Planning for a career and getting a job require that you market yourself. This involves thoughtful strategic planning, implementation, and control. You may have impressive assets, such as relevant work experience, great extracurricular activities, good grades, solid communication skills, and admirable leadership qualities. However, if you don’t market yourself thoughtfully and aggressively, no one will know that you’re out there and have something to offer that they might want.

Even excellent products can remain on the shelf if they are not marketed effectively. For example, Random House believed they had a “bestseller” in *A Civil Action* (1995) by Jonathan Harr. The nonfiction story was so gripping that Robert Redford bought the film rights for more than $1 million and planned to play the leading role himself. Talk show hosts lined up to schedule author Jonathan Harr and as glowing reviews streamed in, Random House printed 200,000 copies. Clearly, the product was good and the publicity had created an initial buzz. However, once in the stores, the book bombed. *A Civil Action* did not make *The New York Times* best seller list and barely sold 57,000 copies. Then Random House did the unusual. They started over and republished the book. This time they recognized that the package and what it says about the contents are as important as the product itself. The publisher replaced the original bland book jacket with an eye-catching design. They repositioned the book’s central theme in the book jacket text and initiated an advertising campaign. The result? The very same book – *A Civil Action* – was soon on the nonfiction hardcover bestseller list, won numerous awards, and then spent years on the paperback bestseller list. It was also made into a movie in 1998, starring John Travolta.

Now to return to you… The process of getting a job involves the same kinds of activities that marketing managers use to develop and introduce products into the marketplace. The distinction is that you are marketing yourself instead of a product. This means that for most of you your customers are potential employers. They may also be graduate schools, venture capitalists who might finance your new business, etc. And your competitors are people who are looking for same kind of job you would like to secure. A major course objective and important preparation for this assignment, is to think through the basic marketing concepts introduced in the course, as they apply to preparing yourself for a career and securing a job.

First, you will choose the major marketing task on which you will focus your Personal Marketing Plan. What do you want to be doing after you graduate? Even if you aren’t sure, choose something you think is likely and prepare a plan that will help you get there. Your plan might be designed to market you for a job in banking or sales, admission to law school, promotion to manager at the store where you now work and plan to stay, etc. Even if you have several short term goals, choose one on which to focus this assignment.

Next you will need to do extensive research for your Situation Analysis – the foundation on which you will build your Personal Marketing Plan. You will do careful analyses of *a*) the industry, *b*) your customers (potential employers), *c*) your competition (other job seekers), and *d*) yourself. You will summarize your Situation Analysis as a set of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – a SWOT analysis.

Then you will outline your employment goals – what you want to get out of your job and the characteristics you want it to have. With your goals in mind, you will formulate your market-
product focus (the next step) by thinking about the following questions: How well do I suit each market segment (of potential employers)? How well does each segment suit me? For each segment, what types of competitive advantage do I have or could I develop? The answers will lead you to selection of a target market (set of potential employers) that is compatible with your goals, skills, abilities, personality, experience, etc. and a “positioning” for yourself that makes you both unique among your competition and attractive to your target market.

Finally, you will design a marketing mix (four Ps) tailored to your target market. You are the “product” and your skills, aptitudes, experience, etc. are the product attributes. Your packaging is what people see when they look at you, including how you dress and behave. The “price” component is the salary range and job benefits (e.g., insurance, vacation, and retirement benefits) you hope to receive. “Promotion” is how you communicate with prospective employers through letters and your resume (advertising), and in-person networking and job interviews (personal selling). “Place” focuses on how you make direct contact with prospective employers (e.g., the Office of Career Services, job fairs, networking, etc.).

As marketing concepts are introduced in class, pause and think about how they apply to your career and job search. We suggest that you designate a small notebook or pages in your marketing notes where you collect ideas about marketing yourself over the course of the semester. These notes will be the basis for completing your Personal Marketing Plan.

