



How to Write a Bio That Sells Brand You

By Catherine Kaputa

There are two ways to make a great first impression – in person or virtually. And today the virtual version is most often the first impression your personal brand makes on a potential boss, mentor, client or colleague. They'll discover your narrative bio on your website, social media sites like LinkedIn or through conventional marketing pieces.

We all know how lasting first impressions are, yet most of the bios I come across are not branding documents. They are not marketing pieces for someone or their business.

Most bios are a laundry list of skills and jobs with no focus or message. Most are boring, a high percentage are downright terrible. They are full of jargon and clichés, and look downright ugly or forbidding in terms of layout and display of the content. The good news is, a bio can a powerful way to position and sell yourself and create a powerful personal brand identity. So how do you do it? You begin by adopting a self brand mindset. You begin as a marketer of any product would, by looking at yourself as a brand looking for a buyer or market, a brand that is a solution to a problem.

The first shift is from bio as job history to resume as an advertisement for the Brand, You.



The second shift you need to make is to a marketing orientation. Don't think of what you want to tell the potential client, but think of what reaction you want from them. Then figure out how best to present your bio to accomplish that response.

The third shift is to focus your message. Rather than resume as laundry list, develop a single minded positioning for yourself that differentiates you from others and is relevant to your target market. The bio should tell the story of that positioning and link the various aspects of your career in a coherent whole.

The final shift is to be memorable visually and verbally. The layout should look inviting and the copy should capture the reader's attention and compel them to read more.

Here are four bio enhancers that can make a big difference:

1. **Tell a story about the Brand You.**

A narrative resume should tell a story, your personal brand story. So like any narrative, there should be a focused theme to the narrative bio. Everything should link together the various things that you have done. (My book, *You Are a Brand!*, has exercises to help you develop your brand story).

2. **Take a page from advertising and use a celebrity endorsement.**

You may not know any real celebrities. (I don't either.) But you no doubt know another type of celebrity, such as the CEO or President or SVP of a company who could provide a third-party endorsement. Call and ask if they could give you a quote you can use in your narrative bio. (You may need to help out by sending a couple of draft ideas based on the work you did for the company.)



3. **Use action words and anecdotes to tell a “story” to life.**

Write your bio as if you were talking to a close friend or business colleague.

Use simple English (Saxon, not fancy Latinate) words and expressions.

Convey a sense of your personality in the bio so that people can get a sense of who you are and respond to that. Using emotion in marketing messages is a form of emotional branding, getting people interested in you because they feel something about you.

4. **Always have a :30 second Elevator Speech: the oral version of your narrative bio.**

The elevator speech is a must that most people overlook. So they stumble through explaining who they are and why that is important. The :30 second elevator speech should be colloquial and conversational. Like the narrative bio, it should be both powerful and focused on a thematic story. In essence, it should convey the key highlights of what you have done, how you did it, and imply, there’s more of that you can do for them.