

W Increasing Your Visibility at Work

Working hard will always be critical to your career success, but you will never achieve full advancement potential unless others are aware of your accomplishments and expertise. While you don't want to clamor for attention or brag about your achievements, key decision makers should know

who you are and what value you bring to the company. Take the initiative to make sure your work gets noticed. Here are a few strategies for showcasing your talents and contributions effectively.

Conduct a self-assessment. Before you look for ways to promote yourself, take an honest look at your professional abilities. Are you committed to continual learning? If so, what steps have you taken recently to stay abreast of current trends in finance and accounting? Are you actively involved in industry associations? Make sure you are always striving toward excellence in your field and improving any weaknesses. Find a mentor who will give you candid feedback on your abilities. The more effective you are in your role, the easier it will be to become recognized for your work.

Show initiative. Volunteer for new assignments, even those considered unpopular or risky. Sometimes they offer the best opportunities to showcase your abilities. A new information technology (IT) system at your firm, for example, may be plagued with problems

you feel are due primarily to a lack of communication between interdepartmental team members. The company is spending thousands of extra dollars on the project, and it doesn't appear others are willing to take the initiative to address the challenges. This is an excellent opportunity for you to make a difference. Offer to step in and lead a team charged with solving the problems, working to understand the issues confronting representatives from both the IT and accounting departments. Consider bringing in outside assistance to get the project back on track more rapidly. Your efforts to become involved when others are reluctant won't go unnoticed.

Speak up. Actively participate in discussions at the office. Before you attend meetings, review the agenda, and prepare yourself to provide input on the topics at hand. Don't hesitate to share your ideas and approaches. Strive to become known for your communication abilities, interpersonal skills, and vision.

In addition, look for opportunities to present. For example, volunteer to serve as a trainer during new-hire orientations, providing an overview of the accounting department and how

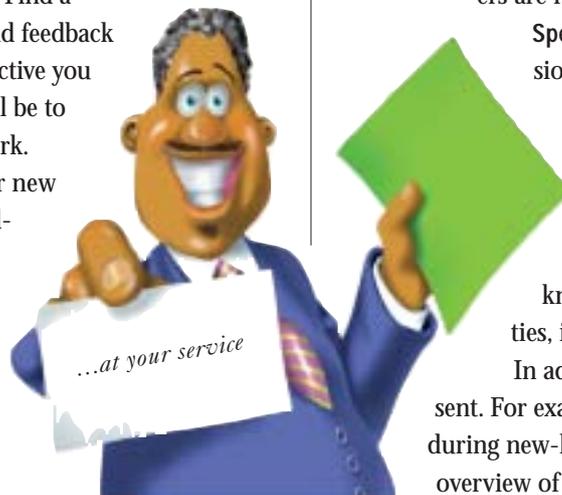


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people in other areas of the company can work with your group effectively. Outside the company, become known as an expert in your field by speaking to local business groups about financial issues. If public speaking isn't your strength, consider organizations such as www.publicspeakingkills.com or Toastmasters International, which can help you refine your presentation skills so you can make the best possible impression with your audience.

Share your knowledge in print. Consider writing an article for a local trade publication. For example, you could describe your experience leading a financial systems conversion or what you have learned about the effect of

Sarbanes-Oxley requirements on employees in areas outside accounting. If you belong to a professional association, become a regular contributor to its newsletter.

Promote the success of others. Gaining visibility isn't limited to highlighting your own expertise or contributions; it should also include supporting your team. Give your employees the tools and guidance they need to excel in their positions. The achievements of your group will reflect positively on your leadership and motivational skills.

If you are discussing a project in which others have participated, be sure to highlight the entire group's efforts. Thank everyone for their assistance, and acknowledge individ-

ual contributions. You will demonstrate that you understand the value of collaboration and sharing credit for an achievement while reinforcing team loyalty.

Get involved. Don't underestimate the importance of attending company gatherings such as the annual picnic or a holiday party. Be sure to do more than just make an appearance. Take the time to talk with people from throughout the company—not just the coworkers you already know well—and participate in special activities such as contests and team sports. Through these informal events, you can develop camaraderie with other employees and make valuable new contacts within the organization.

Increasing your visibility won't happen overnight. With the right approach, however, you can steadily build awareness of your contributions. Take steps to continue learning, pursue new challenges both inside and outside the company, and get involved in team and company activities. You know that you deserve a promotion, but you'll be better positioned for professional advancement when others know your expertise and abilities. ■

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