7 TIPS FOR USING SELF-PROMOTION TO ADVANCE YOUR CAREER
Career advancement is about more than just raw skills and the determination to get better. It’s about the people you know, the stories you tell, and the impact you have on those around you.

At its core, career advancement is a byproduct of self-promotion. But not everyone feels comfortable promoting themselves to others. Many people struggle to have these types of conversations with their bosses, or even with their colleagues at networking events.

However, people who are willing and able to engage and present themselves in the best possible light have a marked advantage in gaining access to new positions, taking on new responsibilities, or applying for new jobs in their field.

To discuss this important part of professional development, IAW recently welcomed Kim Meninger, MBA, BCC from Executive Career Success to lead a HERizon Insights presentation on how to use self-promotion in advancing your career. Kim is an ICF Certified and CCE Board Certified Coach who works with women to expand their confidence, visibility, and influence.

We’ve collected her insights and recommendations from the webinar to create this guide for new job seekers and women eager to move up the corporate ladder to start using self-promotion in their efforts.
WHAT IS SELF-PROMOTION?

For a lot of people, “self-promotion” has negative connotations. You’re probably thinking about the obnoxious guy at the after-conference mixer who can’t stop telling you about the new accounts he closed last year.

But there’s a difference between healthy self-promotion – the kind that can support your career advancement efforts – and the excessive aggrandizing you are self-conscious of taking part in.

The primary goal in self-promotion is not to brag, but to ensure that others fully understand what you do and why you’re here.

What is your value and how does it manifest in the work you do?

This is the key. No one wants to hear a long list of accomplishments – unless, that is, you can contextualize them, explaining why they matter and how those skills and achievements can influence those around you.

Self-promotion is about building strategic relationships – the kind that can have a positive impact on your career. These are long-term relationships with colleagues, identifying a mentor in the workplace who can help you in your efforts, taking on mentees of your own whom you can help guide to success, and proactively sharing your expertise in ways that are beneficial to those around you.
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It’s easy to think of “sharing your expertise” as showing off, but in reality, you’re providing very real value to those around you – helping them learn and accomplish things you’ve already done.

Leverage your experiences and share them with others to build new relationships that will only benefit you in the future. More importantly, don’t be afraid to let other people leverage your work and build on it – accomplishing new and exciting things where you are credited along with them for their accomplishments.

Similar principles also apply to entrepreneurs, whose success largely depends on relationships. Rather than looking for opportunities to sell to potential clients, seek opportunities to share your expertise and demonstrate value.
The Challenges of Self-Promotion for Women

When sharing these goals with most people, the response is positive. People understand the value of putting themselves out there and highlighting their strengths. Still, for many women it remains challenging to do these things effectively.

Some challenges include:

- A feeling that these efforts are self-serving and insincere.
- They seem redundant. We want our work to speak for itself.
- It goes against our natural tendencies and humility.
- It puts us in the spotlight in a way we aren’t comfortable with.
- It feels unclear – how do you measure the success and effectiveness of these efforts?

Self-promotion isn’t a switch you can turn on. It’s a mindset and a skill that many women have avoided for much of their careers because it doesn’t feel right to them. And, in fact, a lot of these behaviors are discouraged in business settings. But these are social constructs that need to be torn down, because without them, success is that much harder.

To advance in your career, self-promotion is a must. How you do it can be unique to you, but much of the discomfort is external and we can address that.
BENEFITS OF SELF-PROMOTION DONE RIGHT

What makes self-promotion such an important aspect of your career? There are many benefits – not only to you but to those around you. Let’s take a closer look at both sets.

Benefits to You:

When you actively promote yourself, you’ll realize several benefits, some immediately and others over time.

- It establishes your importance to those around you.
- It differentiates you from others with whom you might compete for opportunities.
- It grows your influence and impact within your organization and your industry.
- It increases your visibility internally and to other companies.
- It demonstrates important leadership traits that can set you apart for future advancement.
- It positions you for advancement opportunities, both immediately and in the future.
Benefits to Others:

Before you start to feel self-conscious, consider the mirror of those benefits to yourself. These are the things that others gain when you make an effort to promote your expertise.

- It keeps your manager updated on your accomplishments, allowing them to better manage their business.
- It reflects well on leadership in your company as you make extra efforts.
- It provides visibility and opportunities to people on your team so they can do the same.
- It enables others to benefit from your work, expanding your influence beyond your core responsibilities.
- It establishes you as a valuable resource that people can turn to for insights and expertise in the field.