**Personal Marketing Plan Assignment**

The page limit is 6-8 pages with an upper limit of 8, plus up to 2 pages of exhibits if you want. Naturally, you should follow all guidelines for written assignments. You may follow the outline below (in which case, please use headings) or you may present your Personal Marketing Plan in another format, perhaps one that does a better job of reflecting who you are! Past plans have included diaries, videotapes, websites, board games, art portfolios, and PR kits. Alternate formats can be great, but they increase the risk that you will leave out something important. If you present yours differently, check especially carefully to make sure you have included all of the information in this outline. Whatever format you choose, make sure you organize the information you present logically, so that I am able to find everything easily.

**I. Summary of Goals:** Begin with a very brief summary of what you are looking for (your most important goals and your target market), so I know where you are heading. Write this part only after you have finished writing the rest of the plan.

**II. Situation Analysis:** Even if you already know exactly what you want (the precise target market in your industry or the company you’d like to work for) throw that all away while you work on the Situation Analysis. Start from scratch as you analyze your external environment and yourself.

A. **Industry Definition** - Define the industry in which you want to work (if that’s more important than the exact job you do) or the kind of job you want (if that’s more important than the industry you do it in). A combination is okay too. Just don’t narrow it down too far; you should not be talking about your target market segment(s) at this point. Use this definition to focus the rest of your Situation Analysis. Don’t go beyond it, but don’t leave out any parts of it. Here are some examples that are sufficiently broad to be the focus of your Situation Analysis – investment banking, consumer products marketing, public accounting, photography, web design, music publishing, acting, financial analysis, restaurant management, advertising, human resources, IT consulting.
B. **Industry Analysis** – What are the trends in the industry (as you have defined it) that could have an impact on your prospects for a job and your career development? Consider social, economic, technological, competitive, regulatory, political, environmental, and other relevant factors.

C. **Customer Analysis** –
   1. **Segmentation.** Think about the industry or type of job you chose in your Industry Definition. Now, segment that market using whatever segmentation method makes most sense to you. You can segment using a variety of criteria. If you segment on what the companies are looking for (benefit segmentation) it will help you select target segments (later) that will find you most attractive. If you segment on what you are looking for, you will be able to rule out segments because they don’t offer what you want. You can also use a combination. For example, if you want to work in product management, you may want to segment first on whether companies employ only MBAs or not. Within those that consider applicants who have only bachelor’s degrees, you can then segment by product or service category (music, grocery, apparel), geographical location, company size, or anything else that matters to you or affects your chances. Another example: if you want to work in public accounting, you could segment on the basis of the companies’ sizes, their prestige, the focus of their practice, and/or the breadth of experience they will give you. Or you could segment on the kind of educational background and experience they are looking for. Or both.

   2. **Segment analysis.** Once you have segmented your market, describe each of them on the criteria you used to segment the market and describe everything else you know about each segment that is important to a) your ability to get a job or b) the attractiveness of the jobs themselves. What is each segment looking for in terms of skills, personality, experience, etc.? What is it like to work for the companies in each segment (hours, travel, atmosphere, pay, responsibilities, opportunity to advance, etc.). This means doing some research! (There is a selected list of career planning publications in Appendix A, that may help you with this.) **Do not** choose your target market segment(s) – the specific segments on which you will focus – until Section II!

D. **Competitor Analysis** – Who are your competitors? Where are they? How many? What types of backgrounds, experience, strengths and weaknesses do they have? Are they likely to be appealing to employers? In what ways? What are they doing to attract attention? How much do they “cost.”

E. **Internal Assessment** – What are your strengths and weaknesses? Appendix B provides self-assessment guidelines to help you with this analysis.

