Branding yourself: a necessity?

An analysis of the perceptions of young professionals towards the concept of “personal branding”
Acknowledgements

First of all, I wish to express my deep appreciation to all interviewees who participated with admirable enthusiasm and who made this research project possible.

Secondly, I would like to thank my mentor, Astrid Vandendaele, for her guidance, support and the many ideas she put forward and which form the basis of this paper.

Next, I am very grateful to Thomas Tielemans for offering me an internship at Young Prozzz and for bringing me into contact with a considerable part of the interviewees. My sincere gratitude is also extended to the other interns at Young Prozzz for the brainstorm sessions which provided many insights.

Also Tom Bruyer deserves a special thank you for his endless patience and the general support of all students Multilingual Business Communication this year.

Furthermore, another word of thanks goes to all my fellow students without whom this year would have been much harder.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family and girlfriend for believing in the completion of this paper and supporting me throughout a turbulent year.

May this paper reward the reader for his or her interest in personal branding and lead to new insights.

Ghent, August 2013
Content

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................................... 3

0. Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 7

1. ‘Personal branding’: A theoretical framework ............................................................................................... 9
   1.1. Origin and definition ............................................................................................................................... 9
   1.2. Problem: Conflict personal and employer brand ..................................................................................... 15

2. Research ......................................................................................................................................................... 17
   2.1. Methodology ........................................................................................................................................... 17
   2.2. Results .................................................................................................................................................... 18
      2.2.1. General perception of personal branding ......................................................................................... 18
      2.2.2. Online personal branding .............................................................................................................. 20
      2.2.3. Offline personal branding .............................................................................................................. 28
      2.2.4. Online vs. offline personal branding .............................................................................................. 32

3. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 34

4. References ....................................................................................................................................................... 36

5. Appendix ....................................................................................................................................................... 37
0. Introduction

Branding was and is seen first and foremost as promoting products, services etc. The twenty-first century, however, extended the meaning of branding to other areas. Nowadays everything can be ‘branded’: products, services, events and…people. The branding of people is something which appeals to me. My interest in this new concept and the fact that there are still very few studies about personal branding are the principal reasons why I wanted to investigate personal branding. What I found especially remarkable was that of these few studies there are, almost none deals with the aspect of offline personal branding, whereas online personal branding proved to be much popular among academics, a finding which intrigued me and which I wanted to explore further. Therefore, I will discuss both aspects of personal branding: the online and offline segment.

Due to the rise of Web 2.0 and the fact that more and more activities shift from offline to online, having control over information about yourself is becoming more difficult. Here, personal branding comes into play. The controlling effect that engaging in personal branding entails, is therefore given much attention in this paper. Not only having control, but also making yourself visible and trying to stand out in a society that is becoming more complex are factors which stress the importance of personal branding. Although personal branding literature sometimes makes mention of the rise of personal branding in western society, research shows that there is not much attention paid by young professionals to the possibility of branding themselves.

The objective of this paper is in this respect not to create a specific model or guide of how to engage in personal branding, because there are in fact various of such models that often contradict each other and that are often too prescriptive which endangers the possibility of developing your own authentic brand. Suggestions of such models include designing your own personal logo, the usage of a personal balanced scorecard to evaluate how you are doing etc., artificial aspects which have little to do with the authentic personal branding on which I will focus in this paper. The main objective of this paper is in fact providing an answer to the question “What is personal branding according to young professionals and how do the perspectives between people who are really engaged in personal branding and people who are not differ?” This is why I have decided to interview 4 experts in personal branding and 4
people who do not realize the full potential of personal branding. By contrasting their views, I can formulate a qualitative and in-depth answer to the mentioned research question.

The first part of this paper consists of a theoretical framework, i.e. a literature review, in which will be explained what personal branding is and who invented the concept. This framework will form the starting point for the conducted research, which will be preceded by a description of the methodology. After discussing the methodology and the actual results of the research, a conclusion with the answer to the research question will be provided.
1. ‘Personal branding’: A theoretical framework

1.1. Origin and definition

Before moving on to the analysis of the results of the conducted research, it appears to be meaningful to investigate the subject matter of the personal branding literature. In this chapter, I will explore the origin of the concept ‘personal branding’ and try to formulate a well-considered and complete definition.

Origin

In order to come to a specific definition of personal branding, one has to comprehend the general meaning of branding first. In his article On Brand, Olins (2003) describes a brand as “a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected to a company, product or service”. This definition is, in my view, too limited and superseded. The fact is, Olins has forgotten to add the component “person”. A brand does not only include the embodiment of the information connected to companies, products or services, but also people.

The practice of promoting yourself is as old as the human race itself (though the reasons why people are doing it changed over time of course: ranging from attracting females to promoting yourself in order to get a job). However, personal branding only “emerged as a movement in the late 1990s at a time when observers of both the corporate communication and employment worlds were making similar but largely independent observations about the increasingly complex and chaotic nature of each environment” (Lair, Sullivan and Cheney 2005: 311). The founding father of the concept ‘personal branding’ is Tom Peters because he is the first one to popularize it (Labrecque, Markos and Milne 2011: 38), but also Montoya “lays claim to pioneering the concept in 1997” (Lair, Sullivan and Cheney 2005: 318).

It is, however, generally accepted that it was Peters who was the originator of the personal branding literature with his article The brand called you (1997). According to Hearn (2008), in this literature, success is dependent, not upon specific skills or motivation, but on the glossy packaging of the self and the unrelenting pursuit of attention. Here an improved self is not just a pleasant outcome of fulfilling work within a corporate setting, but is explicitly defined as a promotional vehicle designed to sell: one that anticipates the desires of a target market.
In my opinion, this view on personal branding is outdated: it is not just about selling yourself. Marketing and branding are very important in today’s society, but they do not create needs, they create wishes. A product which is heavily promoted and marketed still has to rely on a good and qualitative basis because the damage brought to its reputation will be severe when consumers discover that the product does not cater to their needs. This also holds true for persons who package themselves in such a “glossy” way, but who do not possess specific skills: the effect on their credibility towards their surroundings cannot simply be positive. One has to be careful with this “unrelenting pursuit of attention”, especially in an era in which it is very easy to communicate and spread criticism. One faux pas can be enough to damage your reputation for good: online media such as Twitter and Facebook will only expedite the process. Visibility is, nevertheless, one of the basic principles of personal branding and an essential aspect for e.g. business success “in the modern attention economy” as Shepherd (2005) puts it. According to Josh Hyatt, “[a] personal brand must [rather] highlight your special strengths, yet at the same time it also must not be too self-promotional”. This view corresponds with the perspective which contradicts the early personal branding literature and the opinions about “the glossy packaging of the self” articulated above. Morgan (2011) even states in this respect that “personal branding is far more about substance than appearance”. Thus, personal competences are at least as important as the plain marketization of the self. He claims, however, that one’s appearance is still critical for personal branding and that it “should communicate that you’re a positive fit with the company culture” (Morgan 2011: 13).

I will, however, return to the matter of visibility and limited control over what is said and spread on the internet later on in this paper.

**A consistent way of life**

Promoting yourself and seeing yourself as a brand is, thus, the core principle of personal branding. But it goes beyond that. As to the act of personal branding, one has to bear in mind that it is not an activity which you do spontaneously or when you want to achieve something specific. Personal branding is actually a way of life. According to Wee and Brooks (2010), personal branding means projecting “a consistently distinctive personality in all [your] interactions”. Personal branding strategies are, therefore,

effectively promoting techniques of synthetic personalization back into personal relationships. Someone whose personal brand involves being calm or humorous is thus expected to consistently project calmness or humour in all their relationships
if their brand is to be a ‘strong’ one. (Wee and Brooks 2010: 53)

When your personal brand has to emerge from everything you do day in day out, it is important to manage your brand and keep it up to date which is why “you must constantly measure your brand to understand what it stands for and how it is impacting relationships in your life” (McNally and Speak 2002: 92). Measuring and updating your personal brand is certainly not something which can be done all by yourself. One should always regard the reactions of one’s environment in order to come to valuable conclusions. McNally and Speak (2002) are of the opinion that you should “[p]ay attention to praise, compliments, and other positive feedback. They are evidence that people are giving you credit for a brand[’s] strength, something they value and would like to see continue.” This practice of evaluating your own brand “involves the self-conscious construction of a meta-narrative and meta-image of self through the use of cultural meanings and images drawn from the narrative and visual codes of the mainstream culture industries” (Hearn 2008: 198). But in order to maintain this meta-image of self and your brand in general, control is needed. Having a strong sense of control over anything that has to do with your brand is inherent to personal branding and a parameter to determine which personal brands are more developed and therefore better than others.¹ The aspect of controlling the mass of information (online as well as offline) implies two things: having the ability and space to define who you really are, referred to by Gad (2001) as “a process of self-reflection”, and having the ability to explore and determine how you want to be perceived by the public which is, according to Gad, the result of the mentioned reflective process. In this respect, it is important to include the issue of the internet in the discussion. Harris and Rae (2011) maintain that “by actively managing their online presence, people can maximise the opportunities to develop their personal brand in the direction that they want to take it, while minimising the impact of any negative material that might be ‘out there’.” By engaging in personal branding, you get the possibility to discover negative images and utterances which could damage your reputation and brand more rapidly. You get the possibility to react to these threats which means that you can actually manipulate the way people perceive you. The aspect of managing and controlling one’s brand is also a topic in my research, so I will elaborate on it in chapter 2 of this paper (especially with regard to the privacy settings of Facebook).

