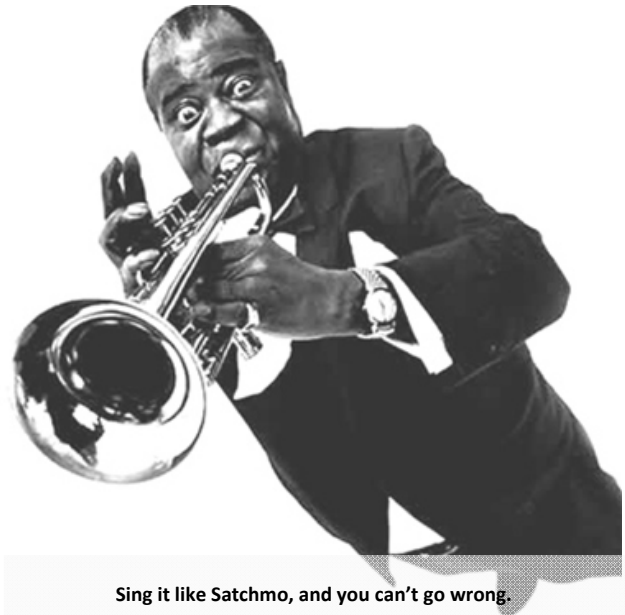


## Career Compass No. 17: The Subtle Art of Promoting Your Value

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You know you're great. Your Mom knows you're great. But how do you blow your own horn without making a lot of racket? It can be a fine line to tread, and a lot of people are uncomfortable and feel that 'bragging' isn't professional. Well, our Career Coach tells you how.



*As a program manager, I work hard and contribute on several fronts to our department's success. However, I am often passed over for plum assignments that would get me some better visibility in the organization and help my efforts to advance. I don't like bragging about my abilities and accomplishments but I'm not getting noticed. What can I do?*

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Successful professionals master the subtle art of self-promotion. Appropriate self-promotion is about achieving acknowledgment for the good results that you produce.

### **WHY SELF-PROMOTION?**

There are a variety of reasons to work on better promoting your value and accomplishments:

- We all desire and deserve recognition for our good work and commitment. It is a basic human need to be recognized for what we contribute. You won't be fully satisfied at work unless you are acknowledged.
- You may want to position yourself for future advancement and therefore need your boss or other higher-ups to know about your skills and abilities.

- You need to get noticed if you are to get the assignments which will provide further meaning and challenge, promote learning and stretch you. Without these kinds of opportunities, you will stagnate.
- Choice assignments won't come your way unless you are considered an "A" player. "A" players get the "A" assignments that offer the opportunity to produce significant results and further create visibility. Those who achieve good results in taking on "A" assignments enhance the likelihood of advancement.
- You may be new to your position or department and no one knows about your ability to produce. Or, you have a new boss who knows little about your work.
- In tight financial times, you may want to enhance your opportunities to receive an annual raise or performance bonus.
- Layoffs are a possibility and you want to feel more secure in your position.

The two extremes to avoid are no self-promotion or bragging. If you do not promote yourself, you go unnoticed or may remain under-valued. If you brag about yourself, you are considered a grand-stander.

Bragging is all about "I"—"I did this, I did that." Appropriate self-promotion is about "we" and your role in helping your team achieve results.

## **SEVEN SELF-PROMOTION STRATEGIES**

Given all these valid reasons to promote your worth in the organization, what are some strategies to achieve recognition of your value?

1. Frequently inform your manager in one-to-one meetings, informal chats, and emails about your team's or unit's progress and ongoing achievements, your role in the team effort, and ideas for future initiatives.
2. Anticipate discussion at staff meetings or multi-department team meetings and be prepared to add something of value to the conversation or suggest ways to overcome some problem and move forward.
3. Accept acknowledgement from your manager or peers regarding your efforts and contributions. Don't be overly modest—thank your boss or co-workers for the praise and then acknowledge the significance of the group effort.
4. Volunteer to write a staff report about a team project which is progressing well and/or make a governing board presentation. You will then be associated with the project and its success.
5. Write a piece for the employee or community newsletter or a professional article promoting a new project or initiative and your team's success.
6. Make a presentation about the project on a panel at a professional meeting or seminar. Again, people will then associate you with the effort.
7. Promote your accomplishments to an array of significant others. Your boss's manager may be the one deciding on who is promoted or who gets the next plum assignment. Today's peer may move up in the organization or get a higher position

in another local government and therefore may be able to further your career goals in the future.

If you successfully toil in the middle of the organization, it is easy to go unnoticed. If you do not appropriately promote your value, you do yourself a disservice.

The strategies identified above suggest that self-promotion is a subtle art form which if practiced effectively will help you achieve acknowledgment, get challenging and rewarding assignments, promote further learning, and enhance your ability to advance.



*Career Compass* is a monthly column from ICMA focused on career issues for local government professional staff, and appears in ICMA's [JOB newsletter](#) and online. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's senior advisor for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail [careers@icma.org](mailto:careers@icma.org) or contact Frank directly at [frank@frankbenest.com](mailto:frank@frankbenest.com).