your brand. Examples that I came up with are the ones that people tend to think about first: Nike, Apple. I thought about Will Smith, I feel like he has a great brand, he's maintained consistency with it for a long time."

BC: "What makes his brand stand out to you the most as a personal brand?"

CR: "He seems consistent. I think that's the thing that makes a brand strong, is that it's consistent and that it seems authentic. So he seems genuine every time he's interviewed, I've never heard gossip that's damaging. You know you hear really critical things about famous people all the time and stupid things that they do, and I don't hear that kind of stuff about Will Smith. Every interview he seems really personable and genuine, funny, and he seems really well rounded with everything he represents. All of his roles collectively represent that really well balanced type of person, so to me he comes up [as a great example of a personal brand]. Another person I was thinking about was President Armstrong. I feel like since he arrived at Cal Poly he has maintained an incredibly consistent brand here. Every communication that he sends out is very thoughtful, it's well executed, it's inclusive and sensitive and personable, and when you meet him in person, it's exactly the same thing. He, I feel like, is someone that people can kind of relate to, as far as having a consistent and authentic brand."

BC: "I also kind of wanted to touch on a background of your role, and what you do, and how everything you do, especially for the students at Cal Poly, relates back to personal branding?"

CR: "Personal branding is funny because it's a word that has come up recently, but it's always been there, and it's something that career counseling directly addresses, but we just call it something different. I've been a career counselor for 13 years, and personally I work with the liberal arts students mostly but we all work with all colleges. From the beginning of our work with students, it's helping somebody figure out what they want to do and what they want their life to look like. To me, when it comes to a brand, that's at the core of what makes a brand good; that it's well thought out, it's values based, it's meaningful to the person who's putting it out there, and when you're deciding what career direction you're going to head in, hopefully, it's the same thing. You've really thought about it, it's a good match for passions and what you're good at, it has a lot of meaning to you, and it's something that you do really intentionally, and that's not true for everybody but that's the ideal and that's why were here; to help people live authentic lives and have careers that are meaningful. To me, even just that piece has to do with branding. Because if we can work with the student from that decision making piece to all the way back in the beginning, then the whole time their making choices going through college, or from the point on that they've decided what they're going to do, it's all tied together. The jobs that they take, the internships that they take, the way they put together their resume, all of the other practical pieces that we work with students on are all directly tied to that same self-image that the person has clarified and defined. It's really personal, and it's really practical. We work on the whole span."

BC: "What is the most important aspect of a personal brand? How can that be used to improve one's career?"

CR: "It is directly tied to what we've already talked about. Consistency and authenticity are the two most important pieces of a brand. It helps improve a person's career because it provides focus and direction. If somebody can create that focus and direction and stay true to it and follow it and use it as their bench-line, everything's measured against that, then it helps somebody be more successful; because they're focused, on task, and intentional."

BC: "How would you go about developing a personal brand? How would you recommend developing it, at the starting point? What tools can be used to help it get to the level that it needs to be at?"

CR: "If you can tell me what you're passionate about and how that connects to your career direction, then you have a place to start. Determining where you're headed is the first step. From there you would create all of the building blocks to create a successful brand. Deciding your focus and your direction and what's important to you, then selecting experiences that develop that and strengthen your qualifications for the direction you're heading in. Which is part time jobs, clubs that you joined, what you used to do your senior project [on], creating a blog, being on Twitter, joining LinkedIn groups that are all connected with that same interest and vision, making sure that your Facebook page reflects

that, finding a way that ties your professional interests with your personal Facebook account, creating a resume that is really clearly reflective of your directions. Instead of having an experience section in your resume, for example, it will have a section on marketing and promotion, or innovative engineering. It's much more obvious to the person who looks at your resume who you are and what you're doing."

BC: "Is there any specific thing that you may or may not have already said that can jump-start a personal brand? I know you said maintaining consistency and authenticity is important, but is there anything that's crucial in deciding to go forward with a certain personal brand for yourself? A certain self-image?"

CR: "One thing that we talk to students about is checking with people who know you, to see if [your image] is accurate. That's what you can do with one of the questions about maintaining it, making sure that it's current, has to do with checking in with people. We've even talked about having students create a 'Survey Monkey' that they send out to people who know them, and have the answers come back anonymously to see if certain pieces of their branding, of their objective, how their considering moving forward, and whether that matches how people see them, to make sure that it's on [track] for who they are. I love that idea. I'd love to talk to somebody who goes ahead and does that to see how other people see them."

BC: "Ok, we'll just jump ahead to maintenance. What do you think the best way to maintain a personal brand is? I know you talked about joining LinkedIn groups and Twitter, and combining that with Facebook, but is there any other way that is a good way to make sure that your personal brand maintains a certain level of consistency throughout time?"

