

The Bashful Art of Self-Promotion

By: Denis Orme

Founder: www.leader-success.com

So you want to stand out from the crowd, or as they say in some countries *Become a Tall Poppy* in a land of opportunity. Yes it still is a land of opportunity for those who wish to work hard, gain skills and experience and then promote their differentiation. However before we start let us see how easy I will be to beat the odds:

Hard work	100:1
IQ	75:1
Education	60:1
Right Company	50:1
Publicity	10:1
Right idea/product	4:1

Hard work alone will not guarantee success, and like it or not publicity and in particular self-promotion holds the key to your successful future. So you need to ignore the myths:

- The hardest working get paid more
- Good work speaks for itself
- Worthwhile performance doesn't have to be sold – it speaks for itself
- Self-promotion is unprofessional

A starting point to your new direction is to have a Life Plan, and yet most of us spend more time planning our vacation than we do our lives.

Your life plan will include: family, social, financial, education, health, fitness, spiritual and finally career goals. In the case of your career it is important to understand what you are trying to promote in order to determine the most appropriate promotion or self-promotion methods.

In deciding to promote your career:

1. Conduct an assessment of where your career is today.
2. Decide what you want your career to look like say two to three years from today.
3. Develop an action plan.
4. Form accountable partnerships – “buddy” system.
5. Meet regularly to review progress.
6. Produce continuing career results.

>>>>>> Sustainable success

Perhaps you are already in a career that you are happy with but lack opportunities for career progression? Perhaps those with influence don't know what results you currently produce or what you could do for the organisation?

I recently coached a person who was in an IT department. The projects he implemented had a wide-ranging impact not only in New Zealand but in Australia also. No one knew, and so his career was languishing. By coaching him over a six month period to make known the results he had produced this executive then became visible to his employer beyond the IT department.

He made presentations and wrote papers on the risk management implications of his projects. This reputation building resulted in him being promoted outside of the IT department into a general management role.

This is the kind of result you can expect, but will your manager promote your results to others in the company? Good leaders do, but there are also poor leaders who will claim that they and not you produced the result, or even just stay silent in relation to your accomplishments.

If your leader will not give the recognition you deserve then you may need another advocate within your company, or engage in self-promotion.

Before finding an advocate or engaging in self-promotion answer these questions:

- What are your special talents?
- Do you have unique skills?
- What do you want to be known for?
- What image do you want others to have of you?
- What do I want my career to look like two or three years from now?
- How assertive do I need to be?

Having answered these questions you need to put self-promotion in the context of your business:

1. What is the culture of our company? Is it a culture where, outside of my immediate manager others regularly get recognition? If so then it will not appear out of place for an advocate to talk of results on your behalf, or for you to self-promote.
2. What is the situation? Is it something truly out of the ordinary worthy or recognition? Do not promote the trivia.
3. When and with whom should the visibility occur either through an advocate or by self-promotion?
 - Do you need to share it immediately?
 - Can you discuss as part of a regular session with your leader?
 - Does it warrant special attention or should it be discussed as part of a regular meeting with your manager, or in a group meeting?
 - Colleague sharing?
 - Share with key company decision-makers?
 - Can you forward a memo, letter or email?

All of this discussion presupposes that you are in a company that values talent and where there are definite opportunities for career progression. However this may not always be the case and at some point you may face a personal decision that your next career step will need to be with another company. At that point it will become necessary to have parallel plans or internal self-promotion and external self-promotion also.

If that is the case you will need a ruthless Road Map:

- What companies are my target market?
- How will I establish the correct image?
- Overcome the paradox – I want a new job, but I don't have the experience.
- Stretching your resources. Allocating a sustained time commitment in order to make and change and probably having to allocate money to your effort. The money will be needed to join organisations, attend events and develop your personal promotional material.
- Starting and maintaining a promotional plan.
- Becoming visible in target organisations.
- Developing your material. This may include a portfolio, CV, proposals or business cards.
- Gaining leverage through friends, acquaintances and referral sources.

Now it is time to blow your own horn! Become part of business word of mouth, learn how to brag about yourself and speak and write about your accomplishments, as success breeds success. For example, have you considered an addition to your email signature line *"responsible for 5 new key accounts last month."*

What are your five biggest, proudest accomplishments?

