



# The Cambridge Perspective

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## What High Profile Leaders Know (that you should too)



The competition for high profile senior executive roles and Board Directorships is fierce, and many talented executives are faced with the challenge of trying to stand out amongst an aggressive field of impressive, well-networked candidates.

Many are turning to Executive Branding to define their personal/business identity, but branding is only half of the formula for successfully increasing your leadership profile. You've got to get your brand message to your target buyer – the hiring decision maker – in a meaningful and memorable way.

Too many individuals overlook these important considerations until they're seeking to make a move. By then, it may be too late. In today's competitive market, it's critical to establish your presence early and market it constantly if you want to be 'top of mind' when those plum roles materialize.

Since  
**1976**

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### Me, Incorporated

The first step in Executive Branding is objectively identifying your core strengths, skills and areas of expertise, focusing on those that are most in demand, as well as the key values you represent and offer to a hiring organization. This will enable you to clarify them in your own mind, and develop a concise statement of your unique market value. And don't be afraid to 'blow your own horn' - that's the point.

Decision making is largely impacted by emotion, so it's important to define not just the concrete skills you offer, but the abstract values you represent, such as vision, judgment, leadership, integrity, etc. The objective is to marry your name to your expertise and values, by ensuring that your message clearly communicates that unique package.

It's also important to get market feedback to determine how your message is being received, and be prepared to adjust it accordingly. A service oriented executive recruiter can assist you in identifying your marketable strengths and provide objective input regarding your message, as they are in a position to see what your competition is doing.

Once you have carefully crafted and refined your personal brand, you will have a compelling message that connects with your audience, which can be used as the foundation of all your marketing efforts.

Before taking the next step, keep in mind: if you want to compete at the highest levels and be perceived as a 'player', you've got

to appear polished and up-to-date, so take a critical look at the image you project and update it, if necessary.

### Multimedia Marketing

It's not enough to follow the traditional, established formulas and avenues of promotion anymore if you want to be noticed by an audience that is continually inundated by mass media. Senior executives who want to stand out will have to be both omnipresent and memorable.



The first step in your promotional strategy should be to create an Executive Profile summarizing your brand message in a short statement, and listing your

past and present Directorships and Career History in point form on a single page. This document is your business card, mailer and advertisement, ready to distribute when needed.

The Internet has now become the most popular source of general information for business people, so it's critical to establish a web presence. Your current company web site is the most obvious place to be listed, but there are countless business directories, such as Zoom, Scott's, Hoover's and association/industry web sites that you can get yourself listed on to build your Internet presence.

For business networking, LinkedIn and ZING are popular, and Business Avatars like SecondLife and There.com are slowly redefining themselves to meet the needs of the business community. Whenever possible, be sure to include your Executive Profile or brand message in your description.

Serious executive branders may also have a personal web site focusing exclusively on selling their services or expertise, with detailed information on their career history, as well as a summary of their professional credentials and personal strengths. This is another opportunity to promote your Executive Profile or brand message.

Blogging is another way to showcase your expert credentials, and where you may have less competition, and bloggers are often a resource for the media. Blogs should be brief, easy-to-read and frequent – but quality content is absolutely critical.

Another opportunity to enhance your profile is by writing articles for industry or association newspapers or web sites, submitting brief articles on your area of expertise to local or national newspapers or business publications, and developing media relationships by refuting or offering creative insights on published articles. The more your name and opinions are recorded, the more well known your brand becomes.

#### **Do-It-Yourself**

No one can convey your expertise better than you. Public speaking, conferences and networking all provide opportunities to reach a larger audience, while reinforcing your expert status in your specialty area.

Teaching business courses or offering lectures to universities, colleges or business schools can also help to demonstrate your credibility and enhance your reputation in the market.

There are many creative ways to extend your network and reach. Look at what your peers and competitors are doing – particularly the successful ones – and decide what works best for you.

#### **Not There Yet?**

Executives who wish to strengthen their leadership skills before transitioning to

the next level have a range of options for professional development, and should continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge, if they want to compete at the highest levels. Professional training reinforces your credibility with hiring decision makers, particularly international management programs or Executive MBAs, and other professional industry designations. Continuous educational upgrading shows your commitment to excellence, and demonstrates your up-to-date knowledge of emerging issues and technologies. For those seeking Directorships, an ICD.D designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors is helpful.

Another excellent development opportunity is mentoring, for both the 'mentor' and 'mentee'. Mentoring is an excellent opportunity to share your ideas and experience with other levels and/or divisions, gain new knowledge, and build communication skills, developing your reputation as a leader throughout the organization. If your organization doesn't offer a mentoring program, you can establish a relationship on your own, sourcing referrals from peers and/or network contacts.

A professional coach can often take you to a higher level than you can reach on your own, while objectively addressing personal and professional issues that may limit your growth. An executive coach can help you to clarify issues, connect them to your business goals and performance objectives, and develop an action plan for meaningful and lasting change. This sense of control can improve confidence significantly, enabling you to perform at a higher level with less stress.

Interim Management as a career choice is an excellent way to hone your skills in your target area and expand your experience and network. Interim Managers work across industries, gaining a broad perspective through a range of diverse short-term projects. As a career option, Interim Management offers personal flexibility and helps in

networking by increasing your exposure to key decision makers and organizations.

For executives seeking to gain exposure to Board Directorship, there are many non-public and/or non-profit organizations that can't afford a paid Board of Directors, but are in need of expertise and eager for assistance. Offering your services in an advisory capacity can greatly enhance your profile, and lead to more significant opportunities.

Hiring decision makers are consumers. They are seeking a high quality product. A familiar, established brand name with a reputation for delivering on its promises is more likely to inspire confidence than an unknown commodity. That's why companies spend billions of dollars every year on branding – and it can work for you too.

Increasing your leadership profile can be the competitive edge you need to take your career to the next level. Cambridge offers Executive Coaching and Career Transition Coaching to assist you in identifying your areas of expertise and/or transitioning yourself into Board Directorship. Our senior executive coaches provide objective, confidential one-on-one counseling for personal and professional development.

Cambridge also offers Interim Management, Executive Search and Board Search services, assisting organizations in finding senior executive talent with the right skills and expertise, as well as a strong cultural fit to ensure the executive can reach and exceed the organization's goals.

Cambridge Management Planning combines responsive client service with targeted HR expertise to provide your organization with informed advice and flexible, customized services that meet your needs – within your budget.

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**Cambridge Management Planning offers a full suite of services including Executive Search, Board Search, Interim Management, Executive Coaching and Career Transition services. Call us for more information:**

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**Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.**

**-- Tom Peters' Career Survival Guide**