CR: "Definitely check in with people periodically to get an outside perspective. One idea is to have everything that represents you that's out [in the public], your resume, any websites you're connected to, your accounts, and any subscriptions. Other people go to websites like Extender, or Flavors.me, they're almost like these premade websites where you can put everything in one place. It's almost like having your own website where all of your links can be there, and samples of your work. On some of them you can even upload videos, you can have somebody to a video reference, or recommendation of you that you put on there so it allows you to manage everything in one place. Which is really helpful. That to me is a good way of having a section to go to and periodically following each link, opening up each tab, making sure that everything's on target and still accurate and true to you. I think, because we throw out 18 things that people can be doing, but it's really more important to focus on a few key representations of yourself and not have a Twitter feed, and a blog, and have 80 things going that are really hard to maintain. If I were to prioritize, what I would try to maintain, first I would do everything you can to be a good writer. Everything that's out that is you speaking to somebody, is usually some kind of written representation. Even if it means taking a class to become a better writer, have people proof your materials, make sure that you're a really strong communicator, that would be the first thing that I would focus on. Your resume definitely would be another one. At this point, [another thing to focus on is] probably LinkedIn. Everybody has a Facebook, so that's kind of a default one,

but you have to be smart about it. Those are the things that I would say to focus on, unless you're a writer, then I would say blog."

BC: "In what capacities would a personal brand be used and how can you use a personal brand in a professional environment? I know there's ways to maintain it with social media, and checking in with people and making sure you're consistent, but how can you use all of those areas and be able to develop a personal brand and use it professionally?"

CR: "It's everything. It's way more complicated and it's way simpler than people make it, which is what makes it hard to talk about. A personal brand doesn't have to be something that requires 80 websites to help you define it; it shouldn't be that hard. If it's a true personal brand, it's something that's natural to you, for the most part. Unless you're chaotic and unprofessional, in which case maybe some environments that would benefit you wouldn't be professional ones and it would be something that you'd have to work on. You use it in every email you send out, every interview you have, every resume you rewrite or cover letter that you send in with an application, the types of positions that you apply for and the companies that you try to work for, can all affect the way your brand plays out. Then again, it depends if you're a writer, then the way your brand would play out would be affected by the types of writing that you do. If you're an engineer, the types of positions and the company that you work for would be a way it could play out, because it's directly tied to your area of interest and passions. It's what we already said; in a professional environment, it helps you make decisions. My focus is people putting their passions to work and a lot of times it's in making a difference. That's something I'm really passionate about, people who know me know that's what matters to me, issues of equity, that kind of thing. If somebody asked me to do a workshop on sales pitches or how to convince people to do something they don't want to do, I mean nobody would ever ask me to do that, but if they did, I would think about what my brand is and what's important to me. I would say, 'you know that doesn't match. That's not in line with the kind of person that I am and/or how I'm seen by other people, so I'm not going to choose to do that.' I think in that way it can be really helpful, if people had thought through it well enough in advance to use it as their gage for certain choices that they make. I think that's the most fundamental way to use it."

BC: "You already touched on it a little bit, but how can a personal brand be used to improve your career?"

CR: "I could think of lots of ways. Because you're consistent and professional and you have this focus, I think people are more likely to come to you as an on whatever that thing is. That always can be used to improve a career, to be seen as an expert
 or especially knowledgeable about a certain area. It can help you move ahead to more focused areas of a company or business and even more general, depending on the direction you're trying to head in. By being focused you're more likely to make intentional choices and more purposefully move in the direction you're trying to head in, which can always improve a person's career. Does that answer the question?"

BC: "That's great. That's exactly what my research was saying, especially about the whole expert thing. Once people see you as an expert then you're more likely to get people to

come back and keep trying to check in with you and then you develop this whole image that you are knowledgeable in your area. For example, I've heard so many things about you from friends of mine who are in the college of liberal arts and your personal brand has developed to know you're an expert in resume building and assisting with furthering careers. That could definitely be an example. Do you have another example that you want to explain?"

CR: "Where that's happened?"

BC: "Yeah. It doesn't have to be directly at Cal Poly either, it can be anyone in the universe who has developed this personal brand that has furthered their career."

CR: "I could think of so many famous people, like you said, even people I don't necessarily love, or admire have done a great job with their personal brand. Jessica Simpson, all people everybody would think of. It'd be cool to think of an expert in their area though."

BC: "Ok, the last question would be, what's the best way to measure the success of a personal brand? How can you tell if this personal brand that you've created is something that's worked? Is there a specific way that you can go in evaluating this personal brand?"

CR: "I would say how naturally implementing it comes to you would be one. I don't know if you can measure that. I certainly would think opportunities being available to you would be an indicator, that you're being offered opportunities that area great match for you, that you are being sought out for advice on this area that you're passionate about. I'd need to think more about it and possibly get back to you."