¹ I am talking here about “a strong sense of control” because it is impossible to have full control over e.g. all the online information about someone. The popular search engine Google, for instance, does not register all the information that is online.
Applying marketing strategies to people

Because personal branding means putting yourself in the market, specific marketing and branding strategies are needed. According to Shepherd (2005), it is therefore obvious that one should appeal to the existing framework of general marketing. He asserts that one should apply “to people the same marketing and branding principles originally developed for products and corporations”, which is by some personal branding gurus called the “life-as-company philosophy” (Shepherd 2005: 589). A couple of examples should illustrate what is meant here. Concepts such as “brand conflict” and “brand dilution” turn up in personal branding as well. As Shepherd (2005) explains, “one of the key branding precepts is that a brand should be simple, clear and consistent. […] it is [however] normal for individuals to develop multiple roles”. It is typical of people to fall back on different kinds of personalities, each of which is used to respond to specific situations. One has to be careful when using specific personalities/brands according to specific situations because one’s surroundings and public can get confused, i.e. brand dilution or even brand conflicts emerge. This is one of the reasons why it is very important to gear one’s social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) to one another, a topic which will be extensively discussed in chapter 2. With regard to specific personal branding terminology, one can detect similarities concerning general marketing: just as a particular product has or should have a unique selling proposition (USP), one’s personal brand should incorporate a “unique promise of value” (UPV as it is called in personal branding literature), a particular value that distinguishes you from your competitors.

Nevertheless, according to Shepherd (2005), “attempts to adopt both the marketing principle and marketing techniques in non-conventional settings [such as the setting of personal branding] is still the subject of considerable resistance and debate.” It should not cause any surprise that the application of marketing strategies on persons meets resistance, especially because the practices of marketing and advertising are having more and more the connotation of being aggressive and exaggerating the qualities of the product in question. Moreover, people are showered with all kinds of advertising, which after a while makes people insensitive to these branding strategies. Applying such marketing and branding strategies to people can therefore cause a contradictive feeling of loss of individuality (the fact is that people use personal branding strategies to stand out and when people become insensitive to this, the opposite result is achieved) and frustration because these techniques are often associated with untruthfulness and obtrusiveness.
**Personal branding ≠ Self-marketing**

With regard to the personal branding terminology and the fact that the application of marketing and branding techniques can cause resistance, one should also consider the difference between self-marketing and personal branding. They both have in common that they stimulate visibility and that they are used in order to gain employment. “While gaining employment is oftentimes a goal of personal branding”, explain Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011), “it is not exclusive; people self-brand for many social reasons including dating, establishing friendships, or simply for self-expression”. The main difference between the two concepts, however, lies in the fact that their focus varies. In the opinion of Shepherd (2005), “a consumer-oriented approach is frequently advocated” in self-marketing circles. Individuals are even often advised to “develop better key skills (communication skills, ICT skills, etc.) in order to make them more attractive in the job market” (Shepherd 2005: 593). Personal branding is more moderate and less restricted. Here, “individuals are not usually advised to undertake a personal makeover in response to market needs” (Shepherd 2005: 593). The focus of personal branding lies more on authenticity, less on selling yourself and leaving out some crucial but less positive characteristics of yourself in order to get a good job, which is why I believe the viewpoint of Wernick (1991) is rather short-sighted when he suggests that

> [t]he subject that promotes itself constructs itself for others in line with the competitive imaging needs of its market. Just like any other artificially imaged commodity, then, the resultant construct – a persona produced for public consumption – is marked by the transformative effects of the promotional supplement...It is a self which continually produces itself for competitive circulation.

I agree with the fact that, in order to engage in personal branding, one has to be aware of the needs of the target market. Constantly effacing some of your main characteristics merely in order to gain employment is, however, a bridge too far and shows a lack of understanding of the different aspects of personal branding.

**Personal branding practiced by everyone?**

As to the question of who can actually engage in personal branding, I can be brief: everyone. Although personal branding was originally considered to be practiced only by celebrities, “in it we can trace the roots of self-branding as a cultural practice” according to Hearn (2008), it
has now become “a generalizable model of profitable self-production for all individuals” (Hearn 2008: 208). Nevertheless, there are critics who believe personal branding cannot be practiced by everyone. Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005) for instance, emphasize that personal branding does not appear to be for everyone, nor does it send the message that it is”. I strongly disagree with this statement since personal branding is something everybody is engaged in, whether one knows it or not. Wee and Brooks (2010) argue in this respect that according to the Personal Branding Group: ‘Personal branding is also not an option. Everyone has one; your current personal brand is either positive, negative or neutral. The challenge for more professionals is that they lack the discipline necessary to define their personal brands.

This corresponds with what I have said earlier: everybody has a personal brand which is created by your digital footprint (the traces you leave behind when you are being active on the internet) as well as your offline behaviour (the impression people have of you by participating in interactions etc.). Of course, some personal brands are more developed and stronger than others (much of this depends on the extent to which you are engaged in personal branding), but the utterance that personal branding is not for everyone is simply untrue.

**Online and offline personal branding**

As I have indicated, personal branding does not only include online, but also offline promotion. Offline personal branding ranges from profiling yourself at certain events or in interactions to posture and non-verbal behaviour. Just as your skills, your behaviour and appearance, as mentioned earlier, are of great importance. McNally and Speak (2002) suggest that your ‘package’ should be an accurate reflection of what’s inside: make sure the impressions you’re creating are the ones you want to be creating. Set an impeccable standard for everything that adds up to how others perceive you. Your smile, your facial expressions, your posture, the way you use your hands and your eyes, the words you choose, your tone of voice, how you’re dressed, and the environment in which someone finds you – all contribute to your brand identity.

Appearance and style are also aspects on which Stef Verbeeck focuses heavily. In his book *Mensen als Merken. Hoe u voor uzelf een solide personal brand uitbouwt aan de hand van de*
beproefde 0\textsuperscript{4}-methode, he swears by clothing and etiquette. The predominant focus on styling is perhaps a bit exaggerated, but, nevertheless, the aspect of offline promotion can certainly not be neglected, which is why it is also one of the components in the research section.

1.2. Problem: Conflict personal and employer brand

Now that it is clear what personal branding exactly means, it seems to me worth-while to look more closely into the effect of a personal brand on one’s surroundings and more specifically into the conflict with its surrounding brands. Especially the effect of an employee’s personal brand on the brand of his or her employer comes to mind. The fact is, when a strong personal brand is employed in an organisation which has, for its part, a dominant brand, this situation is expected to lead to a conflict. Also Shepherd (2005) recognizes that “[a]mong employees, there may be a tension between representing one’s organisation and selling oneself.” He summarizes the issue as follows:

[There might be], on the one hand, a potential conflict of interest between the individual’s advancement and that of the organisation by whom they are employed, and on the other hand a lack of separation between who one is and who one works for, and between the needs and rights of the employer and the needs and rights of the employed. (Shepherd 2005: 594)

This conflict between one’s personal brand and the employer’s brand is described by Shepherd (2005) as a “form of brand conflict”. Of course, this does not mean that the rise of such a conflict will always be the case. Peters (1997, 1999) himself, believes rather in the development of a kind of synergy between employer and personal brand. Nevertheless, it does not require a lot of imagination to understand the possible threat of a strong personal brand to an employer brand and vice versa. Harris and Rae (2011) emphasize that

it is important to bear in mind that personal branding can be too successful – at least in the mindset of some organisations that may see effective brand builders as a threat. As an employee […], raising a personal brand profile too effectively may lead to suspicion and scepticism, especially if the brand appears to eclipse that of more senior managers, or even the brand of the organisation itself.
As a consequence, a personal brand can clash with the employer’s brand in very different ways. An important reason for this, is mentioned by Kaputa (n.d.), who asserts that “self[-]branders establish the greatest freedom, which is responsibility. Self[-]branders make their own luck [and] create their own opportunities. Self-branders are always working for themselves, even when they are working for a boss” (Kaputa (n.d.) as cited in Lair, Sullivan and Cheney 2005: 322-323). It is this freedom, which is inherent to personal branding, that causes the conflict in question at the same time.

In the next chapter, I will, however, put the theory into practice by presenting the research I have done on both online and offline personal branding, a research which is constructed on the basis of the theoretical framework at hand.
2. Research

In this chapter, the results of the research on personal branding are presented. First, I will describe the methodology that was followed for conducting this research. Afterwards, I will discuss the results, a section which is divided in 4 parts: the general perception of personal branding by the respondents, followed by a description of the findings on online and offline branding and a direct comparison between the two kinds of personal branding. Based on these results a conclusion will finally be made in the next chapter.

2.1. Methodology

Qualitative research

The target group of this research are young professionals, being last year students and starting professionals belonging to the age bracket 20-30, the main age group used by Young Prozzz, an open networking group consisting of a couple of thousands young professionals which organizes several networking events for this specific target group. I have conducted a qualitative research because, this way, I could confront and compare the different perspectives of young professionals who do not really know what personal branding means and young professionals who understand the full potential of the concept more thoroughly than I would with a quantitative research. Throughout this research, I will refer to the two groups as “newbies” and “experts” respectively. I have opted for the term “newbie” because it describes somebody who is a starter in a specific area (mostly internet-related). Here, it is not used with the insulting or degrading connotation the term sometimes has, but rather in the encouraging way from the expert’s point of view to stimulate the newbies to engage more in personal branding.

