

Try to become more like Oprah

Job applicants are turning to personal branding. Leah Creighton and Andrew Chesterton report.

The marketing juggernaut has spread to job-seekers as they look to stand out from the crowd and make a great first impression at interviews.

Former broadcaster and publicist Sue Currie, from Shine Communications Consultancy, believes that to gain that extra edge in professional success, you need to apply branding strategies used by big corporations.

"Personal branding is applying the tools used by corporations, to make a name for yourself," Currie says.

"It's not just your image or logo or the outer package, it's understanding and promoting your inner assets that will support you in enhancing your career."

Currie points to US talk-show host Oprah Winfrey as an example of top-notch personal branding.

Winfrey has gained a trusted position with millions of viewers. She uses this to promote her brand through give-aways, book clubs and charity drives.

"According to the 2005 Image-Power Newsmaker Brands Survey, Oprah is the embodiment of a good brand," Currie says.

"She is, of course, a huge corporation through her television show, yet she reveals her authentic self through her interactivity with guests and sharing her personal aims."

Experts say personal branding is a logical step for motivated job applicants to take.

"The whole human-resources and recruitment process has become more professional," says Martin Smith, career services manager at Newcastle University.

"Better-prepared candidates are now recognising the importance of approaching things in an effective and professional manner."

Smith says the interview process has become more difficult and competitive in the past 15 years, and applicants are turning to techniques such as personal branding to give themselves an edge.

"There are more stages in the application process," he says.

"There may be an online application form, which may be followed by a series of tests.

"Then they may get to an interview, then a second interview. An application can go through as many as five stages."



Success story: Sue Currie, from Shine Communications Picture: Rohan Kelly

Martin Smith says job applications and techniques for candidates are constantly evolving.

He says applicants are more focused on what they want in a career, and are prepared to take the extra steps to ensure they secure it.

"Applicants are now saying that work/life balance is important, and they're prepared to be much more strategic about obtaining the positions they want."

Currie conducts seminars entitled Brand New You to help people uncover their unique "personal brand".

Running throughout May, the programs aim to bring out your personal best, boost your confidence and teach you techniques to communicate with

clients, media or potential employers.

"To grow your business or career, gain recognition and increase your earning potential, you also need to embody these characteristics and understand what it takes to create a strong personal brand," Currie says.

Her steps to success are: uncover your true self and personal values, then package your brand with honesty and authenticity.

"The 2004 Eye on Australia survey found a growing demand among consumers for honesty and authenticity.

"If we are to market successfully to our consumers, be they clients, customers or the boss, we need to embody honesty and authenticity through our personal brand," Currie says.