BC: "Ok, that's fine. I also found, I don't know if this will help or maybe even 'taint' your decisions on the matter, but I found a lot in my research that one of the better ways to use personal brands in professional areas and how it can be measured as successful is by networking. By building your network and realizing the types of people in your network and who's seeking out you and vice versa can assist in an evaluation in a personal brand. Do you have anything to add onto that?"

CR: "When I think of networking, I think more on the front end, not so much as a measure, but I guess it can definitely be a way to measure the success, I hadn't thought about it that way. But as you're developing your personal brand, networking with people who support that, professional associations, information interviews, with people who seem aligned with your brand and the direction you want to head in can help. Definitely the people who seek you out, that's such a great point, it's sort of like advice. People come to you for advice, people who contact you for information interviews on related issues are key. Networking is so fundamental to all of this. When I think of LinkedIn, when I think of your resume, when I think of all the things we've talked about before, that's how you communicate your brand, through networking. It seems so fundamental that I don't even think to mention it. But that's the avenue. You have a brand and you have a way you object it. Even just applying for a job is a way of networking. If you're meeting people and having conversations and having

people get to know you, all of that is networking. It's a way of establishing your brand, maintaining it, moving it forward, and getting feedback about it, it's great."

BC: "Do you have anything else you want to add, or anything you thought of while answering any questions that you feel would contribute to this interview?"

CR: "I'm trying to look at my notes to see if I forgot anything. But a tool that we didn't talk about is Google Alerts. 'Googling' yourself regularly or having it send alerts to your email whenever people email is crucial. But that's pretty much it for now."

BC: "Well great. Thank you so much for your time. If you have anything else you'd like to add feel free to email me whenever you think of something."

CR: "I definitely will."

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Kathleen Lee

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions about personal branding in the social media and marketing spectrum, based on a questionnaire about the use of personal branding for career development and success.

Interviewer: Brenna Collins
Respondent: Graphic Designer at Hearsay Social (Kathleen Lee)
Date of Interview: 5/24/12

Interview Transcription:
Brenna Collins: "Maybe we can start with a little background with what you do and your job, and how it relates to personal branding."

Kathleen Lee: "My name is Kathleen, I am a graphic designer at a start up [company] for software for social media management. I have also worked at a marketing agency focused on selling brands and products, so personal branding is definitely a form of that. I think the same rules apply whether it's for a company or for you we're all trying to sell something. I can definitely say that my work overlaps with personal branding and also being involved in school. [Personal Branding]was a big focus because we'd have to learn how to sell ourselves in order to go out into the job world after graduation. So I would say I am very familiar [with personal branding]."

BC: "Great. Ok, first question: how would you as an expert in your field, define and describe a personal brand. If you could give an example of a successful personal brand, that would be great."

KL: "I think a personal brand is sort of considering yourself a product or a service and how you'd preserve that. It's about selling what values you have and providing that emotional connection and you can do that through the way you present yourself through a lot of ways. I think probably the most obvious example, for me that anyone can relate to, is how the modern celebrities use their personal brands. I think you can look at someone like Lady Gaga or, God forbid, Kim Kardashian, and Beyoncé, celebrities like that they have high profiles and high visibility and they take advantage of that visibility to expand their 'personal brand' through all kinds of personal products, and how they sell whatever entertainment they're selling by utilizing perfume, clothing lines, on top of their social media presence. I think that's a huge part of it now is how their online persona connects with their fans. Now there's this sort of 'authentic' version of their self. I think that is just the most obvious example of [personal branding], how celebrities are visible through all these different channels."

BC: "What's the most important aspect of a personal brand, and how can that be used to improve one's career?"

KL: "I think the biggest thing is consistency, especially as a designer, it's really important to show your attention to detail as well as your thoughtfulness. I think by having your personal brand consistent in all these different places it's reversing so when you're going to apply for a job it's important to make sure that your resume matches your LinkedIn and your Facebook and you have a business card that has the same identity that's on your resume. Those sorts of things, those little details[are important]. Also yourself, you know, if you're going to have this personal brand when you present yourself in a career and when you actually show up in an interview, you should make sure you emphasize the same values that you've put on to your resume. You should match your resume. I think consistency is kind of the biggest thing and I also think that for your career it's important to be authentic. I think whenever you're showing your professional self, I think now it's kind of shifted the way things are now because we have social media. You can't just necessarily have your professional version of your self and your regular version of your self [separate from one another]. You have to manage having one public persona. So I think it's important to be authentic. Obviously you don't want to have a future employer look online and see [inappropriate things] but I think it's really good to have an authentic view of yourself and show that you're not just [the perfect description on your resume]. Some of the best talking points I've had in interviews have been about things that don't have anything to do with my school or work but about where I grew up, hobbies I like to have, trips I've been on, those are the types of things that if you can incorporate into your personal package, and being an interesting authentic person, are going to make you stand out of a stack of resumes. You're not just the perfect answer to everything they ask for but you're kind of your unique self. Right now since the job market is very competitive, a lot of it comes down to personality and who these people want to work with, especially working at start-ups, we are young and we need to see if they can be a part of our work environment. Having an authentic flavor would be something important to have reflect on your personal brand."