The participants

The two groups consist each of 4 persons. The four newbie participants were:

- Catherine Apers, student Master of Science in Psychology: Personnel Management and Industrial Psychology
- Sam Claeys, student Master of Arts in Multilingual Business Communication
- Simon Hoebeke, student Master of Arts in Multilingual Business Communication
- Leen Van Grieken, student Master of Science in Industrial Engineering: Building
To the group of experts belonged:

- Joni De Boever, Singer-songwriter at Joni Sheila/ Bachelor in Communication Management
- Elke Haemelynck, HR Adjunct at ING Belgium
- Lodi Planting, Owner of Employerbility
- Jonas Van de Steene, Consultant at OTYS Belgium

For the first group of young professionals, I have addressed my personal network and selected people of who I knew they are active on social media, but who are not familiar with the concept of personal branding.

The composition of the group experts was based on a close collaboration with Young Prozzz. I asked the founder of Young Prozzz which young professionals could be labelled experts of personal branding and four of these experts were then being interviewed.

**The interview questions**

All respondents were asked the same questions in order to have relevant results (for the specific questions: cf. Appendix). These questions were divided in different categories based on the theoretical framework. First, general questions on personal branding were asked, followed by specific questions on online and offline personal branding. Finally, the two types of personal branding were compared and confronted.

### 2.2. Results

#### 2.2.1. General perception of personal branding

With regard to the more general questions on personal branding (cf. Appendix), the answers already showed a discrepancy between the views of the newbies and the experts. A very remarkable observation was the fact that all 4 newbies thought of themselves as not being unique, whereas the personal branding experts stated that everyone is unique. All newbies, except for one who realized that personal branding is something you should live and do all the time, responded that they were not engaged in personal branding nor networking. The only thing they did was merely accepting invitations on LinkedIn. The experts, on the other hand,
recognized that personal branding is indeed putting yourself in the market in all kinds of ways, but they all confirmed that everybody has a personal brand, consciously or not.

Moreover, the perspective of the newbies on personal branding proved to be more limited than that of the experts: they purely described personal branding as a tool for searching and finding a job. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, we concluded that finding a job through actively promoting yourself is indeed one of the objectives of personal branding, but it goes beyond that, just as the experts acknowledged. For them, finding a job was never the most important reason to engage in personal branding, but rather to make themselves and their expertise known to the outside world. 3 of the experts applied in this respect the principle “First giving and then hopefully one day taking”. The experts also seemed to have a totally different mentality compared to the newbies: most of the experts stressed several times the fact that they enjoy helping people and that, automatically, people are helping them in return. One expert summarized personal branding as discovering your talents, reinforcing them and making them visible in order to open doors and be contacted for that which you love the most, without that necessarily having to be a job. Another expert emphasized that personal branding does not really include spreading news (what the newbies are doing most of the time), but rather making it.

To illustrate the statement of the experts that personal branding is a fulltime activity, something which you do 24/7, I will give specific attention to personal branding actions of one of the experts. The expert in question, who is a starting musician, spends most of her time on networking and connecting with people to make her music known. To her personal branding strategies belong, according to her, among other things, talking a lot to people before and after her concerts, handing out many of her personalized business cards, a crowdfunding and marketing campaign for her music, sending out press releases to several journalists and mailings to several important persons in the music industry etc. Not only she, but also the other experts devote often more than half a day to networking, online as well as offline. First, I will focus, however, on the results of the research with regard to the online aspect of personal branding.
2.2.2. Online personal branding

A considerable part of the research is devoted to online personal branding. I will focus here on the three most important social media, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but also important online media such as a blog and a website will be discussed. In the interviews, Google+ was also mentioned as a great tool for personal branding (because of the fact that it belongs to the search engine Google and therefore highly ranked in the search results and that it is, according to one of the experts, an excellent tool for integrating videos, photos, comments and a lot more), but since it is not very popular in Belgium, I will not go into detail about it. First, the social media will be discussed, after which other personal branding tools such as a blog and website are given further consideration.

Facebook

The first social medium which was brought up in the interviews was Facebook. Though Facebook is an online channel used for personal branding, 7 out of 8 respondents saw it as the social medium the least fit for personal branding in general. Only one respondent argued that Facebook was best fit for promoting herself as a musician. This, however, has to do with the fact that Facebook is a very suitable medium with regard to visual representation. The fact is, all of the interviewees use Facebook as a private online channel, only for friends and entertainment, the sector in which the branding of the respondent’s music career fits of course. Via Facebook she can reach more fans, share more photos and be more visual, which is why she opted for Facebook as the best medium. For her career in business communication, however, she preferred the more formal LinkedIn. Facebook is indeed perceived as a more informal social medium, which is why Hearn (2008) asserts that the central goal on Facebook seems to be “collecting or acquiring as many friends as possible” (Hearn 2008: 211). Nowadays, Facebook does not have that connotation of being a popularity contest anymore due to the fact that you can cover how many friends you exactly have. Yet, one still can see how many friends one has in common.

As mentioned earlier, all of the respondents use Facebook in a private context, reserved for friends and family. Nevertheless, I came across a few differences regarding the actions performed on Facebook between the experts and newbies. 3 newbies proved to be hardly active on Facebook and admitted that, when they posted something on Facebook, these posts mostly did not contain content of their own. They use Facebook mainly to see what and how
others are doing. The experts, on the other hand, post a lot more, even though they use Facebook mostly for private purposes. Often, they provide links to their blogs or articles and other posts which promote them as a brand towards others. Two of the experts also participate in discussions on pages of their (professional or private) interest which puts them (un-)consciously in the spotlight. Only 1 of the newbies dares to comment on similar pages, but only if he has an opinion which is well-founded. Moreover, he admits that these comments are never done with the purpose of promoting himself.

In general, it is clear that the Facebook profiles of all of the interviewees are properly protected because they realize that recruiters are often checking them this way. Although the profiles are generally secured, 3 newbies are not sure if they have adjusted all privacy settings. The privacy settings of the experts are not necessarily adjusted more strictly than those of the newbies, although one of the experts emphasizes that he has even divided all of his friends in separate groups and that he indicated which group or which person can see which elements of his profile. Despite the fact that most profiles are secured, all respondents are careful about which photos and which posts come online. Only one newbie admits that she should select more in photos and posts.

In short, this research has shown that Facebook is perceived as the online medium which is least appropriate for personal branding because it is especially used for private purposes. The perspectives of the experts correspond in this respect to some extent with those of the newbies, although they acknowledge that posting private elements also shapes one’s personal brand. Furthermore, the experts prove to be more active on Facebook than the newbies, providing more content of their own instead of reposting things.

Twitter

A similar research was conducted for Twitter. Here, differences between the newbies and experts proved to be bigger. One newbie did not even have Twitter, because she did not think of it as a very useful tool for personal branding. Another newbie said she was actually forced to create a Twitter account because the job fair she was organizing also had a Twitter page and she had to check which information about the event was spread. Nowadays, she still has an account, but she hardly ever uses it (certainly not for tweeting: her total number of tweets remains zero). The two other newbies are a bit more active on Twitter, their tweets, however, especially contain links to articles related to their professional field of interest or are often retweets. The experts on the contrary, create mostly their own content and have hundreds or
even thousands of followers because of the creation of own content. Harris and Rae (2011) confirm that “[t]he best long term way to build brand influence is to be seen as a ‘giver’ of good quality practical information and advice”, which is exactly what is, according to 3 of the experts the main objective of their Twitter account: sharing knowledge. They enjoy going into debate and using Twitter as a tool for sharing and acquiring knowledge.

All experts do not only use Twitter to start interaction and to share knowledge, but also for spreading information (with links to their blogs, in case of the musician: newspaper articles in which she is mentioned, purely for promoting herself), networking and sometimes just for fun (humorous posts etc.) which is, as mentioned earlier, also personal branding (e.g. it reveals that you also have a humorous character). The experts emphasize that Twitter is a very fast medium and that it is a very good “linking device”: one can post very easily links to blogs, videos, LinkedIn profile etc. 3 of the experts admitted, however, that this speed is at the same time Twitter’s biggest disadvantage. Everybody’s feed and timeline have to process an overload of information so their tweets are likely to be read only by a small part of their followers which is unfortunate for their personal branding, while personal branding is all about control as mentioned in the literature review. This is why most of the experts regard LinkedIn as a more adequate tool for personal branding than Twitter. Nevertheless, they emphasize the fact that effective personal branding can only be achieved by combining the most important social media, including Twitter.

In comparison with Facebook, one can conclude that most interviewees are following more companies or people who can be of importance for their careers or other affairs. Remarkable is the fact that the experts generally prefer to follow the people behind the companies because this is a much more efficient way to get something done and to guarantee the quality of the connections. One of the experts even mentions that he is his own company, he wants people to recognise that he is the face of this company, which is why he does not have a separate profile for his company. Two of the newbies do follow a few companies, especially companies active in marketing and communication because these are the sectors in which they would like to start working. They state, however, that they do not enter into discussions to put themselves in the picture.

The results of the research on Twitter demonstrate, again, a discrepancy between the perspectives of the newbies and experts: whereas the newbies regard Twitter as a personal branding tool only in the context of acquiring a job, the experts use it rather to share
knowledge and to show their expertise, making themselves known by delivering own content, following and interacting with interesting people and creating opportunities going beyond the search for a job.

LinkedIn

As mentioned earlier, LinkedIn was considered the best tool for being professionally visible. All newbies indicated that LinkedIn is for them the most adequate medium for personal branding. This is not astonishing since the newbies only look at personal branding from a job seeking point of view. Nevertheless, 2 experts prefer LinkedIn also, but another expert, the musician, acknowledged that LinkedIn is the most appropriate medium with regard to her other possible career in communication management. One expert confirmed the usefulness of LinkedIn, but he preferred blogging, a personal branding tool on which I will focus later. The reason why LinkedIn scored high, lies in the fact that they all considered LinkedIn as the best networking medium.