F. **SWOT Analysis** – Summarize the information you gathered in your Situation Analysis in a SWOT Analysis. Although you will not include everything from your Situation Analysis in your SWOT, nothing should appear in the SWOT that was not discussed in your Situation Analysis! The SWOT sums up everything you learned about your situation and sets you up for the next step (goals, choosing a target market, and positioning yourself for it). So, even if you choose to put your SWOT diagram in an exhibit, the essence of the SWOT Analysis must appear in your plan.
   1. **Internal factors** (within you)
      a) Strengths (e.g., degree from great school, work experience, etc.)
      b) Weaknesses (e.g., impatience, weak quantitative skills, etc.)
   2. **External factors** (outside of you)
      a) Opportunities (e.g., lots of jobs, employers was B-school grads, etc.)
      b) Threats (e.g., rapid skill obsolescence, strong competition, etc.)
II. Market-Product Focus & Goal Setting

A. **Goals** – What are your employment objectives? Be specific about what you want to get out of your job personally and professionally, the characteristics the job must have, and the date by which you want to have at least one good offer in hand. If you want, you may stick to the short term, but feel free to indicate longer term career goals as well.

B. **Target market** – What is your target market segment? Choose one (or more) of the segments you identified in your Customer Analysis and explain why you chose it, given your goals and how what those companies want meshes with what you have to offer.

C. **Points of difference** – What are your points of difference (vs. your competition) for that market segment? Find these among your strengths and opportunities, and make sure they correspond to what you have said your segment is looking for.

D. **Positioning** – Exactly how will you position yourself for your target market? Express how you want companies in your target segment to think of you – your positioning – in one sentence. Make sure this sentence is very focused and expresses clearly what you offer your potential employer that is both *a*) what they want and *b*) unique among your competition. (If you like, you may include a perceptual map showing how you plan to position yourself among your competitors on the most important attributes to your target segment.)

I. Marketing Programs

A. **Product** – Are there things you can do about who you are, that would make your positioning even stronger? **Do not** review all the things about you that are already true and make you right for this market. This is where you think about changes you can make in yourself. Given what your target market is looking for, are there attributes you can develop further that will strengthen your positioning? Are there job-related or interviewing skills you could acquire or refine? Is there experience you could gain? Should you change your “packaging”?

B. **Pricing** – What compensation and benefits do you want and what are you willing to settle for?

C. **Promotion** – Think about the consumer buying process and the progression from awareness, to interest, to desire, to action. What tools will you use to break through the clutter and create awareness in your target segment – interest that results in interviews (e.g., resume, cover letter, phone calls, networking, etc.)? How will you use your personal selling skills to get interviews and make those interviews go well? How will you prepare for interviews (e.g., company research, question planning, mock interviews, etc.) and follow up on them, to increase the chances that interest will turn into desire and desire into action (i.e., an offer)?

D. **Place** – What channels do you have or will you develop to access your target market and how will you use them (clubs, career services, job fairs, personal contacts, etc.). Do some careful research and select your channels carefully to reach your target market. (Don’t assume intensive distribution is the way to go!) Note that the distinction between promotion and distribution is fuzzier for you and for many other “services” than it is for a packaged good!
Appendix A

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PRODUCT: ASSESSING YOURSELF

You must know your product so that you can choose the appropriate target segment of potential employers and market yourself to them effectively. The first step is a thorough and candid self-analysis on the following dimensions: interests, abilities, education, experience, personality, desired job environment, and personal goals. The importance of performing this assessment was stressed by a management consultant:

Many graduates enter the world of work without even understanding the fact that they are specific somebodies, much less knowing the kinds of competencies and motivations with which they have been endowed.... The tragedy of not knowing is awesome. Ignorant of who they are, most graduates are doomed to spend too much of their lives in work for which they are poorly suited.... Self-knowledge is critical to effectively managing your career.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

A good Internal Assessment requires a thorough self-analysis and asking a set of important and difficult questions. If you haven’t already, start by taking Keirsey’s Temperament and Character Tests. You can find links to them on the course website. Then read carefully and slowly through the self-analysis questions below and respond to them honestly. It should take a while to get through them all and you may not be certain of the answers to many of them right away…or ever! It can also be very helpful to seek input from others who know you well and can offer different perspectives (parents, close relatives, friends, professors, employers, etc.).

It is very important that you answer questions in the Temperament and Character Tests and below honestly. If you don’t, you are fooling only yourself and may end up making poor choices and having fewer opportunities than you deserve. (Remember, you don’t have to admit anything you learn about yourself to anyone else, if you don’t want to.)