BC: "How does one develop a personal brand and please provide examples of tools and tactics that can be utilized in creating a personal brand."

KL: "When I just started freshmen year of school, right off the bat in my first design class, we started with developing an identity and that's sort of like a personal sort of branding system and from an aesthetic standpoint it was a logo that presented yourself. That all kick started the development for a business persona and future website. Even if you're not in a creative field I think now the biggest tool is the social media aspect. Obviously you need to have your LinkedIn really well flushed out and you definitely need to be monitoring your Facebook. I work in social media so obviously people look at everyone's Facebook, and LinkedIn and Twitter, but I think it's good practice to make sure that your Facebook is an accurate reflection of yourself as well as matches everything that you're saying on your resume and LinkedIn. I think Twitter is really helpful, especially if you're working in [technology] right now, it shows that you're current and aware of what's going on in the [technology] industry. It's important to have that built out because if it looks like you've just created it yesterday and tweeted once, that doesn't necessarily help. That goes back to the consistency thing. All those channels are consistent and show that you're active and a thought leader and sharing a lot of interesting things, especially if it's within a field that

you're interested in. That's another opportunity that you can continue to present yourself even further."

BC: "This next question is a little similar to the last one, but what are the best practices in personal brand maintenance and please provide examples and tools of how that can be utilized in maintaining a strong personal brand."

KL: "Keeping your resume current is really important. You should doctor it if you can to cater your resume to each job you're looking at. You should have resumes that are catered to specific fields. If you're a new graduate looking in different areas, you want to make sure that your resume caters to each of those different areas and if you can, take it further to cater it to specific jobs. Also, I think it's really important to spend a lot of time on your cover letter as well. Make sure that they tie back in to things on your resume, and also show that you've done your research in your field. The cover letter is the perfect opportunity to sell yourself. Again, perpetuate your personal brand. You think of your personal brand as not just 'what my resume looks like' or 'what my business card looks like' or 'what value ad am I offering'. The cover letter is the perfect example. Then for social media, it's the same thing. When you look at every one of your social media outlets, it shows who you are as a person and how you might be as an employee. Obviously LinkedIn is going to be the most employee based. For when you graduate, Facebook really can become part of your overall persona and personal brand. I think once you actually start working, or even before, I think it's important to find a mentor that can help you define what your personal brand is going to be. Have them help you define what your strengths are, because sometimes it's hard to know your self, and what the industry is looking for. I've had several mentors who helped me decide and define what my personal brand is. I think that's another way to help maintain it, to constantly be checking in with people who have experience. It's also a constant evolution. A year ago when I started my job, I didn't think I was going to do design. I didn't know if it was in the cards, I wasn't even necessarily pursuing it, I just knew I wanted to work in a start up. I knew that I was eager to learn and see what was going on in social media. It just sort of happened that I had a mentor early on who helped me realized my strength and made me start thinking about design again and it just evolved from there. Beyond the technical aspects of what you do in your personal brand, it's really important to establish big picture values early on and make sure that those values always come through in all those different channels as part of your maintenance. What is the big picture, what do you represent, what are your ideals? You'll see companies always have their own values within their big picture and I think the more options you have for those to come through in your personal brand and interviews the better it will help define your brand."

BC: "In what capacities would a personal brand be used and how can you use it in a professional environment?"

KL: "You should think about your personal brand all the time. It really helped me being in Poly Reps and Gamma Phi Beta [at Cal Poly] I think I started on an early path and sort of realizing that you as a person represent all kinds of different things that are the bigger picture than you as well as people begin recognizing you as being associated with those things. You should transfer your personal brand in everything that you do because it's all

going to start weaving together as you get older. For example with Gamma Phi, you want to represent who you are, knowing that that is representing Gamma Phi. Realize that all your actions are representing Gamma Phi and you want those to be representative of the ideals of it. I think those are the things that you should be constantly building on and obviously it changes a little bit. When I'm Kathleen and working for the Giants, baseball team, I take on a slightly different version of my personal brand than when I'm Kathleen and a graphic designer, but they all interweave especially in those channels. In social media, I'm representing both. If you look at my Twitter, I tweet about the Giants just as often as I'm tweeting about the latest tech crunch articles. Weaving those together can sometimes be a balancing act, but I think it's really important to have your brand be a consolidation of all the things that you do. It makes you look more interesting and dynamic. Employers want to see that you are the total package. That doesn't mean that all you think about all the time is your career, but by being conscious of your personal brand, you can apply it to everything that you do. Adapting your personal brand especially if you establish it further to go along it's important to have some sort of core values established early. You need to think of a personal brand like a company brand. Companies have all these different branches but they all reflect those same values of the company. You can really use a personal brand in your career, in your hobbies, in every faction of your life. If you consider pulling them all together, I think that makes you look really dynamic."