In short, you create for those around you a resource they can trust and turn to when they have problems or questions, or decide they also want to move up. It positions you as a potential mentor for others who want to walk in your footsteps, something that only further increases opportunities for those around you.
5 KEYS TO SELF-PROMOTION SUCCESS

The benefits of self-promotion are immense and can be the deciding factor in shifting from your current path to a new one that puts you into a new echelon of success.

But how do you get started?

What specifically should you be doing to prepare yourself and then take action to promote your accomplishments, position yourself as an expert, and provide value to those around you?

It starts with these five keys to self-promotion:

01 Self-Awareness: You need to recognize your own value before promoting it to others.

02 Confidence: You must believe in your inherent value.

03 Courage: You have to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone.

04 Authenticity: You should find ways that align with who you are.

05 Consistency: You must engage in regular self-promotion to realize its benefits.

Let’s take a closer look at seven tips designed to bolster your proficiency with each of these keys, what you can do to practice them in your own life, and the impact their mastery can have on your efforts.
RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN EXPERTISE

First up is the ability to recognize your accomplishments, appreciate what you’ve done, and share it with others.

Many people erect a wall that keeps them from doing this – belittling what they’ve done or constantly comparing it to others in the space.

The first step is to move past this and recognize that what you have done and what you are attempting to do is unique and valuable. Your expertise is coveted, not just because you are currently employed to utilize it, but because you are the only one to have your specific blend of experiences.

To start, ask yourself these four questions:

- What parts of my work come easily to me?
- What do I understand really well about my work?
- Where have I been given positive feedback?
- What do others come to me for?

The goal of this exercise is to understand and embrace your strengths in an effort to build greater confidence, influence others around you, and become aware of the roadblocks you’re putting up that keep you from communicating these strengths to others.
SHARE UPDATES WITH YOUR NETWORK REGULARLY

Another way to develop the five core skills you need to succeed is to build a practice of sharing.

Get in the habit of communicating with and sharing updates with your network on a regular basis. It’s easy to tell yourself that these people don’t really care or don’t need to know more than they ask for, but in reality, people don’t know what they don’t know.

By taking initiative and communicating not only what you’re doing, but what you’re attempting to do in your role with the company, you can build greater trust with your boss, make yourself known to other decision makers in the company, and build your network.

Do this through:

- Providing weekly reports to your manager
- Engaging in regular one-on-one meetings
- Including visuals to showcase what you’re working on

The goal here is to go beyond the bare minimum of feedback your boss likely asks for, and show them exactly what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what you hope to achieve through your efforts. Not only does this help to communicate your value to the company, but it establishes a strong line of communication that your boss will rely on in the future if there are concerns.

The same tactics work well to build new relationships with mentors, thought leaders, and colleagues in local networking groups or online. Entrepreneurs can benefit from this strategy as well.
It’s entirely up to you what to make of a meeting. If you sit in the back of the room, quietly multi-tasking but never speaking up, then you’re likely to see them as the boring slog that you’ve made them. But if you practice becoming more engaged and proactive in your feedback, you’ll start to see a number of benefits.

Some basic changes you can make immediately that will increase the value you get from these meetings include:

01 Sitting prominently and actively engaging
02 Not multi-tasking on a phone or laptop
03 Arriving at the meeting early and chatting with your colleagues
04 Staying after the meeting to clear up key points and voice additional thoughts
05 Asking smart questions throughout the meeting, some of which you can prepare in advance

SPEAK UP AT MEETINGS
Meetings can be long, monotonous, and fruitless. Or they can be empowering and constructive.
The key here is to engage. You need to be an active participant in the meeting, asking questions, answering others, and making your presence known.

The quiet people who diligently do their job but remain unobtrusive will be respected but forgotten. Those who step forward and make their ideas and opinions known will be remembered.

While entrepreneurs generally don’t attend internal corporate meetings, there are numerous opportunities to contribute to external discussions, such as panels, conferences, and networking events. Seek chances to voice your thoughts and experiences with the group.
Offer to Help and Teach Others

This is another area where negative self-talk can be detrimental to your career opportunities.

Whatever your role in the company, you have experience and expertise that others want to know about.