3 newbies have not filled in their profile thoroughly since they consider LinkedIn rather as an online CV and not as a tool for extensively promoting themselves. They are convinced that it is almost impossible to differentiate yourself from others on LinkedIn. A reason for this is the fact that all newbies, except for one, are not aware of the existence of keywords through which you can increase your visibility, whereas all experts are aware of this and even apply these keywords. The experts emphasize the fact that, by using these keywords, you have to show what you can offer people. Furthermore, one newbie and all experts regard LinkedIn as an online medium via which you can show a lot of unique and personal characteristics and interests. They suggest that this is communicated by showing which groups you follow, how you present yourself in the summary, which recommendations or hobbies you have got, by having influential connections, by showing which books you have read, by inserting useful presentations (SlideShare etc.) and links to articles or your own blog(s). Another aspect to which one of the experts referred, was the fact that, by updating your profile regularly, even if it is just changing one word, an announcement of this update will appear on the time line so that you are in the picture again. Also Harris and Rae (2011) recognise this possibility to promote your profile by stating that

by actively updating a LinkedIn profile, the likelihood that people will see that profile displayed when they are searching the site for someone to hire or do business with is increased. The regular addition of new contacts and updating of
profile content also adds to an individual’s “Google Juice”, because LinkedIn allows profile information to be made available for search engines to index and the site is highly ranked by Google.

With regard to the following of certain groups in order to promote yourself or because of other reasons, one newbie admitted she is not yet member of such groups and she probably will not in the future. 2 other newbies are member of very few groups and are actually still working on their profiles most of the time they spend on LinkedIn. 2 newbies, however, read from time to time some of the discussions in the groups of their professional interest especially for gathering information. They do not participate in these discussions, because they do not think that they have a lot to say and because they do not believe that this increase in visibility will offer them more job opportunities than people who do not participate in discussions, whereas all 4 experts stress that promoting yourself this way does make a difference. 3 of the experts, on the other hand, do participate in or even start discussions. They do this, again, for sharing and acquiring knowledge, but they also believe this is part of promoting yourself. According to them, you engage in personal branding by going into debate with others, giving your opinion, posting links to blogs etc. One expert (the musician who uses especially Facebook for the promotion of her music) does not regularly post in these groups, but she says she should do that more often.

Concerning the activity of connecting on LinkedIn, only one newbie actively invites people to connect with him, whereas the other 3 only accept invitations. When they accept, however, they are not very selective in their connections: 2 newbies do not have problems with connecting with total strangers. One newbie even said that, at this moment, she only connects with people to gain popularity. Nevertheless, the 2 other newbies only accept when they have met the people who want to connect personally. By contrast, all experts confirm that they are not only accepting invitations, but that they are also actively inviting people to connect with them. Moreover, they admit that, with regard to LinkedIn, the threshold is much lower because it is a professional medium, which is why they connect very easily with people because they realize that they could miss on good opportunities when they are too strict in connecting with people. However, they emphasize that quality is important. They do not only want to connect with people, they also want to manage and use their network. Morgan (2011) suggests in this respect that
Having a person as a LinkedIn connection is only a statistic. Keeping your name fresh with them is essential. This requires occasionally dropping a brief note to people on your connection list to bring them up to date on your professional activities, inform them of something interesting you read, or pass along a link for a site they might be interested in viewing. It’s essential to build personal relationships with key stakeholders and decision makers,[.] which is something the newbies do not do. Another difference with the newbies is that for the experts, it does not matter that they did not have met the person who wants to connect with them before. A good reason why that person wants to connect with them suffices. One expert said that he likes to have an answer on three questions before he accepts an invitation: where do we know each other from, why do you want to connect and how can I help you?

The research on LinkedIn has revealed that the newbies, as opposed to the experts, do not believe that one can differentiate oneself from their competitors via LinkedIn. The experts summed up a lot of aspects on which you can distinguish yourself from others in spite of the rigid format. Another remarkable aspect is the fact that the newbies, unlike the experts, are not actively connecting with interesting people and not participating in discussions on LinkedIn to make themselves known, which is, of course, essential to personal branding.

**Blog**

Another online medium that I included in my research was the blog. None of the newbies has a blog because, as mentioned earlier, they believe that they lack expertise and that they do not have a lot to say, especially not to keep an own blog up to date. Again, they look at the blog and personal branding from the job seeking perspective as is explained earlier. One newbie does not think that a blog is an appropriate tool to engage in personal branding, because she associates it with entertainment, whereas another newbie is of the opinion that a blog will only provide you very specific jobs, entirely related to what you write about. The 2 other newbies are convinced that a blog is indeed a useful personal branding tool even if they do not have one themselves. All experts, however, do have a blog of their own (3 experts) or are at least writing for someone else’s (2 are getting paid for it, 2 do it for free). They blog to show their expertise (ranging from HR and retention management over communication and social media to music) as well as their personality, an aspect which is wrongly considered to be inappropriate by the newbies. An important aspect with regard to personal branding which remains unnoticed for the newbies, but which is also touched upon by Harris and Rae (2011)
is the fact that “[b]logs enable a personal brand to be enhanced by articulating knowledge on specialist matters pertaining to the industry concerned, and provide opportunities for the individual’s ‘story’ to be told in a compelling and innovative way”. Your personal brand can also get a boost by “a network effect”, that can be created “if other bloggers link to a post on the blog,” Harris and Rae (2011) explain, “or if comments are made on someone else’s blog, leading to an enhanced presence on major search engines over time.” The musician, however, blogs for many other reasons as well: to keep her fans posted, to share travel stories, to promote her crowdfunding campaign etc. The expert who indicated that a blog is his favourite personal branding medium maintains that he likes blogging simply because he has a lot of inspiration, he likes to share his opinion and knowledge (controversially or not) and because he likes to get feedback from others in order to improve himself. Moreover, he notices quite rightly that it is sometimes not clear which origin a tweet has, whereas the content on a blog is entirely yours, otherwise you should not start blogging. Furthermore, you have full control over the content of your blog, which is perfect for personal branding as was mentioned in the literature review.

By way of transition to the discussion of the medium “website”, I would first like to point at a characteristic which distinguishes a blog from a website. This characteristic is also described by Harris and Rae (2011) who state that “[a] blog is different from a website because it is interactive, written in a ‘conversational voice’ and frequently updated. It is potentially an effective form of viral marketing if others pass on or link back to the author’s posts in significant numbers.” The aspect of viral marketing should be nuanced a bit because providing links to someone’s website is also possible of course. It is, however, true that blogging is much more interactive, whereas a website is much more one-way communication.

**Website**

In the interviews, all respondents, except for one newbie, indeed agreed that a blog is a better means for engaging in personal branding. However, most of the interviewees mentioned that a website could be very interesting for certain profiles, e.g. people who work in the more creative sectors such as graphic and web design. Because they do not think that a website is useful for them, none of the respondents has a website about themselves. Nevertheless, one expert has a website about his company and an online platform which he provides with content and one expert, the musician, will create a website soon, on which links to her various social media, newsletters and several other messages will be introduced.
In general, we can thus conclude that with regard to the online medium, the website, there exists little difference between the opinions of newbies and experts. A clear majority of the respondents prefer the blog as personal branding tool in comparison with the website, but a website could be a useful means to promote yourself and proof of your expertise when you belong to the graphic design and similar sectors.

**Connecting the online media**

Having all these different social media, causes problems regarding authenticity. Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011) argue in this respect that “difficulties may arise when a person wishes to create multiple brands for different audiences” and that “advocates of personal branding recommend that a personal branding message be clear and consistent, creating an air of authenticity.”

The issue of developing different identities and brands is already addressed earlier and is also enquired in the interviews. With regard to this, there appeared to be big differences between the experts and the newbies. Whereas the newbies admitted that their online profiles are completely separated (except for one newbie who provides a link to his Twitter account on LinkedIn but nothing else), the experts emphasized that they indeed link their profiles much more in order to communicate a consistent and clear brand. They also link LinkedIn to Twitter and vice versa. One expert observes, however, that her profiles are not linked very well, because she believes that, otherwise, her different profiles would not have the surplus value she wants her profiles to have. 3 experts also note that they often put the same posts (e.g. links to their blogs, articles, music events etc.) on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn (and their blogs) so that their profiles are linked and the content they want to bring out is spread more easily. The newbies, except for one who occasionally puts similar posts online, do not do this, since they admit that their online media are actually separate channels.

Another way of synchronizing your different profiles is by using the same photo on every social medium, which is done by every expert: they all use the same photo on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, blogs etc. 3 newbies, on the other hand, only use the same photo on their Twitter and LinkedIn, whereas their Facebook profile displays another, more frivolous photo. The other newbie, who is only on Facebook and LinkedIn, also uses a frivolous and a more formal profile picture respectively.
We can thus conclude that, although personal branding happens in different ways on different channels, it is better to link your profiles in order to carry out a consistent and clear brand to your audiences. The newbies typically selected LinkedIn as the best medium to brand themselves, but the experts remarked quite rightly that it is the combination of online profiles which complete each other that reinforces your personal brand and makes you stand out.

2.2.3. Offline personal branding

This subchapter contains a discussion of the results of my research regarding offline personal branding, an aspect which is often forgotten and overlooked in personal branding literature, but which is at least as important as the online part. The different aspects I will focus on are the possibilities of promoting yourself on networking events and job fairs; CV, motivation letter and elevator pitch; job interview.

