

the secret formula for using  
personal branding to sell yourself



# **THE CAREER HACK**

**SIMONE RENNOCKS**

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*I dedicate this book to my amazing children*

*Tanah and Christian.*

*Right in the thick of Gen Z land we go forth together.*

*You have taught me so much about the person I need to be.*



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## Introduction

# **WHAT IS THE CAREER HACK?**

Hack: a simple and clever tip or technique to easily do a task, in a simple and deliciously clever way.

In my job as a CEO over the past 20 years, I have read thousands of resumes. All from job-seekers just like yourself, wanting a new career, a higher-paying job, a job with stability or to work for an innovative community-conscious company. My own personal mission is to promote learners who can learn, find productive work, make wise decisions and actively engage in their communities.

The Career Hack is simply a formula that will give you the exact edge you need to stand out and land that job.

There is no doubt – the way we work has changed. So too have the skills we need to succeed in our careers. Digital skills, know-how, problem-solving and automation are skills that, once learnt, will allow you to flow between different jobs, careers and industries over your working life. Transferable skills, often referred to as ‘soft skills’, include digital literacy, problem-solving,



collaboration, adaptability and creativity among others. These skills represent the ability to collaborate in a virtual world and use rapidly evolving technology to solve problems.

Technology was the saviour for many industries during 2020–2021. This acceleration caused employers and employees to fast track their digital development. If you had told business owners five years ago that face-to-face meetings were a thing of the past and this thing called Zoom would become the new way to conduct business, they would have laughed. Or tell recruiters that you would possibly hire a new staff member without actually meeting them in person, they'd think you crazy.

Digital communication isn't taught in schools and is very different to face-to-face communication. It has both positive and negative attributes. On the plus side it has allowed businesses (mine included) to manage remote teams all over the country, as I can have my Sydney team involved in a meeting simultaneously with my regional teams. I can train and have instant input across the workforce from all staff. On the negative side, written communication is fraught with mis-communication issues if not taught well. The simple art of writing and communicating with clarity is a niche skill. Without the added body language, tone of voice, energy and emotional vibe we get during face-to-face conversation, a simple email, if worded badly, can land you in hot water.

The Career Hack incorporates both digital communication and transferable skills.

From high school, through uni to the professional development I have done throughout my career, I have noticed a little

secret. There is a formula, that once mastered, can be used to impress anyone.

Let's backtrack a little here. We all know how it feels to be sold on something, like the used car salesman speech we have all recoiled from. We also all know how it feels to have to sell yourself – nothing feels scarier. Yet it is a skill anyone can learn. So why is it not taught to us at school?

Sales always felt foreign to me. During my teens and twenties, I was a nervous introvert. But as I developed my career and skill set, I became confident in certain aspects of my jobs. Before I knew it, I had an eye-opening revelation about the sales process. Sales is just having a conversation about a product you are confident about. In the case of job hunting, I am confident in the skills I have developed, so in an interview, I need to talk about that. If I get thrown a curveball question, I simply bring it back to my skills and how I, with my unique skill set, would handle that situation.

But, job hunting doesn't start with your resume. In fact, your resume is the final piece to the puzzle. In this book I will walk you through the simple process of personal branding. You will learn what brand strategy is and how it builds on your unique strengths, and how to leverage your skills and become a stellar candidate.

Why is personal branding so important? Right now, it's a candidate's market. The world is going through a huge shake-up and many people have been forced to change careers, so suddenly we have a huge number of people under-employed.

What do I mean by under-employed? 2020–2021 saw many unexpected redundancies and layoffs. Many over-qualified people had to take lower paying or lower skilled jobs out of financial necessity. For some, this was a welcome relief, but for many, it was a kick in the guts.

Our youth have record levels of unemployment, thanks to this shake-up. School leavers were competing with highly educated and over-qualified candidates for the same entry-level jobs. So how can you stand out among all this? It is possible and I have seen some extremely impressive school-leaver resumes, who, whether consciously or not, used the secret formula to become a stellar candidate.

So what is this formula?

The Career Hack is the perfect blend of personal branding and leveraging your story to sell yourself.

You may not have heard of the term ‘personal branding’ – what is it? Personal branding is what you’d want to be known for. What makes you stand out now, and where do you want to go in the future? You can use personal branding to tell the story of your skills and expertise. Are you known for marketing? Sales? Building businesses? Engineering? Do you have specific skills in those areas you can share?

This should not come as a surprise – I check potential candidates on social media. Why? Company culture is everything to me. I look for candidates who are a right fit and who have the skills to help me achieve my business goals. While there are so many different social media platforms out there,

in business most employers and employees looking to make a name for themselves during their career use LinkedIn – think of it as your living, breathing resume. This is where you can engage, network, connect and, most of all, contribute your unique skills. Even when you are not looking for employment, LinkedIn can be used to further your brand or influence in your industry to gain promotions and carve out a niche for yourself. Your personal brand done right creates credibility, trust and expertise.

