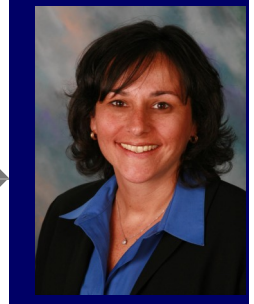


Personal Branding and The Shameless Art of Self-Promotion

By SUSAN YOUNG



Whether you're a business professional, work for a nonprofit or are looking for a job, you must have the ability to self-promote. This is not about sounding pompous or arrogant. It's about having the self-confidence to casually and skillfully weave your talents, accomplishments and personality into pithy nuggets or sound bites that differentiate you from your competition.

Developing your own personal brand and having the ability to self-promote are integral parts of your success.

Most people feel uncomfortable when others focus on them and their accomplishments. We tend to downplay our roles and brush off compliments. Too many of us have a case of chronic laryngitis in the office. Others who claim to be "shy" (another word for low self-esteem) have conveniently managed to stay off the radar screen. It's time to develop your self-confidence and your own brand of YOU.

Self-promotion, when done properly, is about combining subtle speaking, writing and marketing skills. You may not have aspirations of being in the corner office, but each of us should be able to convey a clear, concise and compelling message (spoken and written) about our talents, skills and accomplishments. This is critical in job interviews, an elevator ride with "big boss" and at a networking breakfast with colleagues.

Spend time thinking about what

differentiates you from others in your field. What makes you special? Interview a few close and trusted relatives and friends about your personality traits. Ask them what they see as your strongest attributes and values. What attracts them to you? This will help you to find your voice. The key is to spend time and craft your personal commercial. Two versions are best; one longer commercial that's 3-4 minutes in length and a pared down version that's a punchy 30- second sound bite or nugget.

Here are 5 tips to help you turn your resume into an engaging, conversational story or commercial:

1. Start at the beginning and weave in your personality, highlights and accomplishments so you don't come across as boring or bragging. Here's a snippet from my longer promo: "I started in the news business when I was 12 years old. I had an afternoon paper route and delivered newspapers on my bicycle in my neighborhood in Edison, NJ. When I was 17, I went to college, pretty convinced I was going to write for Rolling Stone magazine. Then I found the radio station....when I graduated I returned to New Jersey and began my radio news career. I worked in New Jersey and New York, as an on-air anchor, reporter and news director. I've interviewed everyone from homeless people to presidents and won awards from the AP and Broadcasters Association..... after

10 years of 'managing chaos', I felt bored and went to work as a Communications Director for a state legislator....

2. Focus on experiences and lessons you have had that reveal highlights of your skills, talents, and goals. Think about what separates you from others in your field. What value, skills and results do you bring to the table? What make you unique?

3. Practice delivering your promo in a casual, genuine and authoritative style that complements your written words. Your story should have the power to draw people to you. It must be compelling enough for someone to say, "Tell me more." Understand the importance of charisma.

4. Develop your own personal brand. It should be relevant, distinctive, valuable and memorable. There is a lot of competition and "noise" in the marketplace. Your job is to rise above it and stand out.

5. Edit your longer commercial down to the essential information for your 30- second sound bite. I recently presented my "Shameless Art of Self-Promotion" workshop at a college student leadership conference in Florida. It got rave reviews because the students understood that they need superior communication skills in today's competitive world. We all must be proactive in our own careers and lives. This will help.

Susan Young works with business professionals and associations who want to supercharge their communication, sales and motivation and make more money. She's the President of Get in Front Communications, Inc., a public relations and communications training company. Susan is a member of the National Speakers Association and provides trainings, workshops and keynotes on interpersonal communication, sales, reading body language, Emotional Intelligence and public relations. Coaching is also available. Visit www.getinfrontcommunications.com and www.getinfrontblogging.com. Follow Susan on Twitter @sueyoungmedia.. Call (210) 375-6422.