Networking events and job fairs

With regard to the issue of promoting yourself on job fairs, there proved to be a clear consensus between the respondents. Because they have all been to a job fair, they came to the conclusion that it is possible to engage in personal branding on such events, but they argued that it is more difficult to differentiate from your competitors since the main goal of the visitors of a job fair is indeed to find a job, whereas on a networking event this is not automatically the case. Besides, one has more difficulties with standing out because a job fair is mostly visited by a lot more people than a networking event.

More interesting were the results of the research on the networking events. Whereas all 4 experts have attended at least one networking event, 3 of the newbies have not visited such events, except for one newbie who explained that the one time he went to a networking event, he did not speak to anyone. 2 newbies admit that they would never approach other people at such an event themselves and the 2 other newbies would try it, but not without hesitation. Here, we can detect a different attitude in comparison with the experts who attend networking events regularly, some of them even a couple of times per month. All experts enjoy coming out of their comfort zone, taking initiative and stepping to strange people to talk to them. They come to such events to see what goes on in society, to establish connections, to share knowledge etc. According to one of the experts, “real personal branding is going to an event and being introduced to somebody by someone you know” because, this way, the threshold is
of approaching total strangers is lower and possible awkward situations are avoided. Another expert states that, on networking events, she profiles herself first as a communication student and then she mentions that she is also a singer-songwriter. This way, she can leave open different possibilities because she realizes that the combination of the two are an advantage in the communication sector. She is convinced that being social and occupying herself with branding day in day out distinguishes her.

Another clear difference between the two groups is that all experts browse the participants list before going to the networking event in order to select who they would like to talk to. One expert even tries to speak to everyone on the event, but when the event will be too crowded, he also takes a look at the participants list. As mentioned earlier, the newbies are much more reserved: most of them would browse the list, but the threshold of actually talking to the people of their choice is still high. The same goes for the fact that all experts mention on the social media (in their status, via LinkedIn, in a tweet (which is mostly the case) etc.) that they will attend a networking event, for example to encourage others to go to the event as well, whereas the newbies respond that they would not do this.

In conclusion, we can say that the experts have a more open, social and enthusiastic character than the newbies. Moreover, the experts understand that they are making personal branding into a lifestyle, as it should be. In what follows, I will take a closer look at how people can profile themselves in a job seeking context. First, I will focus on the personal branding possibilities of the CV, motivation letter and elevator pitch.

### CV, motivation letter and elevator pitch

All newbies have a CV, but they admit that it corresponds with the standard and more formal format rather than being very different from other CVs. One newbie even said that she was given the advice from Randstad on a job fair to brighten up her CV. She confided me, however, that she does not think this is necessary, because she will work in the construction industry, a sector in which there is enough work. She hypothesizes that it does not really matter how your CV looks like except when you are active in a sector in which the competition is very high. The other newbies also claimed that a CV is not a very appropriate tool to engage in personal branding, because of the format which restricts you. One newbie who has some experience in the HR sector (she studied industrial psychology) pointed out that you can always attach a recommendation letter, mention good grades or convert your CV into a video CV in order to differentiate yourself.
From the interviews with the experts I received a lot more output regarding the personal branding possibilities of the CV. One of the experts suggested that one should always include extra and specific accomplishments, not just the usual things such as previous jobs. He argued that you could stand out by adding to your CV which books you read or which hobbies you have. He believes that these aspects reveal a lot about your personality: he gave the example of him giving spinning lessons which, according to him, indicates that you enjoy standing in front of a group and that you can lead a team. Another powerful personal branding aspect which he touches upon, and which is also confirmed by the newbie who works in HR, is the photo. A photo can tell a lot more about you than you could imagine. Furthermore, suggestions like including links to your social media profiles (recruiters will check you, so why not directly putting these profile links on your CV?), trainings or presentations that you attended, quotes that inspire or characterize you, a portfolio or video about yourself, elevator pitch etc. Another expert states that his CV is actually a photo of him as watermark across the entire page. In short, they were convinced that there exist a lot of possibilities to brighten up your CV and make it special. 2 experts, however, were of the opinion that a CV is beginning to be outdated and that one should actually look at their online CV, their LinkedIn page.

As for the motivation letter, 2 experts who are active in the recruitment industry radically state that motivation letters are completely useless first and foremost because they are often not looked at by the HR workers. One expert knows that they are not read, but he regards it as a good tool for personal branding because you are not bound by a format like the CV. The newbies, on the other hand, all believe that a motivation letter is more appropriate for promoting yourself than the CV. 2 newbies know that the CV is indeed more important than the motivation letter because recruiters always look at the CV first (and, as mentioned earlier, this is often the only thing they look at), but they are of the opinion that it should be the other way round because a motivation letter is a better means to convey your personality.

Considerable differences of opinion between newbies and experts have resulted from the discussion regarding the usefulness of the so-called elevator pitch, a short presentation of yourself that you have in the back of your mind and that you will use when an (un)expected career opportunity crops up. The fact is, 3 experts are really convinced that an elevator pitch can distinguish you from your competitors, one expert prefers spontaneity, whereas one newbie has never heard of the concept ‘elevator pitch’ before, 2 newbies have an elevator pitch, but do not use it and only one newbie is convinced that it can be useful.
Also here conflicted views are shown: whereas the experts generally maintain that it is important to distinguish yourself on your CV, the newbies assert that this is almost not possible, because of the rigid format of the CV. With regard to the motivation letter, the newbies believe this is a much better tool for engaging in personal branding, but they do not realize that the motivation letter is mostly not read by recruiters. Finally, opposite perspectives were taken concerning the elevator pitch: the experts advise people to create one and use it in appropriate situations, whereas the newbies are not (yet) appreciating the concept.

**Job interview**

The last aspect of offline personal branding that I will discuss, is the job interview. The questions I asked here involved to what extent the interviewees prepared themselves for a job interview and how they differentiated themselves using personal branding. The answers were varied. 2 experts maintain that they prepare themselves thoroughly: one of them works in the recruitment industry and even gives tips to applicants and has written a blog on the concept of the job interview. He reflects on which questions he will ask the company he wants to work for and he tries to imagine which questions the company can ask him. He has constructed a story in his head which will come out during the interview and through which his personal brand will become clear to the interviewer. The two other experts prefer doing the interview without much preparation because this also brings stress: one is afraid to diverge from what has been prepared, which can have pernicious effects as well. They like to have a spontaneous and informal conversation, which belongs, of course, also to personal branding. According to these 2 experts, one should focus on the importance of enthusiasm and inquisitiveness, 2 aspects that can best be shown in a more informal context. They state that skills can always be acquired as long as someone disposes of the mentioned characteristics. As far as the newbies is concerned, 3 of them admit that they hardly prepare themselves except maybe for the fact that some of them check out the website of the company in order to get an idea of the company’s culture.

It is clear that there exists some discord amongst not only newbies and experts, but also among the experts themselves. Although the majority of the newbies do not prepare themselves thoroughly for a job interview, half of the experts are of the same opinion as the newbies, whereas the other half crams for a job interview. There is, however, a difference in perspective towards the issue of personal branding: 3 of the newbies do not perceive
themselves as being unique and are cynical about the possibility of using personal branding at interviews. The experts do agree, however, that they all engage in personal branding during job interviews, be it by means of thorough preparation or by means of an informal conversation.

2.2.4. Online vs. offline personal branding

The concluding part of my research consisted of the questions about the preference of the respondents regarding online or offline personal branding and which advantages or disadvantages both ways of promoting yourself have. None of the experts really expressed a clear preference: they all believed that both are needed and that the two reinforce each other. One of the experts described personal branding as “a serial story which can work in two opposite directions”, which means that it is possible for someone to meet another person offline and that you connect and keep in touch online so that that person has to turn to your online personal brand. On the other hand, it is also possible for someone to connect with another person online and that you continue this relationship offline so that the person in question witnesses you as an offline brand. Another expert who organizes networking events (“Open Coffees” which are networking events taking place in Flanders for entrepreneurs who can network in a rather informal context while having a cup of coffee) remarked, however, that online personal branding is fast, extremely varied and makes an appropriate framework to organize and focus information, but that the core aspects still happen offline. Offline personal branding is still perceived as being more reliable and qualitative than online, e.g. people still prefer seeing each other face to face to sign a contract etc., whereas online personal branding has more the connotation of being a “sales pitch” (although this does not necessarily have to be the case, of course). Nevertheless, they all agree that you are responsible for the quality of your online personal brand so that the quality issue is actually nuanced.

As mentioned earlier, the newbies are especially familiar with the online personal branding, not only because none of them, except for one, have actually attended networking events, but also because they associate personal branding especially with online activity without considering the offline part. When I informed them about offline personal branding, all newbies answered that they find it much easier to create an online brand and to connect online because they believe they are not quite extravert. One of the newbies also admitted that you can be who you want to be online, but when you come in contact with people offline, it is a
lot more difficult to hide your bad characteristics, which are, of course, also essential to your personal brand.

We can, thus, draw the conclusion that newbies are less aware of the fact that personal branding also happens offline and that their preference, consequently, goes to online personal branding. The experts do realize that the both intertwine and that they are equally important, but that offline personal branding guarantees more qualitative connections and that online personal branding is much faster and easier to centralize more information about yourself.
3. Conclusion

This research has shown that a vast majority of young professionals are aware that recruiters and potential employers check them on the internet, but that some young professionals do not understand the full potential of the concept personal branding which is a solution to the fact that recruiters check them out. The general answer to the research question that was raised in the introduction of this paper, “What is personal branding according to young professionals and how do the perspectives between people who are really engaged in personal branding and people who are not differ?”, was time and time again confirmed throughout the interviews. The fact is, the research has proven that all newbies define personal branding merely as a strategy for differentiating themselves from their competitors in their search for a job. The interviews with the experts showed, however, that this is just one of the reasons for engaging in personal branding. They assert that personal branding is not something which you can switch on and off every time you are applying for a job. Personal branding is your personality, reputation and your effect on your surroundings. Good personal branding is an on-going process of which you have control, but which you have to account for 24/7. The experts stress the importance of the versatility of personal branding: professional as well as personal information tell something about yourself and are, consequently, both equally important for your personal brand. The experts maintain that personal branding is not just differentiating yourself in a job context, it is also promoting and distinguishing yourself from others by sharing knowledge, showing your expertise, humour or other things, helping others etc.

