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3 Tips for the Most Authentic Self-Promotion

You can promote yourself in a way that engages draws others to you. Shift the emphasis off yourself and onto to your clients.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

How many times have you received a newsletter or heard a marketing pitch and recoiled with an uninspired, "Ick?" We can spot an insincere, self-promotional message from a mile away--and yet, as entrepreneurs wanting to communicate our message, we may be sending those same "icky" messages out, sometimes without even realizing the long-term negative affect it can have.

You *can* promote yourself in a way that engages others and draws them to you. When you do, you will stand out in the crowd, as well as grow your business.

You likely know many of the common tips for how to promote yourself and get noticed, but you also need to know what self-promotional strategies to avoid.

Don't ask for business when you're desperate. The time to promote yourself is when your business is doing well, not as a last resort. Every entrepreneur has been there--when times are tough and new business seems hard to come by. The key is to trick yourself into residing in a more confident place by getting into the right mindset. Even if things are going wrong and you're desperate for business, take the time to ground yourself, meditate on your successes so far and those yet to come, and get clarity on what you're trying to create in your business. Remember who you are and who your clients are. There will be plenty of business coming your way. There always is.

The key to self-promotion that works is to come from a place of confidence so you're not asking for business from a place of fear. Moving to a place of trust and confidence will represent you in a better light and is more likely to get you the kind of business you want.

Don't be a toddler. If you're a parent you've been there--you're at the store and your child innocently asks for a piece of candy. So you say maybe. Then they ask again. And then again, until finally, unable to withstand the whining, you say no! Entrepreneurs--and all of us, really--turn into toddlers when we don't get what we want. Sometimes we believe that if we ask enough times we'll get the "yes." The truth is you may ask your way into a *no*. The lesson here is that asking again isn't going to help.

As an entrepreneur you have a vision in mind for yourself. If you're a business owner, it could be a vision for new partnerships or clients. If you're part of a bigger firm, it may be asking for promotions, raises, or better opportunities. You can keep your vision in mind and work towards it with intention, but without asking so often that you turn people off.

The trick is to show instead of tell.

If you want a new title, don't say you deserve it. Instead, *actually* deserve it. The way to get noticed is to become invaluable so that other people can't overlook you, showing that you deserve it intrinsically. For example, if you're a consultant, don't tell people you're a fantastic consultant and they should hire you; instead, actually provide valuable advice and guidance to a prospective client so they can see you in action. If you're a salesperson, don't tell people how great your product is and implore them to buy it; look for opportunities to show them your product in action in a situation in which they genuinely need your product. If you work for a bigger firm and want new responsibilities you want, don't tell someone you want that certain responsibility, just take it on. Deliver on a project, and express interest by directly engaging in the effort and asking good questions to move the project forward

Don't let your self-promotion stand for itself. Don't let the only thing people remember you for be your self-promotion. Instead, provide value.

I once attended a full-day workshop designed to help entrepreneurs set up a successful business, but it turned out to be 95 percent self-promotional, putting emphasis on what the sponsoring company had to

offer rather than what attendees could take away. I thought to myself, "I spent an entire day here, and what have I really gotten?" Entrepreneurs who are too self-promotional either consciously or unconsciously design events, communications, newsletters and client meetings that can be viewed on the receiving end as pure marketing events--and nothing will lose a client faster.

Shift the emphasis off yourself and onto to your clients. What do *they* need from you? What do they want to hear? What help do they need? By listening to your audience and trusting that your commitment to them will pay off, you will set yourself apart. Your audience will see you as a trusted advisor who can truly help them. You will steer clear of irritating self-promotion and find yourself in a much better place--a healthy, long-standing, profitable relationship with your clients.

As an entrepreneur, you have something valuable to offer. Your talent is enough to impress your customers and draw them in. Trust your results and look for opportunities to help. Today, reflect for a moment on the promotions you have planned. Choose just *one* of the techniques above and experiment! See how it changes your results.

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