

### **TIP: Rules for Marketing Yourself Internally**

On occasion, the workplace can be a confusing and frustrating place for a small company manager. Have you ever volunteered to lead an upcoming high-profile initiative, only to see someone else be selected for no apparent reason? Have you ever interviewed for an internal position higher on the organizational chart, then not been selected even though you meet 100% of the requirements? Have you ever added a big number to the company's bottom line and not received any credit for your efforts—even though it was YOUR hard work and innovative thought process that made it happen? When these situations arise it is easy to assume that your work is not appreciated, or that something (or someone) internally is working against you. But more often than not, the answer is much simpler: small company owners and CEOs are notoriously bad at saying "Thank You" and giving outward credit to people who work hard for them.

So exactly what does marketing yourself and your accomplishments entail? Should you openly brag about yourself to your co-workers, point out every good thing you've ever done to your boss, and hand the owner or CEO of your small company an up-to-date resume? Not exactly. But I am hoping you understand that a little periodic self-promotion—done in a subtle way—can help you get where you want to be from a career standpoint. With that in mind, I have assembled a few of my most valuable tips for marketing yourself and your accomplishments within your organization; no matter what you happen to do for a living.

#### **Rule #1: Understand Your Audience.**

Whether you manage a marketing department, a product development department, the Accounting function or the entire operation, there is a principle for marketing yourself that is more valuable than the rest: know who you're speaking to. Does your boss prefer to communicate via e-mail or verbally? Does she respond better to statistics or written reports? Does he get more excited to know that the company has saved money or made money? What time of day is your boss most open to a quick note or conversation? Knowing this information can do nothing but help you in the long run.

#### **Rule #2: Establish a Regular Pattern for Your Communication.**

Instead of surprising your boss with a positive report when she least expects it—and is most likely to forget—establish a regular pattern of positive communication. Early afternoon on Friday is typically a good time to send a positive report, because your boss might actually have time to read and absorb it. But whatever time you choose, be consistent from week to week. In time, your supervisor will not only come to expect your "Friday Good News," she will actually look forward to it.

#### **Rule #3: Paint Only the Big Picture.**

When you finally decide to approach your manager with some positive news, be careful to not inundate him with details. Statements like "our most recent product was released 3 months early" or "employee turnover in my departments has been cut in half over the last two years" are about as detailed as you should get when it comes to your personal accomplishments. You can always offer to provide your manager with more information at a later time if requested. And there's one more advantage to leaving out the details—it gives your boss an excuse to stop by your office for a POSITIVE conversation about your performance, which of course we all need more of these days.

**Rule #4: Present the Good, but Resist the Temptation to Embellish.**

Once you become comfortable communicating your accomplishments to your boss on a regular basis, it actually becomes fun. But at the same time, it can be tempting to push the boundaries and blur the line between what is expected in your role and what is considered an extraordinary accomplishment. Resist the temptation to point out that you met your revenue goal for the year, or that you completed a major project on time, or that a planning document you have been working on for several months is now complete. As difficult as these activities can be, do not forget they are an expected part of your job.

**Rule #5: If You Can't Back it Up or Don't Believe it 100%, Don't Report It.**

I can't explain why, but it has been my experience that small company owners and CEOs are inherently suspicious of good news. Maybe it's because they've been burned so many times in the past. Or maybe it's because managing by exception (only communicating with employees when there's a problem) is a more comfortable style of management. Either way, you can be 100 percent certain that the receiver of your positive report will, from time to time, question you about it—extensively. If you're not comfortable walking through your report step-by-step with the person who signs your paychecks, don't bother.

**Rule #6: Use Charts and Graphs—In Color.**

If you actually want your boss to read what you're making available to her, try to avoid lengthy written reports, documents with paragraphs, and even reports with long sentences. Wherever possible, presenting information in a succinct, graphical-based format makes your news easy to review, understand and absorb. And in the absence of charts and graphs, don't discount the value of a quick e-mail with a handful of short bullets. We all have a person in our lives who sends e-mail that we immediately delete or archive, because the message is usually too long to read. Don't become that person! And using a splash of color once in awhile in your charts and graphs (don't push it) immediately indicates to your boss that your information is important, and that you put some time and effort into assembling it.

**Rule #7: Take the Opportunity to Make Your Boss Look Good.**

Are you looking for a sure-fire way to make your boss excited to receive your regular positive updates? Focus on providing timely, succinct and well-formatted reports she can use to enhance her reputation with HER boss or peers. As you create your reports, ask yourself this question: "Based on the content and format of this report, could my boss pass this on to the owner of my company, or to an executive from another small company?" If the answer is no, spend a little more time working on it. A good manager can obviously complete his job at a high level . . . but a good *employee* figures out ways to make his boss look good in the process.

**Rule #8: Market Beyond Your Own Department.** Here is a fact that might surprise you: your direct supervisor is not the only person you should be marketing yourself to. Although formal and written communication to anyone but your direct supervisor could land you in hot water, there is no rule against mentioning you and your departments' successes to people outside of the department. Today's peers could be tomorrow's employees, managers, or even company owners—and the more people who know you're extremely good at what you do, the better.

As a small company manager there are literally dozens of reports you are expected to maintain and turn in at any given time. But today I need you to add one more report to your regular routine—the one that highlights YOU as a great manager. If you regularly go the extra mile or continually find innovative ways to bring revenue into the company, you have the right—and the obligation—to let someone know about it. If you do something great on your next project, don't be afraid to tell someone!