Therefore, we can conclude that everybody has a personal brand, but that some are more developed than others, depending of course on the extent to which you realize what personal branding is and on the extent to which you are active online and offline. According to the experts, this, however, does not mean that you have to be on every social networking site or in different offline unions because, this way, your personal brand would run the risk of getting splintered across several sites or associations. It is important for someone’s personal brand to remain visible and identifiable (e.g. one of the experts is known on the internet as “iOnAsJ”).

This research consisted, thus, of two main research topics: online and offline personal branding. With regard to the topic of online personal branding, I can say in conclusion that Facebook is perceived by all respondents as the least useful tool to engage in personal branding because of its unprofessional format and private use, whereas LinkedIn is generally preferred. The experts also pointed at the importance of Twitter and blogs as excellent
personal branding tools, but they emphasized that good personal branding is actually done on social media which are balanced and linked to each other, forming an undivided whole. In this respect, the research has revealed that newbies should adjust their social media profiles more so that a consistent and controllable personal brand is established instead of only having separate profiles.

With regard to the research on offline personal branding, I can conclude that the newbies are not aware of the branding possibilities here. They are not convinced of the fact that one can present oneself as being unique on a CV, motivation letter or job interview. There seems to be a discrepancy between newbies and experts regarding attitude towards promoting yourself offline as well: the newbies consider themselves as not being extravert enough to actively promote themselves on networking events and job fairs, whereas the experts do this regularly while enjoying it. Finally, we can conclude that the newbies and personal branding literature in general focus much more on online than offline personal branding, which is regarded by the experts as being equally important for your personal brand as online branding: in fact, the two reinforce each other.

To conclude, I want to touch again on the conflict between one’s personal brand and the brand of his/her employer. In the interviews, I asked the respondents if others and their surroundings influence their personal brands, which seemed to be the case. However, I investigated this issue not into detail, which is why I introduce the conflict between personal and employer brand as a possible and very interesting research topic in the future.
4. References


5. Appendix

Questions in-depth interviews

Algemene vragen

1) Beschouwt u uzelf als uniek? Hoezo?

2) Wat is personal branding volgens u?

3) Wat is de reden waarom u aan personal branding doet?

4) In welke mate bent u actief bezig met het uitbreiden van uw netwerk?

5) Bent u zich ervan bewust dat willekeurige rekruteerders en potentiële werkgevers u opzoeken op het internet?

6) Wat is volgens u het belangrijkste en beste middel om aan personal branding te doen: Online of offline?

7) In welke mate dragen anderen bij aan het creëren van uw personal brand? Hoe wordt u dus beïnvloed?

8) Met welk merk zou u uzelf associëren en waarom?

1) Apple  3) HP  5) H&M  7) Wibra

2) Disney  4) Pepsi  6) Nike  8) Veuve Clicquot
Vragen rond online personal branding

Facebook

9) Om welke redenen gebruikt u Facebook?

10) Welke soort posts zet u allemaal op Facebook? Amusante of eerder informatieve posts?

11) In welke mate is uw profiel afgeschermd voor anderen?

12) Selecteert u in foto’s die u op Facebook zet?

13) Verwijdert u tags of laat u zelfs mensen weten dat ze uw foto gewoonweg moeten verwijderen?

14) Verwijdert u soms ongepaste posts of reacties van andere mensen op uw profiel?

15) Gebruikt u Facebook met de gedachte in het achterhoofd dat mogelijke toekomstige werkgevers u proberen te screenen via deze weg?

16) Liket u pagina’s of wordt u lid van groepen die met uw beroepsinteresse te maken hebben? Post u hier dan ook op en/of neemt u geregeld deel aan online discussies of chat om in de aandacht te komen?

Twitter

17) Om welke redenen gebruikt u Twitter?

18) Welke soort tweets stuurt u meestal de wereld in? Eerder informatieve of eerder amusante?

19) Gebruikt u Twitter met de gedachte in het achterhoofd dat mogelijke toekomstige werkgevers u proberen te screenen via deze weg?

20) Volgt u bepaalde bedrijven of experts, belangrijke personen die iets zouden kunnen betekenen voor uw carrière?

LinkedIn

21) Om welke redenen gebruikt u LinkedIn?
22) Wordt u lid van verschillende groepen of volgt u specifieke bedrijven in de hoop dat deze u opmerken?

23) Neemt u ook geregeld deel aan discussies in de groepen? Post u hier soms vragen, artikels of likt u sommige comments? Contacteert u leden in deze groep rechtstreeks in de hoop dat zij iets voor u kunnen betekenen?

24) Denkt u dat dit alles uw zichtbaarheid of kans op een job kan verhogen of denkt u dat dit relatief weinig uithaalt?

25) Vanaf wanneer conecteert u met iemand op LinkedIn? Is dat na een ontmoeting, na een telefoongesprek, e-mail of als u die persoon al meermaals gezien hebt en u hem/haar al een beetje kent?

26) Gebruikt u LinkedIn met de gedachte in het achterhoofd dat mogelijke werkgevers u proberen te screenen via deze weg?

27) Heeft u een persoonlijke URL op uw LinkedIn-profiel die u gebruikt in uw zakelijke communicatie: CV, motivatiebrief, e-mail, business cards, profielen op andere sociale netwerken?

28) Heeft u een samenvatting van uzelf geschreven op LinkedIn? Bent u zich ervan bewust dat u in deze samenvatting trefwoorden kan gebruiken die uw vindbaarheid vergroten?

29) Welke zaken zet u allemaal onder “ervaring”? Zijn dat enkel echte jobs, stageplaatsen, vakantiejobs,…? Waarom?

30) Hoe onderscheidt u zich volgens uzelf van anderen op LinkedIn?

Blog

31) Schrijft u vaak voor blogs of heeft u misschien zelf een blog?

32) Om welke redenen blogt u?

33) Blogt u met de gedachte in het achterhoofd dat mogelijke toekomstige werkgevers u proberen te screenen via deze weg?

34) Zijn dit eerder informatieve of amusante blogs?
Website

35) Heeft u een eigen website? Waarom?

36) Heeft u een website met de gedachte in het achterhoofd dat mogelijke toekomstige werkgevers u proberen te screenen via deze weg?

37) Profileert u zich hierop? Met welke doeleinden?

Vragen rond offline personal branding

Netwerkevents en jobbeurzen

38) Bent u ooit al naar een netwerkevent en/of jobbeurs geweest?

39) Profileert u zich hier ook of vindt u deze beurzen niet relevant om uzelf te promoten? Hoe profileert u zich?

40) Zekt u op voorhand op wie er naar het event komt? Zekt u dan foto’s van interessante mensen op zodat u deze kan aanspreken?

41) Zet u op voorhand op Facebook, Twitter of andere kanalen (a.d.h.v. hashtags, mentions etc.) dat u naar zo’n evenement gaat?

Cv

42) Heeft u al een cv?

43) Profileert u zich hier ook of vindt u dat niet relevant? Hoe profileert u zich?

Motivatiebrief

44) Heeft u een motivatiebrief geschreven?

45) Profileert u zich hier ook of vindt u dat niet relevant? Hoe profileert u zich?

46) Vindt u het belangrijker om u hier te onderscheiden van uw concurrenten dan op uw CV?

47) En als u weet dat men vaak eerst naar een CV kijkt en dan pas of zelfs niet naar de motivatiebrief?
Sollicitatiegesprek

48) Heeft u ooit al een sollicitatiegesprek gedaan?

49) Hoe heeft u zich hier geprofileerd?

Uitleidende vragen

50) Gebruikt u nog andere sociale media? Zo ja, welke en doet u hier aan personal branding?

51) Welk soort profielfoto’s gebruikt u op uw sociale profielen en gebruikt u consequent dezelfde foto?

52) In welke mate zijn uw profielen op de sociale media op elkaar afgestemd? Zijn alle kanalen met elkaar gelinkt?

53) Welk online medium vindt u persoonlijk het meest geschikt om aan personal branding te doen? Welk het minst?

54) Heeft u een elevator pitch? Denkt u dat de elevator pitch een goed instrument is om uzelf te onderscheiden van de concurrentie?

55) Deze vraag is abstracter en alle antwoorden/fantasieën zijn mogelijk: Welke kanalen stelt u voor om nog efficiënter aan personal branding te doen?