For the Internal Assessment section of your Personal Marketing Plan, you will summarize what you learn about yourself through this process and highlight the elements you think are most important. If you do a good self-analysis, you will undoubtedly identify many things about yourself that, while important to you in other contexts, are not highly relevant to your job search. Leave those out of the Situation and SWOT Analyses, but keep a record of them for yourself.

Sample Self-Analysis Questions

**Interests**
How do I like to spend my time?
Do I enjoy being with people? Working with people?
Do I like working with technology?
Do I enjoy working with numbers?
Do I enjoy abstract theory and concepts?
Do I like being a part of clubs and other organizations?
Do I enjoy physical activity?
Do I like to read? Write?
What other kinds of activities do I especially like and dislike?
What do the things I enjoy most have in common?

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What do the things I enjoy least have in common?

**Abilities**
Am I adept at working with numbers?
Am I good with mechanical things?
Do I have good oral and written communication skills?
Am I good at structuring problems?
Am I good at following every detail of instructions?
Am I good at structuring my time?
Am I good a motivating other people?
What special talents do I have?
Which of my abilities do I wish were stronger? How hard would it be to improve them?

**Education**
How have my courses and extracurricular activities prepared me for specific jobs?
Which were my best subjects? My worst? The most/least fun?
Is my GPA an accurate reflection of my academic ability? Why?
Do I want to go to graduate school? Immediately following college or later?
Why did I choose my major?

**Experience**
What is my work experience (full and part time)?
What were my responsibilities in each position?
Were any of my jobs applicable to positions I may be seeking? How?
What did I like the most about my previous jobs? The least?
Why did I take those jobs? Would I choose them again?

**Personality**
What are my good and bad personality traits?
Am I competitive? How is it an asset and how does it get in my way?
Am I social or more of a loner?
Do I work well with others? Am I patient?
Am I outspoken or more reticent?
Am I a leader or a follower?
Do I work well under pressure? Do I enjoy it?
Do I work quickly or am I slower and more methodical?
Am I ambitious?

**Preferred Job Environment**
Am I willing to relocate? Do I have geographical preferences?
Would I mind traveling in my job? How much?
Do I have to work for a large, nationally known firm to be satisfied?
Would I like to work in a small company?
Must the job I assume offer rapid promotion opportunities?
If I could design my own job, what characteristics would it have?
How important is a high initial salary to me?
How do I feel about working on commission?
Do I prefer to be closely supervised?
Do I want to be in a job where most work is done in teams?
Do I prefer autonomy and independence in my job?

**Career & Personal Goals**
What are my short-term and long-term career and personal goals? Why?
Am I strongly career-oriented or do I have other interests to which I want to devote energy?
What do I hope to be doing professionally in 5 years? In 10 years?
What do I want my personal life to be like in 5 years? In 10 years?
What do I want out of life?

***IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

When you have finished your Situation Analysis (of which the Internal Assessment is one component) you will summarize what you know in a SWOT Analysis. Half of the SWOT consists of highlights of your Internal Assessment broken out into Strengths and Weaknesses. As when you answered the self-assessment questions, this cataloging of strengths and weaknesses should be done with ample time to reflect on your attributes and how you and others see them. Here is a hypothetical set of strengths and weaknesses:

**STRENGTHS**
Enjoy being with people
Avid reader
Good communication skills
Involved in many extracurricular activities
Like working with others
Work well independently
Honest, dependable, and thorough
Willing to travel in the job
Good problem solver
Good sense of humor
Self-starter

**WEAKNESSES**
Not adept at working with computers
Intimidated by numbers
Minimal work experience
Mediocre GPA
Sometimes impatient and insensitive
Resent close supervision
Work methodically & slowly
Will not relocate
Anger easily sometimes
Appendix B

Selected Career Planning Books & Websites


Yate, Martin, *Knock ’Em Dead: 1999 Edition; Cover Letters that Knock ’Em Dead; Resumes the Knock ’Em Dead*, (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1999; 1997), www.knockemdead.com.