

Title:

4 Ideas to Market Yourself Better in Tough Times

Are the tough economic times making you nervous about your job? It is for many. But what can you do about it? How can you create a 'safer' situation for yourself?

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Gerard le Roux (that's me) is/am a 'guerrilla' job search coach – giving you the streetwise strategies on how to conduct a job search that works. Fast. Landing you more job interviews and more job offers.

You may have read some of my advice in The Star, Financial Mail, The Argus, online at Career Junction or on IOL.co.za, or heard me on Radio 702, Cape Talk 567, SAfm and Radio 2000.

Take my free job hunting e-course by sending a blank e-mail to tendays@getresponse.com or visit www.jobsearching.co.za/free-stuff to register. It's a real injection of energy, motivation and good advice. Also visit my website with many, many articles to assist you – www.jobsearching.co.za or take advantage of my CV writing service – find out more at www.wowcv.net.

All the best – oh, and by the way: there's a RANT! page on my website where you can go to let out all your job search, career and job market frustrations and ask questions – go to www.jobsearching.co.za/rant-add-yours-here

Regards,

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4 Ideas to Market Yourself Better in Tough Times

Ok, so here are 4 things you can do - or at least start thinking about - in order to create more security for yourself in insecure times. And it's really all about marketing. When a business is in trouble there's usually only one reason: too few customers – y'know, no demand, no-one willing to buy OR no-one knows about them OR they're not talking to their customers in a way that's clear and unmistakable.

And in your career it's pretty similar. When things are tough it's risky, with perhaps even your existing employer wanting to cut expenses and cut jobs. And this puts you in an precarious position. You're edgy. Anxious. Because one thing's for sure – those bills will keep on coming! So, how can you make it better? Let's get into it.

The 4 "Tough Time" Ideas

Idea #1: Who are You?

Defining who you are, what you do, what clear, unmistakable benefit you provide, what problems you solve, how you make the company better, how you help bring in revenue, save money, retain clients, etc – these are critical things you need to make clear. To yourself. To your employer.

This is an important topic for a number of reasons.

1. Firstly because you need to send a clear message to employers, current or potential (they're your "buyers"), about the benefit you provide and why you're a good person to have around.

If your employer understands clearly what a great job you do: then when it comes to decisions about cutting people, at least your employer won't have to scratch their head and think:

"Umm, what does she do again?"

That's not what you want them to be thinking. They must know who you are and why they need to keep you around or get you on board.

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on board.

2. Secondly getting to grips with "who you are" helps YOU. How? It gives you confidence, focus. It gives you a sense of purpose and a feeling that you make a difference. As a result you act with more confidence and authority.

So what can you do to answer this question and get some clarity on it? There's only one way really. Just let me interject here – if you're anything like me, lazy, you'll immediately be hoping to do a little 'pop' quiz here and get the answer spat out at you. Instant gratification! Sorry to disappoint you. To repeat: "there is only one way" – sit down with a pen and paper and do some brainstorming on the topic of "YOU" – see some questions in paragraph 1 above. Think about yourself in a work context: what's your value?

Idea #2: Be Brilliant at What you Do Now!

Yeah, there no place or time like now. Y'know that quote –

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is now."

You want to kick into another gear in your current job. Sometimes it's tough to do. But you won't be sorry. Why is this a good thing to do?

1. If you leave your current job, you need good references. Admit it, until now you may have been slacking off a little – and when questioned for reference purposes your boss may be less than enthusiastic about your performance – this, when you actually want raving fans! Fans are good.
2. Also – you want to be looking for a job from a position of strength – not while during a slump in your performance. Not while you're down. You want to be seen as a contributor during tough times, someone who's willing to put something extra in.

So, again, brainstorm a little – even get input from your boss or colleagues – how can you improve? How can you be more productive? What areas in the business or in your department need attention – can you help in some way?

Start measuring yourself – if you're in sales it's easy: how many calls are you making, what are the sales figures telling you? Simple. But if you're a PA, for example, it's more difficult. Time yourself on tasks, set goals, plan your work better, monitor your performance. You really

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want to be able to show – with definite proof like stats, testimonials or performance appraisals – that you're doing a great job, or that you've improved things.

