

Tooting Your Own Horn!

How To Balance Healthy Self-Confidence With
Shameless Self-Promotion

by
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*He who has a thing to sell, and goes and whispers in a well,
is not so apt to get the dollars as he who climbs a tree and hollers.*

- Unknown

Many people have problems talking about themselves in business. It often takes the form of saying too much about the wrong things or not nearly enough about the right ones. What's most important is to focus on what your audience really wants--results!

People buy results

Have you seen the home improvement store commercial where the customer is shopping for refrigerators? He walks down the row of display models, trying his "World's Best Dad" homemade coffee mug in each beverage door dispenser until he finds the perfect fit and declares, "I'll take this one." If the sales person had tried to sell him a refrigerator that was a great price, had lots of the latest features, came with an outstanding warranty, could be delivered the same day but did not accommodate that mug, he could have tooted that appliance's horn all day but never made a sale. What's important in this story is what's important about tooting your own horn. Unless you're playing the tune your audience wants, they won't hear you.

Results come in two flavors

There are two types of results--tangible (quantitative) and intangible (qualitative). Tangible results can be expressed in facts and figures; intangible results in feelings and emotions. But before you start spinning your results into sound bites, take some time to study and document the results you have produced from your customer's (employer's) point of view. Chances are what you think your customer is getting and what (s)he perceives as your (or your product's) real value are not a match.

What does your customer really want?

What does your customer really want? Is it tangible or intangible? While you might assume that everyone wants results they can touch and see and express in numerical values, the truth is that most people are like the guy with the coffee mug. They want the feeling the product or service will give them. So when you are thinking about the results you deliver, consider more than the obvious. Dig deep to uncover what customers value most. Get your customer involved.

Knowing your value builds confidence

You get a double pay-off when you invest time in clarifying your results as your customer sees them. First, you get language for talking about what you deliver and second, you build confidence in your abilities. After all, it's not just you talking about yourself, it's your customer talking too.

Take your show on the road

Now that you're ready to talk about what you do, where will you do it? Here are a few ideas . . .

- **Launch or update your website.** Feature your results.
- **Be a joiner.** Join and become active in organizations or groups that specialize in your interests.
- **Develop your speaking skills.** Develop a talk or program that showcases your knowledge and skills. Look for opportunities to share what you know in speeches, panel discussions, or meeting facilitation. Prepare your own introductions. Make sure your audience sees you the way you want to be seen.
- **Write.** Develop a newsletter, articles or opinion pieces that include by-line information about you and what you do.
- **Volunteer.** Become involved in supporting a good cause.
- **Become an expert.** Position yourself as an expert for radio, tv, web, and print.
- **Show up.** Attend networking events that target your market.
- **Climb a tree and holler.** Announce your achievements in publications and on web sites that target your market.
- **Get pictures!** Get pictures of you and/or your clients at events you attend. Send them with your press releases, put them on your web site. Send them to clients for their office.

Knowledge is power! The more you know about what your customer wants, the more effective you'll be when talking about what you do.

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