*The Career Hack* will help you understand why you need a personal brand, what a strategy is and how to define your USP (Unique Selling Point). I will show you how to build your personal/professional relationships and online reputation, as well as how you can use LinkedIn to create your network, ecosystem and content to strengthen your position of influence. Finally, I'll show you how to tie your brand and job applications together in one super cool hack.

As a CEO, the top skills I look for in my staff are:

- empathy
- social skills
- digital literacy.

Technical skills are important in many roles, but can be learnt over time. The one thing you can't teach is how to be a nice person. We spend roughly one third of our life at work. That's a whole lot of time to waste if you're not enjoying working with

those around you.

Unlike face-to-face communication or even spoken conversation, learning to communicate effectively via digital communication doesn't allow your unspoken language to be interpreted by the other person. Without seeing a person's body language, feeling their energy levels and emotions, and noticing their tone and inflection, we are only ever getting one piece of the message via digital communication. I am a big fan of emojis :) and hashtags, not over-using them but being aware of choosing ones that explain my message further. The other way I express my meaning when I write blogs or articles is by selecting an image that visually reinforces my meaning.

Have you ever received a text from someone and thought 'what on earth does that mean?' Without any additional context, other than our own perception of a message's meaning, you can understand how easily digital communication can go so far wrong.

The Career Hack is the secret formula for becoming a great communicator of your unique story.



## WHO IS *THE CAREER HACK* FOR?

*The Career Hack* is designed for the new workplace. It is perfect for school- or university-leavers or anyone transitioning back into the new workplace after a career break. School and university curriculums take on average five years to refresh. By the time the future workplace is being taught, it will already be outdated. The pandemic changed us all in a once-in-a-generation thrust. Not many were prepared for it, most of us were caught off guard and many walked around in a haze trying to deal with so many significant changes all at once. It was the stuff of movies, science fiction kind of storylines.

I think the one thing the whole world can agree upon is never say never again.

*The Career Hack* will teach you about:

- your online presence

## THE CAREER HACK

- knowing what it is you want to achieve
- using subtle and unconscious clues
- understanding who you align yourself with (people and ideas)
- putting your personal brand forward.

*The Career Hack* will give you tips about:

- using social media to build your personal brand
- writing blogs, vlogs and content
- crafting images
- using LinkedIn as a virtual resume.

*The Career Hack* is the secret formula to future-proofing yourself, to thrive on change.



**Part 1**

**JOB READY**







## CAREER LAUNCH

Job ready: having a positive attitude and the in-demand skills employers are looking for.

When I was 16 I wanted to be a hairdresser. Every week I would anxiously run to the newsagency to pick up my copy of *Hair Now*. It had this cool extra flip book of different hairstyles where you could hold a small photo of yourself behind, to see if the style suited you. I know it's pretty lame... But hey, it was the late 1980s.

My stepson is in Year 11. There are so many job options before him but it's crazy to think that at 16 years of age, with little to no real world experience, anyone can know what they want to be when they grow up. A study by The Foundations for Young Australians 2014 uncovered that only 6% of adults end up in the career they wanted when they were younger. So how many times does the average person change jobs in their lifetime? Would you be surprised if I said that the average person will change careers between five and seven times and

The world of work has changed. So how can you stand out and keep your skills relevant? *The Career Hack* is designed for the new workplace. It is perfect for school or university leavers or anyone transitioning back into the new workplace after a career break.

Too often parents, through no fault of their own, give bad advice to school leavers that just ends up with the young person being frustrated and depressed. And older people returning to the workforce cannot compete with candidates whose skills are current and in-demand for the same jobs.

But what if there was a secret formula to stand out?

***The Career Hack*** is the perfect blend of personal branding and leveraging your story to sell yourself. It will teach you about:

- using social media to build your personal brand
- knowing what it is you want to achieve
- understanding who you align yourself with (people and ideas)
- putting your personal brand forward.
- using LinkedIn as a virtual résumé.

***The Career Hack*** is the secret formula to future-proofing yourself, to thrive on change.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Having over 20 years' experience in Vocational Education, Simone Rennocks is the CEO of My Skills Australia.

Simone has a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master's Degree in Analytical Psychology. She is highly innovative and uses her creativity to design programs that are engaging and in demand. Simone is the host of the 'Job Ready Podcast'.

My Skills Australia's students have voted them the Top Marketing and Info Tech Training Provider in NSW, on both Job Ready Skills and Student Satisfaction.

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