BC: "In your opinion, how does one use a personal brand in successful career development and please provide examples."

KL: "In terms of development overtime, obviously it's really important when you're getting a job to have a defined personal brand that accurately reflects you and the job you're looking for. Definitely overtime, I think it's even more important especially in a few of my graphic designs, a part of your career is based upon your experience and networking. It's not necessarily you reach a certain threshold and you're at the next level, or you pass a test, or learn a certain skill set and you're at the next level of a designer. It's just gathering information in the field and networking with other designers in other companies. It's being able to evolve your brand as you grow and being able to have your personal brand reflect the things that you've learned and the things you've picked up and have it mature with you, is really important. As an example, our founder, Clara, she's a really good example of a strong personal brand. Her parents moved here from Hong Kong when she was little so she could go to school in the US, she got into Stanford, and graduated at the top of her class. Then she worked for huge companies like Google, Sales Force, and had a great idea, that she later wrote a book about. She became this thought leader in social media and decided to start our company. She represents these brands that are evolving overtime. When we first started she was a trailblazer in a social business field and she was a thought leader because of her book but now in our company she's having to evolve her personal brand to include CEO and founder of Hearsay Social. She's had to make decisions on how to adapt from Clara the author and thought leader to Clara the author, though leader, and CEO; not losing all the things she did before but also incorporate it into this new venture so that it helps business. Adding another level, last year she was asked to be on the board of Starbucks, so that's another thing to add to her brand. She has to consolidate them and figure out how they will all fit together without weakening the other. You don't necessarily want to always highlight

that she's an author and thought leader because it might demean the power of her business that she started. At the same time you don't want to undermine that she's on the board of Starbucks to promote the company because then it might be self-serving. There's all these things that she has to balance and I think she does a really good job of keeping all the things that she represents important but also putting the company first in the appropriate setting and utilizing her toolkit when she goes to different audiences and weaving them all together into a story that's really compelling. She can literally speak to a room and sell them completely because she's found all these types of stories that can connect to different people in her industry. I think she's a really good example."

BC: "This is the last question. How would you measure the success of a personal brand and please provide examples."

KL: "There's not necessarily a number or a meter or something, but I think the biggest thing is recognizability is one thing but also consistency is key. Steve Jobs is a really good example of this. Overtime he kept things very simple. You always knew something had his touch and he had this whole outward facing public image that was extremely consistent and recognizable. Obviously he's a consumer brand, so it's going to fit a large number a people, but even if you're in a specific space in history you can own that space as well. That's the biggest thing. Ten years from now in your career if someone mentions your name, someone who's worked with you or who's familiar with your work, is going to have the same or similar impression that they had of you before. That's the biggest measure of success is that there's an understanding of who you are and the value that you add across the board. Anyone that you've ever worked with would be able to call up a reference and they'd all say similar things. The best measure of success is to have that sort of consistent, positive impression on people and be really clear with what you bring to the table. If you perpetuate your brand all the time and always try to make everything your best work and always impress upon people those values, so that every time someone comes across someone else's work with you, you always have that same impression. On a bigger scale, if you become a more public facing, social media is a really easy way to see if your personal brand is perpetuating because it's kind of like a ripple effect. It's networking on steroids. It's a really easy way to see if your brand's been evolving overtime because your network's going to grow quickly if you've done a good job. To put it in a nutshell, your network is the best way to measure your success. Have you been able to build this network that knows about you and your values? You want a large network that can back you up with all the ideals that you've build in your personal brand. Getting the job that you want and moving up in your career is one thing, but I think the network is going to really show what impact you've had on people. Going back to Steve Jobs, I think that's the perfect example. When people think of Apple products, they think of a very specific thing. They have a very strong emotional attachment to electronic devices, and a huge part of that is Steve Jobs. If Apple didn't have an outward facing founder and CEO, I don't think people would nearly be as devoted to their Apple products. It really makes a difference with the guy who was standing up [on stages] obsessed with what he was making, obsessed with perfection, you sort of just trust that Steve Jobs had this crazy attention to detail and would never create anything less than perfect. People just think, 'I ended up with this really good product because Steve Jobs was a perfectionist'. He's a larger example but in a day-to-day example, everybody

knows you do this or that, and everyone in your network know that about you too. When all your channels interweave with your network, you can see it all come together and create a strong, effective personal brand."

BC: "Is there anything else you'd like to add about personal branding?

