

TEN WAYS TO SELF PROMOTE

“Without promotion something terrible happens...Nothing!”
—P.T. Barnum

OK, here it is—the big secret. If you wait around it may not happen, and you will fall farther behind those who know. What am I talking about? Self-promotion! I’m sorry I had to break it to you. If you are invisible to the world, it doesn’t matter how good you are. So get noticed. How does an introvert get that recognition? The answer is: in steps. Take small steps in your quest for promotion, first taking on the things that are easiest for you, then taking on the more challenging.

Here are some ways to self-promote, and be more visible:

1. **Get a website, or blog.** Create a place where you can write about subjects that interest you and that relate to your business. Begin to establish yourself as an expert in your field. The online community doesn’t care if you are shy; as long as you can write and have unique ideas or an interesting way to express yourself.

2. **Find a local business publication that takes freelance writers and write articles for it.** There is a good chance you won’t get paid, but you can use these articles to promote yourself and your business and potentially get paid for your writing later on. Cite these articles when meeting with prospects or to strengthen your relationship with your customers. When I was on maternity leave I began reading a lot of business journals and technology websites to stay current. After I went back to work, I kept up my reading, and noticed several of them were seeking submissions. In one case I met with the local editor and we brainstormed several areas on which I could write. My articles were posted on the web, and in the print version with my picture, my bio, and my company information. This was an excellent way for me to generate some additional interest in my company and in me after being out of the loop for several months.

3. **Get to know the media.** Make an effort to know at least a couple members of your local media. Newspaper reporters, TV anchors, news directors, editors, and radio personalities are all looking for great subjects to report on. By bringing these people into your network, you will become a valued and important resource to them. Give them a good story, and they will come back to you again and again.

4. **Find a PR buddy.** Do you know another deserving, yet under-recognized individual that you can trust with a little covert operation? Share your hopes and ambitions with this person, tell him or her about accolades you would like to receive, and offer to nominate your friend for an award or write a public interest story about them. Ask them to do the same for you.

5. Send out a monthly or quarterly personal e-newsletter.

An associate of mine sends out an email newsletter monthly to everyone in his distribution list. His is similar to a Christmas letter (“we just moved into our new office;” “we have a new product at work;” “the weather has been great...”), and over the years I feel that I have gotten to know him better from this monthly letter. Just remember that you are sending this out to your business associates, so there is no need to get too personal! Most people won’t care that your niece has chicken pox and that you just bought new lawn furniture, so keep it mostly business.

6. **Have a professional bio written.** Hire a professional résumé and bio writer. The bio can be used on your website, when applying for executive positions, or when nominated for awards. A decent bio written by someone else can tout your accomplishments in ways you might feel

uncomfortable doing yourself! This same person can also write an incredible résumé for you for the same reason.

7. Offer to speak at seminars, or schedule your own. Speaking at seminars is a wonderful way to promote yourself and your business. If the big seminar-style opportunity doesn't feel comfortable for you, look for "round-tables" or panel discussions to speak at. They are more casual, and there will be more than one speaker, so you won't have to be all alone on stage. A few years ago, I was asked participate at a *Women in Computers* discussion at a local university on networking and mentorship. I hadn't ever taken part in a panel discussion before and didn't know what to expect. But it was a lot of fun, and since then I have become a big fan of this type of setting for self-promotion. I found that it was good to have other speakers there to fill in the gaps when I needed a little help answering a question, and I learned a lot from the variety of participants. The environment was relaxed, and I was relatively comfortable and had a lot to add to the discussion. No matter the forum, take the opportunity to get yourself noticed by your community and industry.

8. Follow Up. The best way to be remembered is to follow up, and follow up with everything! Call to confirm meetings, call to make sure people got the information you sent, call to make sure your clients are happy. Let your clients, prospects, and contacts know you are out there and that you are thinking of them. I make following up so important because on several occasions I have gone to a lunch meeting to meet with a colleague or client and never gotten to eat, because they never showed up. I hate sitting in the waiting area, getting sympathetic looks from the hostess. I had a lunch meeting a few years ago at one of the fanciest restaurants in town. When I entered I was immediately ushered to a table, and even though I said I was waiting for another person. After waiting for 20 minutes at my table, I decided to order. I was hungry, and on a schedule, and I was sure my colleague would join me soon. Unfortunately though, I ended up eating alone, which was bad enough at a nice restaurant, but several people I knew also came through the restaurant that day, including an ex-boyfriend, an old boss, and the mayor. "Hi Meg, eating alone?" I was so embarrassed that I am now extra prudent about these follow up calls!

9. Smile for the camera! Have a good professional photo taken and put that on your business cards, website, and/or company brochure. People will remember you more when they can put a face with a name.

10. Have a "tag line." When you introduce yourself, use a tag line or a clever saying that will be remembered and will help others associate you with what you do. (At BizNetix, we "put your biz on the net"—it may be corny, but it's memorable and effective!) Self-promotion is important to reaching the next levels of success, and it can be done tastefully, and professionally. Look for opportunities, don't be afraid to ask for help, and remember to keep your ultimate goals in mind!