What are the key benefits from your accomplishments to your coaches, employer or potential employer? What information might they be looking for?

The sooner you identify them, learn them and practice delivering them then the sooner you will become more comfortable in talking about them as opportunities present themselves.

However, don't denigrate yourself. "Oh, it's nothing" is the retort I hear too often. Accept the complement with good grace and then briefly say how you did what it was that you are now getting praise for.

Your accomplishments may be worthy of press releases, web site announcements or provide you with opportunities to make presentations to business groups.

Look at your current resume. Every sentence or bullet point should have a quantified or qualified accomplishment.

Why are you unique – What position do you occupy compared to those similarly qualified? What is your 'unfair advantage'? This must clearly show through in your resume. Remember for each employment advertisement the search firm or potential employer runs will receive 80 – 100 resumes.

Marketing “Me Inc”

Yes you need a marketing plan, and it will have two key elements.

First, promoting your general visibility by becoming visible in target organisations, seminar presentations and follow-up with attendees, and article writing reprint and circulation.

Visible volunteering

- Target your organisations. They must capture your interest and members must have the potential to become either referral sources, or “buddies” where you can keep each others careers on track.
- Who will you cultivate as “buddies”?
- Don’t just join. Volunteer for visibility.
- Can members of the group become the nucleus for an on-line discussion group?

If you deliver seminars?

- Are they being delivered to my target group?
- Have I developed a presentation “core” so that I can use if for other presentations?
- Am I going to follow-up with attendees? If not, I should not waste time preparing and delivering seminars unless I just want to feel good.

Now review your actual presentations:

- Do my presentation have a clear focus?
- Have I adapted my presentation to the audience specific needs - what do they want to know?
- Is my presentation self-serving or benefit driven?
- Have I provided too much background or too many details?
- Have I allowed enough time to draw my audience out on their needs?
- Have I given them the action steps? What do I want them to do as a result of listening?

- Do my presentations have a clear focus?
- Have I adapted my presentation to the audience specific needs - what do they want to know?
- Is my presentation self-serving or benefit driven?

Can I generate News Releases to enhance my visibility?

News releases always have the Who, what, why, how, when & where? However, the most important aspect is to determine *Who cares?* This is the ultimate test of what is newsworthy and whether a publication will be interested. There are eight types of news releases:

1. Media events
2. Advisory – media tip sheet
3. News release
4. Biographical feature
5. Position papers
6. Public service/calendar announcement
7. Post event articles
8. Piggyback major story or event. Media rebuttal etc

Remember also that you may have the opportunity to participate in radio or TV forums.

Article writing may also give you the edge you are looking for.

Articles generally fall into three basic types, problem solving; developments of interest to reader; and those providing reader opportunities.

In structuring an article your objectives are to initially create anxiety, show desirable outcomes, suggest a course of action and finally highlight your availability to solve problems.

Just like the follow-up with attendees of seminars you deliver, do not write articles unless you intend to reprint the article or use it in an email to your full contact database. It is simply not worth the time and energy otherwise.

Similarly newsletters or e-zines may give you an edge in the market.

When will it be appropriate for you to use PR? Here are typical situations for considering the use of a person for PR:

- For personal positioning
- Offensive/defensive communications
- Releasing Collateral marketing pieces
- News releases and ongoing visibility
- Event or results-based PR
- By-line article positioning
- Speaking opportunities. Consider also signing up and being represented by Speakers Bureaus
- Video production
- Public service “authority” This involves becoming an “expert” that the media will call when they have a story in your field of expertise.

To determine if you need PR assistance, ask: Who do I want to reach? What do I want them to hear? How should I/my business be portrayed? Why should I be featured? How often?

Second, building a network in the business community of potential referral sources including your peers, professional advisors to business and executive search firms. Additionally you will be targeting on potential employers in industries where you seek employment.

Do you need to cultivate a mentor? At this stage of your career could you benefit from a mentor, rather than engaging a coach. If the answer is “Yes” ensure that he/she will devote enough time and be honest about where you are today, and your progress.