KL: I think I've just about said all I can, unless you have any more specific questions for me to answer."

BC: "No, I'm done. Thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it."

KL: "Glad I could help!"

Appendix C

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions about personal branding in the public relations and marketing sectors, based on a questionnaire about the use of personal branding for career development and success.

Interviewer: Brenna Collins
Respondent: Communications Manager at Mind Body, (Jennifer Saxon)
Date of Interview: 5/30/12

Interview Transcription:
Brenna Collins: "I'm going to start off by asking you some background information first just to get a description of your jobs and how you can consider yourself an expert in personal branding."

Jennifer Saxon: "Ok, my full time job is at Mind Body, which is a local software company. We create business management software that lives in the cloud, personal business primarily in the health and wellness industries. So if you were a fitness studio and you wanted to be able to run your business from where ever you are, not tied down to a computer at your studio, then you could purchase our software and we would help you run everything from class schedules, client log in, to payroll, equipment rentals, sales reports, you name it, the software can pretty much track anything for you. You can do it all online so that people aren't really tied down to one particular location. Owners can go on vacation, they can check in to see how their business is doing, so that's what we do. I'm the communications manager there, which primarily means that I'm the head copywriter for all of our marketing materials, I also conduct, intermissively we pursue public relations, which isn't a major thing on our radar at the moment, but I also am the public relations expert on the marketing team and also content development for the web."

BC: "Do you want to also describe what you do at Cal Poly, too?"

JS: "I am a adjunct lecturer, so I come and I teach part time. Right now I'm just teaching the Journalism 415 class, which is the student run PR firm, CCPR. I've done that two quarters now, so I'm a "newbie"."

BC: "Sounds good. Ok so we'll just jump right in and go off of question number one. How would you as an expert in your field define and describe a personal brand? And can you give an example of a successful personal brand?"

JS: "A successful personal brand, I may have to think about that one. Well I think, you know, a personal brand is very much like a corporate brand or a company brand or an organizations brand in that it encompasses your promise to whoever it is that you are dealing with. It encompasses everything from your reputation to someone's first

impression of you to their expectations of you moving forward, all of those things, just like with a company and how they represent themselves to the public, is the same as a personal brand. The difference being that a personal brand can probably be a little bit more intimate, because you're obviously dealing interpersonally with people, one on one, much more than a company or a brand is. Although it's changing a little bit now with social media allowing companies to be a little bit more intimate with their clients as well. A successful personal brand, I think of like Lady Gaga, she's a huge brand, but she's so huge that it's almost a corporation. She would be on the extreme scale. One good brand out of Cal Poly, I think, was President Baker. He had been at Cal Poly for so long that he really was verified with the school, and vice versa. That comes through an adherence to managing your reputation and really having a set core value system for yourself and how you interact with people. He was always associated with Cal Poly because he represented Cal Poly when he was on duty, and off duty. I think he probably developed a successful personal brand there. That took time though. He was in a powerful position already, so he's already going to be associated with Cal Poly, but he stayed long enough that the two of them went hand in hand by the time he left."

BC: "Ok, great. So for the next question, what is the most important aspect of a personal brand and how can that be used to improve one's career."

JS: "I think if you think of building your personal brand the same way that you would perhaps build a marketing plan for a project for a project or a company, you can easily do that for yourself and one of the most important things for a company to do as well as a person is to really identify what is called your value proposition or your positioning statement. What makes you unique, to really hone in on that and be able to explain that and sell that to the people that you're talking to."

BC: "How do you develop a personal brand, and please provide examples of tools and tactics that can be utilized in creating a personal brand."

JS: "Well I think it would be the same as corporate brands. If you're building a marketing plan for yourself, first you need to do research, sit down and consider what your strengths and your weaknesses are. What are the opportunities out there for you to grow, or for you to move in the direction you want to go, what are the threats to your success. From those, also research the industry you're in, I'm assuming. Are we talking primarily about career type development?"

BC: "Yeah, pretty much."

JS: "Investigating and researching the industry that you're interested in and also researching your target audience. See who the people you need to influence are in order to get where you want to be. A really good way to do that is say you have this ideal job, but you know that it's a least five or six years away at least because you need to build experience and you're not quite sure what that experience needs to be. A lot of people do job searches and they search for the job that they can get now based on the experience they have now, but really what I recommend people do is search for jobs you want in six years,

and look at the list of requirements for these jobs and that will tell you the things you need to do between now and then in order to get that job in six years. For instance, if you knew you wanted to be a professor at Cal Poly, and you thought, oh let's do something else for now and let that be my full time job. You may think, well I'll just teach, do part time lectures, maybe get some experience and come back later. One of the things that people like me, who didn't realize they wanted [to be a professor] is that you have to actually have a Master's degree in order to be a full time professor and if you want to be a tenure professor, you have to have a doctorate. That takes time. So if people want to be CEOs of companies, chances are you need a Master's or MBA. Or if you want to be a social media person, those jobs have been out long enough that you can search for those positions and see what those companies are looking for, and their experience, and tailor your experience to those jobs. Does that make sense?"

