

1. Deepen and broaden your understanding of your core values.

Write out a list of your core or primary values. Following are a list of questions and steps to use as guides.

- What are my core values? Know your value set. For example, a basic list might include, Integrity, Teamwork, Customer Service, Creativity/Innovation, Effective Communication.
- Of these core values, what are the ones that you feel must be present in order for you to be successful at your next employer?
- Ask yourself where have you felt the most fulfilled and in sync with your team and company? What values were present in that work environment that really helped or allowed you to excel?
- How were you demonstrating those values? For example, if “effective communication” was a cultural value and one that contributed to your success, how was that showing up in your interactions with your team, peers and even higher ups?

***You must drill down into each value you’ve distinguished to define them at a deeper level and in behavioral terms. For example, if a core value of yours is integrity, define that value further by asking yourself:

- What does integrity mean to me?
- When I look at my career, what actions did I take or am taking that represent integrity?

Answering these questions will deliver a set of behavioral phrases or attributes. We call these Key Elements of the core value. For the core value of Integrity, some Key Elements might be:

- My actions are correlate with my words
- I do what I say I will do
- If I can’t keep a commitment, I communicate appropriately, commit to a new date and deliver on that
- I can be counted on to do the right thing for my customers, my team and my company

2. Establish my personal brand as a values-based leader

Armed with your expanded list of values, look at your resume and ask yourself the following question, “What kind of leader have I been and what kind of leader am I committed to be in my next job?” Write out a statement that describes this. Here is an example.

“I am a leader who makes myself aware of and understands others’ strategic goals, the issues stopping them, and how the achievement of my critical objectives supports others in achieving their goals, etc.....”

Your expanded set of values and your personal statement of leadership are the foundation of developing a personal brand. They represent the core message you wish to impart to anyone who spends time with you in an interview. They are what you want people to remember about you after you leave their office.

But, this will not happen by you reading this statement or reciting your values to them. It is not enough to say, "I have integrity" or "I am a leader committed to integrity." What you need to do in your interview is prove that these statements are accurate and represented in your career. And the truth is you have all the evidence to do this at your disposal. It is in-between the lines of your resume in the detailed anecdotes that represent the accomplishments you have already noted.

3. Develop a compelling overview and specific anecdotes demonstrating your values and personal statement of leadership

With your list of values, your personal statement of leadership and your resume, start out by developing a 90 second career overview that highlights your major career roles and grounds them in the accomplishment of a strategic objective for that business. For example:

"My first job out of grad school was with Acme Consolidated where I worked my way up over 7 years in one of their main businesses to the position of Plant Manager. This was my first P&L and I really learned exceptional customer service, and in the process, deliver better profitability to the bottom line. It was based on the results I produced in this Plant Manager role that I was then promoted to the position of General Manager of Acme's \$8 billion electronics component manufacturing business."

After you have written out the career overview, now develop 3-6 anecdotes from your career that also draw from the following:

- Your values
- The achievement of strategic objectives
- Leadership & management capabilities
- Problem solving skills
- Team interaction capabilities

Arm yourself with stories from your career and experience that reflect these five dimensions. Remember, talk about the specific actions that you took to achieve your results. Use your values list and your personal leadership statement to inform how you speak about what you've done. Be careful of over using the collective "we". *Your* actions will reflect *your* values.

As with the overview, write them out, and then practice speaking them. Practice telling your stories to your spouse, friends, and to yourself in the mirror. The more comfortable you are at telling these stories about yourself, the higher the likelihood you will be successful in imparting your personal brand in an interview.

4. Interview Preparation

Basic interview preparation starts with fundamental research about the company and the people with whom you will be interviewing. Areas of research should include:

- The company's mission/vision/goals and values
- Recent press and financials
- Recent analyst reports (industry and financial)
- Recent investor presentations

Now turn your attention to the people you will be meeting, your interviewers and conduct some basic research using the company website, LinkedIn, and other easily accessible web-based tools.

- Who are they and what are their roles?
- What are they involved in outside of the company?
- Industry trade affiliations, charities, boards...

5. Putting it all together

Leveraging your new-found knowledge about the strategic issues which the company is confronting, and the people you will be interviewing, you can begin to shape and mold your anecdotes fit the company and people. Your core message and brand will remain the same, but the delivery will shift based on the company and person. Your anecdotes will demonstrate that in your past positions you have:

- Successfully dealt with similar issues
- Produced relevant strategic impact
- Understand the key concerns of the individuals you are interviewing with based on their position, and have worked with their counterparts in your past roles to produce strategically important results.

6. Prepare your questions

The last step in order to maximize your interview is to prepare your own questions. Never forget, you are interviewing the company as well. You will be able to infer a tremendous amount of data about the company culture from how the interviewers interact with you and the questions they ask. You will discover

even more data by preparing a set of questions that will help you understand the company, their business, culture and people.

How To Maximize Your Interview – Hiring Manager/Interview Team

1. During an initial screening call, recruiters want to get your resume. If after you send it, they are radio silent, move on. They are looking for specific bullet points, and didn't see them on your resume.
2. Request the job description up front. When they request your resume, ask for the job description. Most recruiters will key off of it. This is true even at the retained, executive search level.
3. During interviews with recruiters, keep in mind that they have a checklist of skills and experiences they are working through.
4. After reviewing the job description, in the follow up call with the recruiter, refrain from saying, "I'm a perfect fit for this job." Recruiters hear that phrase from almost every potential candidate. Instead say, "In my experience, I have worked through several of the objectives for this job..."
5. Play a little hard to get. Recruiters like to know that you are in demand. They want to market a "hot commodity" to their clients. It is important that you strike a balance with them between being truly interested in their job and letting them know you have other options that you are considering.
6. Most executive recruiters will put you through at most a 1-2 hour "interview" which usually consists of a resume review. It is very important that – just like for the potential employer interview- you know the desired objectives/goals for the role you are interviewing and have ready the necessary anecdotes that demonstrate your values, experience and skills in meeting those objectives. Believe us, very few executive recruiters know how to get past a first layer of information, so you have to be ready to "spoon feed" them if necessary.
7. Executive recruiters are notorious for not following up with candidates once they have identified the top person for their client. Often they keep candidates on the hook as backup in case the top person falls out. After you interview with the recruiter, be clear that you would really appreciate their honesty in this process and be very clear on their timelines and flow of communication.
8. Lastly, it is important to understand, that it is the nature of the beast in executive recruiting to rule people out and find the best candidate for their client. Many times, they may truly feel you are the best but the client's perception is everything. It is very important that you NOT take it personally if you are not selected. Instead, it behooves you to use the interaction to develop a relationship with the recruiter and stay in touch with them every 6 to 8 weeks. If the executive recruiter is impressed with you, when another assignment comes up that is relevant, you will be "top of their mind."