

CLAIM YOUR SUCCESSES...BLOW YOUR OWN HORN

By Daisy Wright
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Do you know of anyone who is afraid of talking about himself, afraid to blow his own horn? I am not referring to a narcissistic person who believes he is the 'greatest thing since sliced bread'. I mean someone who is reluctant to let others know about his on-the-job or personal successes.

Talking about oneself tends to conjure up images of conceit, self-centeredness, egotism and the like. It's especially difficult when so many of us have been conditioned to believe that it is wrong to call attention to ourselves. On the contrary, it's when we don't, that opportunities pass us by. A chance for promotion eludes us because we believe the boss already knows what we can do.

I remember in grade school if someone started talking about himself and how great he was, we would tell him that "self-praise is no recommendation". That expression taught us to wait for others to shower us with praise; to wait on others to give us permission to acknowledge our accomplishments. We become adults and we find it difficult to acknowledge the role we played in the success of an event or a project. We sit back and watch others claim our successes because we are too afraid to speak up. In fact, even when others commend us for a job well done, we become embarrassed and downplay our role by saying "it's all a part of the job".

Taking credit for your accomplishments, in or outside the workplace, is not bragging. It's admitting to yourself that you played an important role just like the others on the team. If you don't take the credit somebody else will.

Time and again I hear clients downplay their contributions because, "it's all a part of the job". One man told me he had interviewed for a manager's position last year with his employer, a leading telecommunications company, and did not get the job. When he asked for feedback, he was told that he did not sell himself well. In other words, he did not blow his horn loud enough. When I asked him why he did not promote himself in the interview, he said the director knew him and knew what he could do. That's a passive approach to take in an interview. He was too modest and believed if he had called attention to his achievements he would have been labeled self-centered and egotistical.

Another client invented a safety product, which his company sold exclusively to a major home renovations company, and for which they obtained a patent. When asked if he was recognized for the invention, he said, "No, because it was all a part of the job". He did not claim his success because he felt it was all a part of the job. To him, it was no big deal; to the company it was a big deal as it continues to reap huge financial rewards.

I advise people – clients and those who will listen – that modesty has its place, but if they don't blow their own horns, no one will know they are coming. It's the candidate who knows how to blow her horn without being obnoxious is the one who will move ahead. So, the next time the boss asks to state what you have accomplished over the past year, be prepared to confidently blow your horn to claim your successes without appearing conceited.

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