Build up a 'body of evidence'.

Idea #3: Build Your Bridges

Getting another job is really about one thing: connecting with people. It's people who make things happen. Technology helps – with what? – to connect to people, to communicate. It's people who hire people. It's people who make hiring decisions. And it's people who can connect us with people and opportunities.

So what does this tell you?

Making contact with people, maintaining contact – keeping in touch is important. So – remember all the people you've worked with, are working with. Keep in touch. Build a network of people with similar career or professional interests to you.

This may require some strong leadership on your part – ie having a clear idea of who you are, where you're going, what field you want to be in, what you 'bring to the party' etc, and being proactive (taking the initiative, being bold) – and being organized.

You want to build bridges between you and others. Many of them. And you want to maintain them. So that when you need them, they don't first need a 'resurrection'.

Think like this:

"What can I do to help others?"

People love people who are focused 'outward'. Toward helping others first. Sometimes it's just about getting together for coffee, asking them how things are, and actually listening. Sometimes providing an interesting article dealing with the person's interest/problem/hobby is a good idea. Show personal interest – please don't let that be a foreign concept!

And don't wait till you need a favor to start this. That's lame, awkward and ineffective – it gives 'networking' a bad name.

You can also explore the power of networking websites like LinkedIn.com. It's really a tremendously valuable tool for exactly this purpose. Join and ask others to join you.

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The benefit of all of this? More people tuned in to helping you. That very powerful.

Idea #4: Send Your Message

Ok, first let's not get ahead of ourselves! First things first:

What IS your message?

In the job search context, your marketing message is this:

"Here's what I can do for you"

and

"Here's why you should believe me"

It's about offering to provide a **benefit** – save money, make money, solve problems, build something of value. And then establishing **credibility** – here's who has trusted me with this before (positions held and previous employers), here's what I've achieved (how and by how much I improved things, overcame challenges, got things done etc), and here's the education and training I've received in order to do all this.

So do you have a 'handle' on your message? In Deb Dib's words (the CEO coach – www.executivepowerbrand.com):

"Here's what I do, how I do it, what it's delivered to my companies. I can do it for you, too."

Is your CV delivering that message clearly? Do you ever, anywhere in your CV, come out and say it? Or are you confused as to exactly where to put that message? If so, here's a tip: start your CV out with an "Executive Summary" in which you clearly say, who you are, what benefit you provide and why you're a strong, credible candidate.

With this in mind, cast a critical eye of assessment over your CV, cover letter, e-mails and business card. Is your message clear? Be brutal. Give your CV 5 seconds attention. What does it tell you? Put yourself in an employers position. Do the "so what?" test:

Is what you're presenting there, on page 1, on the first half of page 1 even, delivering something that'll catch an employers eye:

- Does it promise some benefit, does it hit on something of interest to them?

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to them?

- Does it convey that you're an authority, an achiever, a do-er, a contributor?
- Does it convey that you're solidly experienced and qualified.
- Does the overall 'look' convey professionalism and trust?

The benefit of this? More people who know exactly why and that you're a great person to have around – you deliver, you make things better, you contribute, you're an achiever.

Pretty cool, no?

Conclusion

So those are some ideas on how to market yourself in tough times.

Think about being asked to buy an expensive, complex product when:

- You're not sure what it does
- You're not sure how it does it
- You're not sure it'll be of any benefit to you
- You're not sure whether it's ever helped anybody before you

Would you buy it?

No! But as employees, often we expect employers to buy us on that kind of flimsy basis. And they don't easily fall for it. And then we complain about how tough the job market is. Well it is tough, but knowing who you are, being brilliant at what you do, connecting with other people and sending a clear personal marketing message is at the core of turning the situation around.

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Gerard le Roux is a 'guerrilla' job search coach – giving you the streetwise strategies on how to conduct a job search that works – fast - to land you more job interviews and more job offers. See www.jobsearching.co.za for more info and take Gerard's free job hunting e-mail course by sending a blank e-mail to tendays@getresponse.com, or visit www.jobsearching.co.za/free-stuff to register. It's a real injection of energy, motivation and good advice.

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