BC: "Yeah, definitely."

JS: "So that would be one thing to do for research. After you do the research, then you have to think about, what is my goal? So the goal would be, I want this job in six years and you're thinking about, what's that objective and how you're going to measure your success. You come up with those measurable objectives to get to there, so this quarter I'm going to do this, and this year I'm going to do this, next year I'm going to do this, and kind of come up with these measurable "mini goals" that will help you get near your big goal. Find out who are the people you need to influence and figure out the people you need to influence and find out how you can start meeting those people. Networking with people is really important, getting your name out there, volunteering with organizations that matter in the field. If you are doing research and you have opinions about trending topics, you know have a blog and post your thoughts about those. Always stay up on the latest research, always stay up on the latest tools that are out there. If social media is a big thing for your industry, then use the tools that other people use in the industry for branding yourself. If you're a PR professional, use social media to brand yourself. Have a Facebook page, have a Twitter account, and have a Pinterest board. All the things people are using to promote their company, [you need to] use that to promote yourself. Employers will also search for you online and they want to see what your online presence is like. So not only have one, but manage it. So make sure that you aren't just on Facebook, planning weekend vendors with you friends, actually be on there professionally, be on LinkedIn professionally, stay in contact with people that you've worked with or met. You never know who's going to be the person who has that job in the future that they think you'd be perfect for. Make sure you network. Build your reputation just by maintaining it primarily. Every time you meet somebody new, make sure you follow up with them and talk to them as much as you can. Learn from other people too. People like to talk about themselves. Not everything that you do when you network has to be about getting you to the next place, a lot of times it's about getting to know somebody else, it takes a lot of pressure off of you and it makes it easier to have real genuine conversations with people. Another thing that a lot of companies are doing now, it's not really anything that is really taught in marketing, so much at least that I know of, is core values. Core values are what's becoming more important for companies. I think for the individual it would be a good idea for people to come up with their own core values. These are the kind of things that can help you filter out industries or companies or

people that don't mesh with your own core values. What kind of brand do you admire? Do you admire honest brands? Do you admire aggressive brands? Do you admire environmental brands? Think of the brands you admire and why you admire them, and if that's something you want to emulate then figure out how to incorporate that into your own brand, and what you do, and the people you associate yourself with, the volunteer work that you do, the blogs that you write, whatever. Everything that you do needs to speak to your core values and if it doesn't, then it's probably not something that you want to do. It's all about having a reason for doing what you do. You should really have a purpose behind what you do, you should live life on purpose, essentially. Build your brand on purpose, don't just let it happen, because it won't get you to where you want to go if you don't take control of it. So then you create your key messages, what is it about you that's unique, what are you selling points, build those if you think your uniqueness is kind of vague, then build your experience in order to build the unique qualities about yourself. Have a mission statement. Just like companies have a mission statement, people should have one too. You know, what is your mission, what drives you, what is your passion, what is your purpose? That's always a good thing to have. A then always re-examine. Always check back and see if this is the direction you want to go in and if not, adjust it. Always have goals in mind and objectives. Am I answering all your questions?"

BC: "Oh, yeah. You've practically covered them all down to number six!"

JS: "Okay, good!"

BC: "Well I know you talked a lot about how you maintain a personal brand and you kind of tied in together both of those questions. Like I said, they're all obviously going to overlap, but is there anything else that you don't think you have mentioned about brand maintenance, and other tools you use to maintain it?"

JS: "I think just making sure that you are up to date, that you stay current. For instance, you can be working really hard, over the past three years, on having a strong Facebook presence and a really engaging LinkedIn page and you've written some great blogs, and you volunteer with certain organizations and you belong to the right associations. But now Pinterest is around and you haven't paid any attention to it. There are these new tools out there that you aren't taking advantage of and what that does, without you realizing it, is that it hurts your brand because it doesn't look like you're current anymore. So I'd say just really paying attention and once things start going mainstream. It's part of your core values, your personality, and your main brand. What you want people to think of when they think of you is really a doctor cutting in, then adopt these new tools the second they come out. If, on the other hand, you want to make sure you're somebody who, when they do it right they do it from the get-go, then you kind of wait until they hit a little more mainstream. It all depends on what you're comfortable with, what kind of person you are and what you want people to see you as. So I'd say just staying current and also staying true to your own set of core values, whatever that happens to be. Consistency is a big deal. If you aren't consistent with how you approach what you do, then your brand becomes confusing to people, and they aren't quite sure what it is that you're promising. What does that brand

promise? [You can't be] transparent and say everything and then the next moment, be guarded and not as expressive. You just kind of have to be really conscious of what you do."

