

You are the message !

By Denis Orme
Founder: www.leader-success.com

Research has shown that we start to make up our minds about people more or less within 7 seconds of meeting them. We are communicating with our eyes, faces, bodies and attitudes.... Much of it unspoken and in that brief 7 seconds we can trigger in other people a chain of emotional reactions from fear to comfort and reassurance.

This impression is created while you are being introduced.

As I have said before **Audiences want you to succeed**, but from the moment you set foot on the stage or get in front of a group at your church, service organization or office their scrutiny of you and your message has begun.

You are the message, and in the article '**Its show time**' I addressed:

- Dress – professional and appropriate to the audience.
- Grooming.
- Confidence - if you have completed the planning and preparation, confidence will follow.
- Smile. Your smile will melt your audience.
- Self-talk? Remember, you become what you think; and
- Speech.

.....in this article we will go further.

What is your image?

Well, your image is everything from your voice, appearance, walk, stance, body language (do you look like a winner?) your props, your acting style, use of humor, clothes and accessories. This results in your image, but more importantly the perception people have of you. Even before you open your mouth!

Did you know that the eighty muscles of the face are capable of making more than 7,000 facial expressions? Most of us can read 'happy' or 'sad,' but perhaps we should become better at reading other nuances.

When you communicate with others it is not just the words you are sending, you are also sending the message as to what kind of person you are. *You are the message! And without doubt you must convey that you are a winner. Success breeds Success.*

Remember also that hard work alone will not guarantee your success, and like it or not publicity and in particular self-promotion holds the key to your successful future. It is a given that you are already highly competent in your field.

Firstly, you need to ignore the myths:

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

Think about:

Why you are unique.
What are your special talents?
Do you have unique skills?
What are your five biggest, proudest accomplishments?
What position do you occupy compared to those similarly qualified?
What is your 'unfair advantage'?
What do you want to be known for?
What image do you want others to have of you?

Signature stories are stories uniquely you, and drawn from your experiences.

*Similarly by probing the questions above you will arrive at your **signature style**. Again uniquely you, in image and in both the content and delivery of your presentation material.*

Dwell on what your style or persona currently is, and, the persona you should develop to secure continuing career options and speaking opportunities.

Great communicators do not change their style from a private conversation to an appearance before a large audience. **They remain authentically themselves.**

But in order to successfully grow your career, or your opportunities for speaking, you need a marketing plan.

Marketing 'Me Inc.' requires a two pronged approach; raising your visibility and building your network within the business community. We will look at each aspect and how to develop a step-by-step strategy to achieve these aims.

An excellent way to raise your visibility is to join target organizations where members have the potential to become either your referral sources or 'buddies' to keep you on track with your personal or career goals.

Remember that the target organization that you join, be it Toastmasters, SWAP, or your local BNI chapter must capture your interest and provide the forum for visibility.

Do not just join for the sake of joining. Volunteer to lead discussions and, wherever possible deliver presentations.

Remember your aim is to leverage your membership to increase your visibility, and continually hone your presentation skills.

Another technique you can use to raise your visibility is the delivery of seminars or presentations to your target group or industry.

Develop a presentation core of material that you can use in numerous presentations but which can still be customized to your audience. Following up with attendees is crucial to maintaining your visibility, otherwise your effort in preparing and delivering the presentation will have been wasted.

Article writing and press releases may also give you the edge you are looking for in raising your visibility. Articles generally fall into three basic categories: problem solving, developments of interest and those providing reader opportunities.

In structuring an article your objective is to initially create anxiety, show desirable outcomes, suggest a course of action and finally highlight your availability to solve the problem. Contacting industry-focused magazine publishers and submitting your article to them can provide you with the opportunity to become a regular contributor to their publication.

Press releases can be tricky and the most important aspect apart from the Who, What, Where, When, Why is to determine *Who cares?* This is the ultimate test of what is newsworthy and whether a news editor will be interested in printing your story. A young woman I once worked with returned to USA after a two year stint in the UK.

She quickly contacted a local paper and convinced them to do an article on her accomplishments overseas and why she had chosen to come back to America. She then used reprints of the article at job interviews. Talk about creating a buzz about yourself with a prospective employer!

Obviously having your own blog, ezine or online newsletter is another great way to enhance your visibility and build your online network with your peers or possible mentors, prospects and potential employers.

The second dimension of marketing 'Me Inc' is **building your network** in the business community. Your network should not only include people within your industry, but professional advisors to business, executive search firms and mentors.

Mastering networking is an important skill that you can constantly improve upon. 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. Use networking events to become a center of influence by introducing old and new contacts to each other.

At every networking event I attend I set myself a specific goal; that I will find at least three people to follow up with. When exchanging business cards I write the date and reason for follow up. This information is then entered into an excel spreadsheet and is great as a memory jog before meeting up with that person for a coffee.

Remember my 'Rule of 7.' It takes between 6 to 7 contacts before someone maybe likes you, maybe trusts you and maybe wants to do business with you. Most of us fall into the trap of only making three to four contacts before we give up. That is the very time when the other person is just getting comfortable with you.

It's all about communication

Prepare your 'elevator pitch'. When you meet someone for the first time, you only have sixty seconds 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 it will eventually become second nature to working it into conversations at networking events. I'll give you my 'elevator pitch' as an example;

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

One client, Phil Crowley, was absolutely over the moon when I saved his company \$900K on a contract re-negotiation."

Self managing your career will bring you enormous personal satisfaction in that you know you are in control of where you are headed.

Even if you are gainfully employed in a satisfying career which has long-term prospects you **MUST** maintain your network in the business community and be diligent in devoting time every month to marketing 'Me Inc'.

As I have said before, the only person interested in you is YOU.