56) Profileert u zich nog op andere manieren t.o.v. anderen?
Ghent University
Academic Year 2012-2013
Master Multilingual Business Communication

Internship Report: Young Prozzz

Gertjan Reunes

Promotor: Astrid Vandendaele
Content

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 3
2. Young Prozzz ......................................................................................................................... 3
3. The internship ....................................................................................................................... 5
   3.1. Search & Selection ........................................................................................................... 5
      3.1.1. Namezzz ................................................................................................................... 5
      3.1.2. Job posting ............................................................................................................... 6
   3.2. Young Prozzz ................................................................................................................... 6
      3.2.1. Creative & commercial activities .............................................................................. 6
      3.2.2. Event promotion & organisation ............................................................................ 7
      3.2.3. Translation & editorial work ................................................................................... 8
4. Personal evaluation ............................................................................................................... 8
5. Appendices ............................................................................................................................ 9
   5.1. Commercial PowerPoint presentation (abstracts) ........................................................... 9
   5.2. Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on LinkedIn .......... 10
   5.3. Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on Facebook ........ 10
   5.4. Translation of the partner dossier (abstract) .................................................................. 11
   5.5. Press release .................................................................................................................. 12
   5.6. Blog article .................................................................................................................... 13
1. Introduction

Developing qualitative and exciting interpersonal relationships and skills belongs to one of the most important goals I set for myself. This is the main reason why I decided to do an internship at Young Prozzz, subsidiary company\(^1\) of the recruitment agency Search & Selection. The fact that Young Prozzz is all about expanding your professional network with interesting people who can be of importance for your career was a trigger for me to conquer this trainee post. During a period of three months, I have learned the tricks of the trade with regard to not only Human Resources but also with regard to communication towards a young and varied, but professional audience to which I belong as well.

In this report, I will first give a brief description of the company, followed by an explanation of all my job responsibilities and, to conclude, I will give a personal evaluation of my internship.

2. Young Prozzz

Contrary to what most people think, Young Prozzz is not a company in itself. It is rather a project started by Thomas Tielemans, Communications & Relationship Manager at Search & Selection. He refers to Young Prozzz as an ‘intrapreneurial activity’, a construction or company within the company. One can describe Young Prozzz as being ‘intrapreneural’ because the range of its activities varies a lot from Search & Selection’s. The main difference is the informality which is considered to be of paramount importance to Young Prozzz. Young Prozzz exists for almost 3 years and has evolved quickly in this short period of time. Originally, Young Prozzz was set up as an online platform which gave young professionals advice on their careers. People could ask questions and post interesting articles etc. Due to the success, Thomas had to expand quickly and move the project in a new direction. He transformed the online platform into a manageable Facebook page and he worked out the offline aspect of the ‘Meetups’. As a result, today, Young Prozzz can be perceived as an open networking group of young and starting professionals. As a consequence, graduates, young job seekers and professionals ranging from approximately 18 to maximum 30 years old

\(^1\) Young Prozzz is rather a project of Search & Selection than an actual subsidiary company. One cannot depict Young Prozzz as an individual company because it is still fully integrated in and sponsored by Search & Selection. It cannot exist on its own, but I will refer to Young Prozzz here as a subsidiary company, because it is only a matter of time until Young Prozzz will be able to pay one’s way.
belong to its target group. The fact that Young Prozzz not only addresses a young target group, but also consists of a very young team grants credibility to the organisation and gives it a fresh and positive image. The Young Prozzz team includes interns and ambassadors, all supervised by Thomas Tielemans, the founder of Young Prozzz and still a young professional himself.

But what exactly are the main activities of Young Prozzz at this moment? As mentioned earlier, Young Prozzz consists of both an online and offline aspect, which does not mean, however, that the two do not overlap. In fact, the online and offline activities do intertwine: by building online communities, i.e. several networking spaces on the Young Prozzz website arranged according to specific areas of interest, and organising offline networking events, the ‘Young Prozzz Meetups’, Young Prozzz offers the young professionals opportunities to work actively on their careers. The concept of the Meetups is innovative in this sense that the Meetups are networking events where graduates, young starters and employers meet each other and connect in an informal way. Networking is often stimulated by the organisation of business speed dating sessions in which participants have to talk with several conversation partners during a couple of minutes and through which career opportunities may arise.

As I mentioned earlier, Young Prozzz is a project of Search & Selection, a recruitment and selection agency founded in 1977 by Frans Claerhout. Search & Selection is a private limited liability company consisting of a staff of 20 employees on average: approximately 15 HR consultants are administratively and logistically supported by a small, but varied team. Besides the main activity of supporting employers in their search for and evaluation of employees, Search & Selection also provides advice on specific issues concerning Human Resources Management. The company works for private as well as public enterprises and does not only have offices in Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels, but they are also active on the Dutch market in Breda, the French market in Lille and the South African market in Pretoria.

---

2 One should, however, bear in mind that Young Prozzz aims especially at young professionals who enjoyed higher education, i.e. professionals who are at least 21 years old. Nevertheless, there are exceptions, which is why the described range is broader.
3. The internship

Due to the fact that I had a whole range of different job responsibilities, I will only discuss the five most important ones. Because I had to work both for Search & Selection and Young Prozzz, I have divided this chapter in two sections, each of them containing a description of the tasks performed for Search & Selection and Young Prozzz respectively.

3.1. Search & Selection

Regarding the work I have done for Search & Selection, I have selected the 2 main activities: working in the database of Search & Selection called ‘Namezzz’, and job posting on several job sites on behalf of the company.

3.1.1. Namezzz

The biggest task for Search & Selection consisted of research in their database Namezzz. After the company had done a big mailing (containing their annual newsletter) to all the contact persons of their clients and prospects in November 2012, there were a lot of emails which were not delivered properly. My assignment was to detect the cause of the returned emails and solve it by updating the database. This meant that I had to figure out which email address belonged to whom and what the exact reason of the return was. The tools I used varied: LinkedIn, Google and the website of the company in question are just a few examples. The most common causes of the returned emails were that the contact person had changed job, had retired or the company was adjudicated bankrupt. Only if the online research was unsuccessful, I was allowed to call the company and ask for more information concerning the email address of the contact person. The reason why I had to try to solve the problem online first, was the fact that most companies are suspicious when a recruitment agency calls for information regarding one of their employees. The connotation of the recruitment agency wanting to steal away the employee in question was always there. Such a situation could jeopardise Search & Selection’s relationship with this company. Thanks to this task, I have developed a more sensitive and collaborative way of approaching people and companies.
3.1.2. Job posting

An example of one of the smaller tasks I had to accomplish, was posting vacancies on behalf of two of Search & Selection’s clients, Lego and Frisomat. The profiles for these vacancies were candidates with a higher economic education and background, which meant that I mainly had to address business schools like Vlerick, Antwerp Management School, Solvay etc. Furthermore, this job posting implied that I had to judge which job sites were relevant before I could post the vacancies in question (e.g. a business analyst, junior manager export & affiliate companies, associate marketing manager etc.).

3.2. Young Prozzz

The largest part of my time of the internship I have devoted to Young Prozzz because, as I have mentioned earlier, Young Prozzz is a fairly young organisation which continues to grow fast. Therefore, more labour force is needed, which is why I had to work mainly for Young Prozzz. The range of job responsibilities was even wider compared to Search & Selection. I will discuss three main categories: the creative & commercial activities I had to perform, event promotion & organisation and translation & editorial work.

3.2.1. Creative & commercial activities

Due to the fact that Young Prozzz is a young company, there is still a lot of room for developing and implementing new ideas which is why the Young Prozzz interns could take at almost any time initiative to develop new concepts and actions. Regularly, I engaged with two other interns in brainstorm sessions concerning viral marketing in order to increase the brand awareness of Young Prozzz by connecting more with the target group, the young professionals. I can’t go into detail here, because some of the actions we have worked out, will only be introduced within a couple of months. I can, however, reveal that one of the brainstorm sessions involved inventing better ways to create more interaction on the website and the social media (including more visual and humorous posts on Facebook, the introduction of the Young Prozzz Challengezzz, chat opportunities and a reward system for the ‘better networkers’ on the website). The results of these sessions were integrated in a report which will be put into practice over the next months.
The internship at Young Prozzz introduced me to some extent to the commercial world. This does not mean that I had to sell certain formulas directly to the customer. This happened in a more indirect way by creating a visually attractive and convincing PowerPoint presentation, which summarized the sponsor dossier which was drafted by Thomas (cf. Appendix 5.1.). This presentation was an absolute necessity, because we discovered that the sponsor dossier, i.e. a document with specific commercial formulas for which companies can sign up to enter into partnership with Young Prozzz, was not read by a lot of companies due to the long text.\(^3\) As a result, I had to make sure that the PowerPoint presentation was visually attractive enough to convince companies to team up with Young Prozzz.

3.2.2. Event promotion & organisation

Obviously I also had to aid with the core activity of Young Prozzz: the promotion and organisation of the Young Prozzz events. Two kinds of events need to be distinguished here: the job fairs and the events fully organised by Young Prozzz, the ‘Meetups’.

What I had to do at the job fairs was basically to promote Young Prozzz to the visitors. I had to approach them and actively explain what Young Prozzz stands for and convince the visitors to register on the spot. This was a very intensive activity which sharpened my communication skills and made me more confident to interact with total strangers.

With regard to the Meetups, the job responsibilities were much more varied. One month before every Meetup, I was responsible for the online communication and promotion of the Meetup to the target group. This included mailing to graduates, posting on the Facebook page, Twitter and LinkedIn. Furthermore, I had to search for relevant Facebook and LinkedIn groups (which meant that I temporarily had to become member) and post in these as well. E.g.: For the Design Meetup on the 2\(^{nd}\) of May 2013, I posted links to the website and the event in groups such as “Creative Skills”, “Design is dead”, “Design Vlaanderen” etc. Other examples can be found in the Appendices (for the MarCom Meetup: cf. Appendices 5.2 and 5.3). During the event, I had to welcome the guests and do some administrative work such as giving them name tags and personalised business cards with the logo of Young Prozzz on it.

\(^3\) The fact that the addressees did not click on the dossier could be determined with the help of a special mailing programme called Campaigndock.
Later on the evening, when everybody was present, I could go and talk to people and start networking myself.

