

How Fear of Self-Promotion Can Kill Your Career

This is a guest post from Joel A. Garfinkle. Joel is the author of seven books, including [Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level](#). As an [executive coach](#), he has worked with executives at companies such as Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Deloitte, Cisco Systems, Oracle, and many more. You can also subscribe to his [Executive Leadership Newsletter](#) and receive the FREE e-book, 41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!

Does the idea of promoting yourself at work make your heart race and your palms sweat? If so, there's a good chance that you're also feeling the effects somewhere that hurts a little more—in your wallet.

In a study of salespeople with call reluctance titled “The Importance of Managing Visibility,” George W. Dudley & Shannon L. Goodson discovered that the fear of self-promotion—which causes call reluctance—has negative implications for people in other positions as well. They found that employees in administrative management positions who did not promote themselves did not get promoted as often as those who did. In fact, [self-promotion](#) was actually a stronger indicator of who would get promoted than competence.

If you want to keep moving ahead in your career, it is absolutely essential that you overcome your fear of self-promotion. If you don't, no one will realize how valuable you are, and at some point your career will fizzle out. Here are some strategies you can use to promote yourself at work in spite of your fear:

1. Keep track of your accomplishments. It's hard to tell others what you've done if you can't remember. Keep an ongoing record of the projects you are working on and update it at least weekly, if not daily. When it comes time for a performance review, you'll be able to tell your boss exactly what you've done to deserve a raise. This list will also come in handy when you are competing for a promotion.
2. E-mail others about your successes. For introverts especially, e-mail can be a less intimidating method of self-promotion. When you e-mail your boss with progress reports that highlight the successes you've had on the projects you're working on, copy others higher up in the organization who are affected by the project as well. This will help you gain visibility.
3. Speak up at meetings. Before you attend a meeting, think about what is going to be discussed and try to find a way to relate it to what you're working on so you can ensure that your expertise is known and valued. Look for opportunities to contribute ideas and solutions. People who speak up at work stand out and are perceived by others to be more competent, whether they really are or not.
4. Recruit someone to help you get the word out. Having someone speak up on your behalf is even better than speaking up for yourself. People have a tendency to believe a third party who speaks on someone else's behalf more than someone who is doing his or her own self-promotion. Find someone who will tell others about your successes for you so you don't have to work quite so hard on your own self-promotion.
5. Promote others. It's often easier to tell someone how great Suzie in accounting is or what a great job Jim did on that report than to tell them what you yourself have accomplished. When you promote others, you make them feel good about themselves and you may even spark a desire for them to reciprocate the favor when they get the chance. At the very least, the people around you will see you as someone who plays well with others when you praise your boss, subordinates, and co-workers every chance you get.