BC: "That definitely goes in line with everything I've researched. Consistency is kind of what I think is probably the most important thing about branding. So, on to the next question. In what capacities would a personal brand be used and how can one use personal branding in a professional environment?"

JS: "In a professional environment, there's nothing better than walking into an interview or meeting somebody at a business reception or in a meeting with people you haven't met before and have them go, "oh, I've heard of you, you're so and so", or "oh, I read what you wrote about such and such". That sort of thing where your reputation precedes you is something that your building your professional brand well enough that someday that will happen. It's something that should open doors for you instead of close them. Most people, especially if you're applying for a position, if you're actually job searching, are going to look at those things before you actually come in for an interview. You can certainly use it to open doors in the right way, and to find people who will help you find those ideal jobs. At some point in your career it becomes a lot less about finding the right job postings and a lot more about knowing the right people. A lot of higher-level jobs aren't actually posted anywhere you find out about them because you know the right people, or you're in the right place at the right time. Your professional brand can help make sure that happens for you. I think a personal brand that's less about your career and more about working with other people and knowing other people, I think everybody has that already, but they don't think of it in that way. They don't think of it as something they do on purpose, they think of it as, "Oh, that's my personality". I think if you are a good friend and you always make a point that you're there when your friend needs you, or you're someone who can keep a secret and would never tell a soul, all those things are part of your personal brand. Coming up with what's important to you and what your core values are, that will turn into your brand."

BC: "I definitely agree. In your opinion, how does one use a personal brand in successful career development and please provide examples of how you can do that."

JS: "If you're going into job hunting right out of school, I think having a good online presence on social sites is a good idea, because employers will be searching for information about you. They're going to be doing research on you before you come in. I think making sure that you network and that you build a network of people who know you and can vouch for you and they're willing to be references, that's super important. Also, as you go through your career, you'll be leaving behind positions, and people, and teams, who you hope be references in the future or who you hope will be those people that call you up one day and say, "I heard about this job that will be perfect for you". Maintaining those relationships, making sure you don't burn those bridges when you move on from position to position or project to project."

BC: "So you would say the best way to use a personal brand is through networking, essentially?"

JS: "I think certainly for career development that continues throughout, from year to year, networking is one of the most important things you can do. Also, you need to be trustworthy and all those things because most people aren't going to give you two cents if they don't think that you are a good person, or a hard worker. Knowing that you need to do those things. Definitely the further you get into your career, the people that you know, but if you can also be out there and blogging and things like that, so that people you don't know follow you and hear about you and see that you have something to contribute to the conversation, whatever that conversation has to be, that's important too. It's almost like this hidden networking that you can do."

BC: "Ok, great. So we have one question left and that's, how would you measure the success of a personal brand and what examples do you have of measuring success?"

JS: "Well you can measure it in a couple of ways. If you created a personal marketing plan and you had your objectives in mind and your goals in mind, you can obviously measure it that way. Have you successfully reached the goal that you were striving for? Were you able to achieve the objectives that you set for a particular time period? Obviously see if your objective is to get job X, did you get job X? That would be a pretty clear-cut definition of success. Are you doing things that you want to be doing? Have things changed as you've been gaining experience, and can you use them to learn more, to progress more? Have you been able to move forward on purpose and adjust what you're striving for to accommodate the new reality, whenever that changes. So, I think just feeling like you are where you should be, and you are where you want to be and that people respond to you in the way you want them to, can tell you if you're being successful with your brand."

BC: "That definitely makes sense. What's the point of a personal brand if it ends up being something completely different than what you were striving for, you know?"

JS: "Right. It would be really exhausting to maintain a personal brand that isn't true to who you are. It would be nearly impossible."

BC: "I think it would just wear you out, and you wouldn't end up knowing who you are anymore. You would end up in a whole sea of confusion. Do you have anything else that you feel like adding about personal branding in general?"

JS: "I think it's an interesting twist. It's not really something that people do on purpose, it's something that just kind of happens to them. If they're lucky, they had a clear idea of who they were and what their value was and were able to build a brand rather inadvertently that way. Typically people don't think of their value system and also their career together. It's interesting that you're trying to do that and it's fantastic that you're doing it so early on and you'll be able to continue to look at the choices that you make in that way. It's definitely a "living life on purpose" kind of way."

BC: "I think it's gotten a lot easier now with social media and all the new gadgets so you can constantly be worrying about your image, even if it seems more exhausting in a way."

JS: "You probably don't have to be as intense about it as you would if you were marketing for a company. It can be something that is just part of your radar."

BC: "Well great, that's all I have. Thank you so much for agreeing to help me out."

JS: "Not a problem, good luck on your project!"