The interesting thing about teaching is that most people don’t think they can do it. But there’s no magical level of expertise where someone is suddenly qualified to teach what they know. Teachers and mentors tend to be the people who are comfortable and confident enough to have these conversations.

You can be that person, and when you are, you will stand out among your colleagues as not only an intelligent individual with a lot to share, but someone who actively wants to see those around them succeed. Do this by:

- Hosting informal lunch and learn sessions in the office
- Presenting your work to other managers in the company
- Sharing regular updates with other teams
- Mentoring other employees, new staff, and colleagues

Step one is to recognize that you have valuable insights others care about. From there, you can start sharing them, building a stronger relationship with everyone around you.

Entrepreneurs can engage in this strategy too. Offer complimentary webinars or workshops to teach others valuable skills and practices. Or engage in strategy sessions, not just consultations, where prospective clients can experience your real value.
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01
Share a new perspective based on your experience or expertise in the field.

02
Offer resource ideas that are valuable to people around you.

03
Engage in goal alignment, both internally with other managers and departments, but also with other individuals outside your company who are moving in tandem with your efforts.

04
Provide others with opportunities to give back, creating a reciprocal relationship that will only grow stronger with time.
Strong strategic relationships will help you to identify new ways to help people and position yourself in such a way that you are top of mind when new opportunities arise.

Most entrepreneurs recognize the value of relationships, but many lack diverse networks. In addition to prospective clients, build relationships with other business owners who complement your areas of expertise. Also, get to know thought leaders in your field.
VOLUNTEER FOR CROSS-FUNCTIONAL PROJECTS

Within your company, there are frequent opportunities to lead new endeavors and be part of creative ventures that will help you stand out.

These are rarely delegated. More often than not, because they are new and interesting, they are volunteer-based. By following the other tips in this guide and building a strong line of communication with your boss, other managers in your company, and your colleagues, you should be in a good position to engage in new cross-functional projects when they arise.

To effectively take advantage of these opportunities, though, you need to be ready when they arise, meaning:

- Ask your manager about new projects, upcoming launches, or realignments that you can take part in.
- Talk to others in the company about these types of opportunities, so you know what is available and when.
- Lead a new effort that you help devise with other managers or individuals in your company.
- Seek non-work groups where you can utilize your skills in new ways and build connections, such as employee resource groups or community service groups.

The goal here is to showcase what you know while building a larger skill base and new connections with outside influencers.
Take advantage of casual opportunities

This last tip is as much a product of mindset as anything. While most of the tips in this guide require a proactive approach to self-promotion – leveraging opportunities as you see them – this last one is about always being ready to promote.

There will be dozens of casual opportunities to present yourself and build new relationships. Lunches, meetings, conferences, or networking events all have a social impact. These are often places where new bonds are born and new opportunities arise. Be ready for this to happen.

Some things to keep in mind that will help you be ready in all situations include:

- **Have an elevator pitch ready**: For even the briefest encounter. Have a really good answer in place when someone asks what you do.

- **Take advantage of travel and conferences**: It might feel like you’ll never see these people again, but in this digital age, you can build strong, lasting connections that will help you in the future in just a couple of days.

- **Eat lunch with others whenever possible**: View lunch as an opportunity to build your network, not just catch up on your email at your desk.

You never know when a new opportunity to promote yourself and build new relationships will arise. That’s why it’s important to be ready and practice these behaviors constantly. You can’t always control when or how you’ll be presented with an opportunity – but if you’re ready to take advantage of it, you’ll be better off for it.
THE VALUE OF SELF-PROMOTION FOR YOUR CAREER

By focusing on the core traits that can help you promote your skills and values more comfortably to others, and by following the seven tips in this guide, you can start building rapport with your boss, engaging with other decision makers in your business, and creating new relationships that will lead to new opportunities in your career.

You already have the skills and value that you need to achieve these goals. The next step is to get out there and practice. The new connections you make will be an immensely valuable resource in your current and future career development efforts.
The International Association of Women (IAW) is a global in-person and online professional networking platform that provides women with the forum, education, and services to thrive in an interconnected world.

IAW members have diverse backgrounds, beliefs, perspectives, and lifestyles, but with one common bond — their ability to succeed. Through over 100 local chapters and via in-person and virtual events, our community empowers each member to realize their dreams, acquire the connections and knowledge needed to rise, and helps them build better work–life integration and the confidence that is vital to lead.

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