

CAREER

Marketing Yourself Is a Core Competency

When you hear the term “marketing,” you likely think of products, services and commodities. How about marketing yourself?

Are you comfortable talking about yourself this way? More important, are you prepared to talk about yourself in this way – packaging your talents and accomplishments, showcasing them and presenting your value inside your organization as well as out in your profession, industry and community?

Marketing yourself is an essential ingredient to successfully managing your career. You may be thinking this sounds so deliberate and insincere but in reality, marketing yourself can be your most natural and sincere skill.

How do you develop ease, confidence and comfort with a task that is considered so difficult by so many? First, do not view marketing yourself as a task but as a required competency for taking charge of your career and executing a successful career management strategy.

It's a core competency that can become so effortless and second nature that you do not even realize you are doing it. Develop this core competency with the marketing techniques, the 3 Ps.

Preparation

- Keep a running list of your skills, competencies, knowledge and accomplishments. Know your strengths as well as your limitations. Be well versed in what you have achieved, your interests and your aspirations as well as the choices you have made. Ask others for feedback and input, too.

- How do you differentiate yourself from your peers and colleagues? Define the unique characteristics, traits



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and/or experiences you have to offer that set you apart.

- Create and build a strong network. Maintain and nurture long-lasting relationships within your network of contacts. Be disciplined about enhancing your network. Gain momentum and do not stop.

- What are your areas of functional and/or technical expertise? Have you established specific niches for which you are sought-after and well known? Keep it simple and easy to understand. Have a crisp and clear message when articulating and communicating your expertise.

- Be goal-oriented and have a mission for yourself with specific short- and long-term goals and objectives. Reassess and update regularly. Have a plan and stay true to yourself. The end result will assure that you come across as confident, focused, purposeful and self-directed.

- You are in charge of your attitude and only you! A positive attitude and a sense of humor are most important

in setting a strong foundation for a successful marketing strategy. “I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.” – Charles Swindell

Packaging

- Always maintain a current resume, bio, curriculum vitae and/or portfolio. Make additions, amendments and edits as they occur. Do not allow for a long lag time in between updates so that it is all accurate, recent and thorough.

- Keep copies of performance reviews, awards, authored articles, presentations and other testaments of your work history, track record, expertise and credibility. This also provides quick access to relevant examples which allow you to showcase your talents, accomplishment and value.

- Obtain written references, testimonials and/or statements from colleagues, managers, peers, clients, staff, professors, vendors and other key contacts who can attest to your experiences, skills and knowledge.

- Serve on boards, committees and/or volunteer organizations providing opportunities to expand your network and enhance your visibility in your profession, industry and/or community.

- Education is important. Always continue to learn, whether it's through classes, advanced degrees, certifications or various training initiatives. You can never acquire too much education – being well-read and educated is an asset that will always round off your “package” for the better.

- Create key alliances and partnerships. Align yourself with people you respect, admire, want to be associated with and can learn from. You know

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the old saying about being judged by the company you keep – that remains true.

Presentation

- Strong communication skills are vital. Be concise and assertive regarding your needs, interests, skills and competencies. Clearly articulate what you want, what you have to offer and the value-add to be gained. Practice your delivery on trusted confidants. Active listening skills are just as crucial as verbal skills – listen well and reflect back to assure comprehension is accurate.

- Interpersonal skills are just as vital. Maintain a give-and-take approach exhibiting friendly, outgoing and engaging characteristics. Build and gain trust. Be courteous and respectful in your interactions. Take and display interest in others' talents, accomplishments and value. Find common ground, similarities and differences as a way to leverage your relationships. Build strong rapport and long lasting relationships as a solid foundation – personally and professionally. Most important, be sincere and authentic.

- Be pro-active and strategic with your efforts to be visible. Put yourself in a position to have the opportunity to

showcase your talents, accomplishments and value to the right people, at the right time and in the right forums. Don't wait for someone else to reach out to you – identify the opportunities and have a plan in place to initiate and follow through. Think big picture and outside the box.

- Practice professional etiquette – Common courtesy, good manners and giving back are not only for your personal life but go a long way in your professional life. People remember kind gestures, helpful hands and ways you reach out above and beyond what's expected. The worst things you can do are burn bridges and not display professional etiquette. Always strive to leave positive impressions with everyone with whom you come in contact.

- Be your own advocate. It is important to advocate for yourself at appropriate times with the right people. Don't expect others to be the only ones who advocate for you.

- Know when to reach out to mentors, advisors, allies, partners, colleagues, friends and other key members of your network for their support and assistance.

- Create your "brand" – this is how

you wish to be portrayed in the marketplace – your reputation and your credibility. You will create a niche for yourself and it will be the message that you deliver, the mark you leave with the utmost confidence.

- Speaking of confidence, this is how it all comes together. It can all boil down to this one last piece. You can be completely prepared with an outstanding package but if you blow it in the presentation by a lack of confidence, it is all wasted.

The good news is, however, if you do the proper due diligence within the preparation and packaging phases, you will build the confidence to assure a successful and effective presentation.

Practicing these 3 Ps will result in a more fulfilling and focused career. Be sure to incorporate external initiatives as well, reaching outside of your organization with equal importance.

Once you create an effective marketing outlook, you won't even realize you're engaging in what has become a natural process of achieving self-actualization.

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