

Let me take a picture of you

“But the photo on your website isn’t exactly recent either.” Touché! My client Remo (name changed) was responding to my criticism of the photo on his CV. He was approaching 50, yet the man in the photograph could easily have passed for someone in his early thirties. But I know from personal experience: the older we get, the more insulting photographs become!

Peter Näf

Zurich, October 2026

Many of my clients hate going to a photographer. And yet, in Remo’s case, it makes sense that recruiters looking at the CV of a top specialist should also see a candidate who looks like an experienced senior professional.

Remo was right: I, too, have been putting off a visit to the photographer for more than a year. In reality, my clients are unlikely to care that I have grown a few years older since my last photo shoot.

We are always forming a picture

But perhaps none of us are really concerned about the photograph itself. What matters is what other people do with it. After all, the image is only created in their minds. We know that other people interpret and judge because we do the same ourselves. That is why we care about having the right images of ourselves in circulation. I do not mean the trail of photographs we leave on social media, but the images of us that exist in the minds of other people.

In career development, we use self-marketing to actively shape our image in the eyes of others. But how much influence do we really have?

The question reminds me of a statement about writing that is often attributed, in essence, to Umberto Eco: once a text has been published, it no

longer belongs to the author but to its readers. The writer has only limited influence over how the text will be understood. We can influence the image of ourselves that we present. But we cannot control the image that others create from it.

The image is created by the observer

The image that others form says more about them than it does about us. We can only see the world through the lens of our own experiences, attitudes and beliefs. But do not worry: this frees you from the burden of having to appear perfect. Influence what you can influence.

In a career context, we should be able to expect experienced managers and recruitment professionals to be aware of perceptual and assessment biases and to judge accordingly with care. However, we cannot rely on that. What does this mean for your self-marketing?

Allow people to experience who you are in personal interactions and, when that is not possible, through the stories you tell. In doing so, you are putting forward the best images you have to offer. There is little more you can do.

Two conditions, however, must be met: you need to know yourself well, and you need to like yourself. People who do not like themselves communicate that, whether they intend to or not. Authentic self-marketing begins with a positive relationship with yourself.

What is unlikely to work is projecting an image that you believe other people want to see. Most people have a remarkably good instinct for recognising such images.

[#personalbranding](#) [#activecareerdesign](#) [#selfconfidence](#)

Please find further articles on career topics on my homepage
<https://karrierecoaching.ch/en/articles/>

