



YOU ARE YOUR BRAND

How to define what makes you a unique leader when applying for headships:

Personal brand helps identify the value you can bring to a school/MAT and the type of environments that best suit your experience; It isn't defined by your current role alone, it's a blend of your experience, values, skillset and approach – and how that makes you a compelling candidate.

Decide on your key messages

A personal brand not only tells your story, it's about enhanced self-awareness, which means taking a close look at your strengths, weaknesses, vision and values.

Having greater self-knowledge can be a powerful asset when identifying the kind of school you are most likely to flourish in. Think about the areas in which you excel as a leader - what can you do that others cannot? How did you drive impact in your current setting?

Take some time to craft a personal brand that accurately represents you, your achievements and what you want to be known for. Try writing a short branding statement summarising what you do well as a leader, and why and how you do it well. Then reflect on how that prepares you for the specific challenges of the headship you want to apply for.

Make your brand visible

Your online reputation really is just as important as your offline one. Prospective employers will google you, so be sure to google yourself. Would you be happy for future employers and colleagues to see the results? Are your brand messages consistent with what is available in the public domain?

Now think about LinkedIn, Twitter and other networking platforms. You don't need to be a prolific tweeter, but done well, it can help you to stand out from the candidate crowd, lead to powerful networking and encourage leadership opportunities to come to you.

Your online presence is important marketing collateral and should showcase your personal brand and enhance your reputation as a school leader. First start with the basics: a professional looking photo, an updated profile and an accurate overview of your key achievements. Next, ask yourself: Is your profile on-brand? Are you aligning yourself with the online communities you want to be associated with? Is messaging consistent with your CV/application?

About Propelo

The Propelo team combines sector leaders in school improvement, recruitment and central operations. Together, we help schools and trusts find the people and solutions that move them forward, faster.

From helping to attract, recruit and retain talent, to securing an effective interim school leader during a time of change — we're a knowledgeable partner you can depend on, when you need it most.

For the last decade, the Propelo team have been working within some of the country's top academy trusts, education charities and consultancies. It means we're already known and trusted by the sector. We've supported hundreds of schools — across all phases and contexts. And it's that blend of first-hand experience, knowledge and thinking that sets us apart.

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Do your research

Once you've decided what kind of school you want to lead, be sure to do your research before you submit an application. Any strong application will demonstrate an understanding of where the school is on its improvement journey, a handle on strengths and weakness as well as a compelling vision of how the school will develop under your leadership.

Read previous Ofsted reports, access available performance data - but don't be afraid to ask for more information from the school or recruiter. This is an opportunity for you to gather all the information you need to put together a well-considered application.

Write your application around your brand

When you've decided it's time for a leadership move, it's all too tempting to create a generic application and then send it out to numerous schools. Our advice is always: be selective and make it personal.

Generic statements about your leadership or the education landscape will disengage the shortlisting panel and could potentially be damaging to your personal brand. It sounds obvious, but prospective employers want to know why you want to be the Headteacher of their school over any other.

Your application is your opportunity to make an impression so take the time to ensure it's a true reflection of you as a leader. Schools and MATs are focussing much harder on candidate experience to make sure it is a purposeful and engaging experience. Equally, the interview process allows your prospective employer to really get a sense of the kind of leader you are. The best interviews are always those in which a leader is transparent about what they can bring and where they need support.

It's important to think about how you represent yourself in each interaction. Every single point of contact is an opportunity to make a positive impression. If you're consistent in your delivery of these touchpoints, you can build a personal brand that's compelling, authentic and differentiated - and crucially, better connect with the school you're interviewing with.

It's the simple things: be open and transparent in your application, candid about the successes and challenges you've faced and be upfront about any other processes you might be involved in. Finally, think carefully about the kinds of questions you want to ask the appointments panel — your questions can reveal a lot about what drives you and your grasp of specific challenges the school might face.

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