### 3.2.3. Translation & editorial work

A great deal of my time at Young Prozzz was spent on translating Dutch texts to English. Amongst such tasks belong the translation of the entire Young Prozzz website and the sponsor dossier which was later transformed in a PowerPoint presentation which also had to be translated to English (for an extract from the translation of the sponsor dossier: cf. Appendix 5.4.).

Finally, I have done a great deal of writing too. Not only have I written press releases (cf. Appendix 5.5.), but also blog articles (cf. Appendix 5.6.) were part of my duties. Young Prozzz has recently launched a blog of which some articles are written or at least read and corrected by me.

### 4. Personal evaluation

In general, I believe this internship was a positive and instructive experience. Especially at the level of organising events and networking I have learned a lot. One of the advantages of a Young Prozzz Meetup was the fact that it gave me the opportunity to get in contact with a bunch of interesting people (some of them will surely be of importance for my future career). These events made me realize that it is very important to connect with people and to expand your personal network.

The tasks I most enjoyed, were the creative and commercial activities because of the fact that we were given a lot of freedom to develop our own ideas, how crazy they might have been. I must admit, however, that I expected to be a bit more involved in the core commercial activities. This is, however, completely understandable because Thomas has a lot to do both for Young Prozzz as for Search & Selection and some of the less attractive activities were passed on to the interns. Nevertheless, I cannot deny the usefulness of this internship. Now that Young Prozzz taught me how to become an entrepreneur of my own career, I am more than sure that I am ready to enter the job market!
5. Appendices

5.1. Commercial PowerPoint presentation (abstracts)
5.2. Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on LinkedIn

Social Media Marketing in Belgium

Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on LinkedIn

5.3. Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on Facebook

Recent Posts By Others

Promotion of the upcoming (Marketing Communications) Meetup on Facebook
Not another recruitment event

Not another recruitment event? Indeed, a Young Prozz Meetup is much more than that. No exhibition hall where companies are tied to their own fair stand, but an open networking event full of dynamics situated on an attractive location. You don’t have to claim attention, you have to earn it. We make sure that the young professionals want to pay attention to your vacancies by actively promoting your company and by involving you and your co-workers in the event.

With visibility for your brand and vacancies on the website and in the mailing communication, you reach in no time hundreds of ambitious young potentials within your discipline. Moreover, the association between your brand and Young Prozz creates a leverage for this brand.

Through live promotion on the event, you reinforce your company image and you put your vacancies, services and products in the spotlight. This can be done by setting up a roll-up or banner, by product placement and by providing promotional articles and brochures in the goodie bags which will be taken home by all the persons present.
By putting a guest speaker on the program and delegating own co-workers to the event, you can personally address, with a minimal investment, a large group of relevant profiles.

5.5. Press release

Young Prozgg
Oude Houtlei 125
9000 GENT
Tel. +32 (0) 9 225 73 65
GSM +32 (0) 494 88 74 65
www.youngprozgg.com

PERSBERICHT

Maandag 17 juni 2013

YOUNG PROZZZ LEERT DE NIEUWE GENERATIE NETWERKEN

GENT – Netwerken, voor velen een vaag begrip, maar voor Young Prozgg dé manier om je carrière een boost te geven. Met het organiseren van netwerkevents, gestopt in een nieuw jasje, biedt deze open netwerkgroep startende professionals een kans om op een informele manier contacten te leggen met interessante mensen en misschien zelfs hun droomjob te versieren. Op vrijdag 21 juni komen ze met de vierde editie van hun meest succesvolle event, de ‘MarCom Meetup’.

Wat twee jaar geleden begon als een klein online adviesplatform voor afstuderende jongeren is nu uitgegroeid tot een professionele netwerkorganisatie onder leiding van Thomas Tielemans, de bezieler van Young Prozgg die tevens actief is in de Human Resources sector. Met de bouw van meer dan 15 unieke online communities, elk een apart vakgebied of sector vertegenwoordigend, helpt Young Prozgg jongeren aan hun carrière te werken. Voor elk van deze online communities organiseren ze sfeervolle bijeenkomsten, de ‘Meetups’, waarop men nuttige informatie kan vergaren.
van o.a. gastsprekers uit het vakgebied. Ook kunnen de jongeren tussen ‘pot en pint’ een hele avond contacten leggen met gelijkgezinden of met andere jonge professionals die betekenisvol kunnen zijn voor hun carrière. Deze mix tussen studenten, starters en ervaren werkgevers zorgt voor een inspirerende omgeving waar informeel netwerken centraal staat en verlaagt tevens de drempel tussen jobzoeker en werkgever. De Meetups vinden plaats op sfeervolle locaties zoals het Nemrodhuis, een oude suikerraffinaderij in het centrum van Gent en schouwtoneel voor de eerstvolgende MarCom Meetup.

Vrijdag organiseert Young Prozzz de vierde editie van de MarCom Meetup voor laatstejaarsstudenten en jonge professionals in marketing en communicatie. In samenwerking met Arteveldehogeschool hopen ze onder meer de afstuderende studenten van de desbetreffende school een duwtje in de rug te geven en niet alleen met een diploma, maar misschien ook met een leuke job huiswaarts te doen keren. Bovendien worden er tal van experts uitgenodigd van o.a. Duvel Moortgat en Van Marcke Group. Tijdens de zogenaamde ‘salongesprekken’ met deze experts krijgen de aanwezigen de gelegenheid om ervaringen te delen en inspiratie op te doen. Met behulp van kleurcodes die elk een specifiek interesseveld aanduiden en persoonlijke business cards kan iedereen op een efficiënte manier met de juiste personen in contact gebracht worden. Aangevuld met een heuse business speed dating waarbij je in 15 minuten tijd 5 verschillende mensen ontmoet die boeiende carrièremogelijkheden kunnen opleveren, vormt deze Meetup een leuke en gevarieerde ervaring, boordevol carrièremogelijkheden.

Aan de hand van dit verfrissend concept kunnen jongeren gemakkelijk leren netwerken en een gefundeerde keuze maken voor de toekomst. Afspraak op vrijdag 21 juni in het Nemrodhuis dus.

/////EINDE PERSBERICHT/////
achterhoofd van 30 seconden tot maximum 2 minuten, de tijdsduur om met de lift van de onderste naar de bovenste verdieping te gaan in een kantoorgebouw. De elevator pitch stelt je in staat om gedurende deze tijdsomspannende unieke en interessante eigenschappen over te brengen aan jouw potentiële werkgever die anders straks, samen met de kans op een droomjob, uitstapt.

Om een commercieel voorstel overtuigend te brengen, moeten bepaalde key-elementen steeds aan bod komen.

Het onderstaande voorbeeld zou de elevator pitch van Coca Cola kunnen zijn:

De structuur van de elevator pitch kan je ook toepassen om jezelf als talentvolle professional te presenteren. Er kan zich immers steeds een onverwachte carrièrekans voordoen. Stel bijvoorbeeld dat je op een evenement toevallig iemand ontmoet die werkt bij jouw gedroomde werkgever. Zulke kansen moet je grijpen door jezelf overtuigend te presenteren en zo een indruk achter te laten. Ook
op de sociale media word je gedwongen om in een beknopte zelfbeschrijving tot de kern van de zaak te komen. Wanneer een potentiële werkgever jouw profiel bezoekt, moet hij getriggerd zijn om verder te lezen of om met jou contact op te nemen. Daarom kan het ook nuttig zijn om jouw elevator pitch, zij het een beknopte versie van ongeveer drie korte, maar krachtige zinnen, op jouw cv op een plaats te zetten waar ze in het oog springt, bijvoorbeeld centraal bovenaan. Dit geeft jouw cv een persoonlijker karakter, iets wat werkgevers wel degelijk kunnen appreciate.


Een vaak gehoorde kritiek is het feit dat sommige mensen hun elevator pitch als arrogant beschouwen. De bescheiden Vlaming blijkt er inderdaad veel moeite mee te hebben om zichzelf te promoten omdat de grens tussen jezelf promoten en arrogantie wel degelijk vrij smal is. Zolang jouw pitch echter oprecht is en motivatie uitstraalt op de potentiële werkgever is er van arrogantie geen sprake. Positieve eigenschappen die je daadwerkelijk bezit, kunnen zonder problemen door jou in de verf gezet worden. Hoe zou je je anders kunnen onderscheiden van jouw concurrenten? Probeer je dus over deze perceptie heen te zetten en wees wie je bent.

Hoe stel ik nu echter een elevator pitch op?

De eenvoudigste manier is voor jezelf 3 woorden te bedenken die jou het best typen. Deze zijn, zoals eerder al gezegd, gerelateerd aan jouw competenties, kennis, interesses en passies. Rond deze 3 woorden bouw je een samenhangende en boeiende pitch die to the point is.

Op de website www.alumni.hbs.edu/careers/pitch van de Harvard Business School vind je echter ook nog een handige tool om een elevator pitch op te bouwen.
Eens je een elevator pitch hebt bedacht, is het belangrijk deze ook up to date te houden. Een elevator pitch van iemand die pas is afgestudeerd en nauwelijks of geen werkervaring heeft, ziet er uiteraard helemaal anders uit dan iemand die al een paar jaar op de arbeidsmarkt vertoeft en al zeer uiteenlopende werkervaringen verzameld heeft. Ook jouw interesses en passies kunnen en zullen over de tijd heen evolueren. Daarom is het dus belangrijk dat jouw pitch betrekking heeft op jouw huidige persoonlijkheid.

Genoeg gepalaverd: aan het werk!