It’s all about ‘face’ time. In New Zealand we still hear mention of the “tall poppy” syndrome but it is not something I personally subscribe to. However all of us have to get comfortable with business and social situations and that it is why it is important to have an “elevator pitch.” You only have sixty seconds when you meet a person for the first time for them to either want to carry on talking to you, or simply drift off to another group. If you prepare and rehearse a 60-second pitch then it will become second nature in working it into conversations at networking meetings. Write out your presentation.

- Category – what is your career or profession?
- Uniqueness – what makes you unique compared to others in your field?
- Results – results you get will really attract attention.
- Love – if you are not passionate about your work it will show.
- Newsworthy – people love stories.
- Other people’s mouths – it is what other people say, rather than what you say about yourself that is important.
- Who can benefit? If you give people the whole universe rarely will they think of a potential referral. If you phrase it “*A good type of prospect for me is.....*” you are more likely to get qualified referrals.

Example:

“I provide excuse-free leadership in the repositioning of businesses to improve market-share, cashflow and profits.

In one recent project I saved \$900K and the negotiation was in NBR . Philip Crowley was so delighted with the result that I was retained to do the repositioning of another of their businesses.

Any company that has been in business for 5 years or more is a good prospect.... Their market and technology have changed and typically they have not adopted a “Greenfields” approach to business planning.”

WHERE IS THE BENEFIT? Remember, people buy benefits not services. Making them look good, easing their pain are good ways for them to want to do business with you.

Now you have to learn how to work the room!

Master networking is a skill you can learn as you start the “Rule of 7” journey. What is my Rule of 7? It will take six or seven contacts before someone maybe likes you, maybe trusts you, maybe tests your product or service before entering into a more long-term relationship with you. Most of us fall into the trap of making say only three or four contacts before giving up. That is the very time when the other person is just getting comfortable with you. If they are a prospect, not a suspect (suspects just use you for information or give themselves a referend point with your competitors) or a potential referral source than remember the Rule of 7. Now back to working the room:

1. Wear a badge with name and company in LARGE print
2. Move away from the people you came with or know
3. Set specific goals... I will find at least 3 people to follow up with.
4. Walk up to someone you would like to know and introduce yourself.
5. Exchange business cards – later write time/date and reason for follow up.
6. What will your next contact be?
7. Ask
 - What do you do?
 - Who are your customers/clients?
 - What makes you unique?
 - How will what you do help me or my clients?
8. Decide on your follow up and calendar it

When you meet someone for the first time do not try and dominate the conversation. People love talking, and in particular love talking about themselves. Become a better listener. Be a center of influence – introduce old new contacts to each other.

Marketing “Me Inc”

- Customers/clients

Customers – wedded, cross-sold used for referrals

Customers have a 5 – 7 year life cycle..... They are your friends in business, even when you change companies or start your own business

Speed of service

Rapport with influencers – Coach, User, Financial & Decision Maker

Data cards of personnel – birthdays, family members, anniversaries

Thanks you letters cards

Send “no charge” invoices

Genuine interest in clients

You can create a website and newsletter..... Build a database of contacts, exchange contacts

Write a book

Write a column

Write a regular newsletter

Enhance credibility

Create vehicle with many promotional opportunities

Make royalties

Promote other services/products

Get clients

Build and maintain a card file and data base

Do I need professional sales training?
Identifying prospect/customer needs
Analysing sales situations
Organising proposals.... “you get” benefits
Obtaining commitments

MY MANTRA

I am always prepared. I take the time to do it right
Hearing “no” doubles my determination
I keep myself “up”
I am professional, and it shows.
I always spend time each week marketing “Me Inc”.
I keep promoting, and that keeps me winning

Avoid the mistakes

Not targeting your audience

Spamming..... Dear Sir To whom it may concern
Participating in groups only for self-promotion.... You must have an interest in their objectives
Don't fake the praise – must be genuine
Promoting too soon or too late
Don't be too pushy/wear out your welcome
Projecting wrong image
Forgetting where you came from - be proud of your history
Great promotion won't overcome a lack of results
Build a personal database of contacts.

Your marketing plan will be a month-by-month document similar to that attached. Even when you are gainfully employed in a satisfying career which has long-term prospects you MUST maintain your business community network. Realistically, the only person in your career is you. There are no careers for life.

Who are your target markets / audience?

CRE - what are you doing?
Have I allocated time each and every month, no matter how busy I get?