

Marketing Your Most Valuable Asset—You

“The ability to show others who you are and what you’re about is just good business sense.”

As a PR veteran, I’m always amazed at the lack of preparedness of new executives when we have to put out their press releases. It is media-worthy news when you have new hires or promotions at any level. Letting the industry know you’re growing is a good thing. Your customers want to know about it. It sends a positive signal.

The components of producing press releases are fairly simple. A resume. A head shot. A bio. Yet these basics are rarely available. We’ve waited many weeks on a photograph, and at best we are given a dry, boring resume from which to write an announcement.

Aside from press releases about new jobs, there are numerous instances when you can

use a well-written bio and head shot, such as community service. You never know when you’ll benefit from having these tools.

Women, in particular, seem to lack the necessary tools for self-promotion.

They rarely have a head shot or bio.

Recently, I was putting together a panel for an event. None of the women on the panel had a professional head shot, while the only male on the panel had a promotional tool kit ready—a wonderful, but missed PR opportunity for the less-prepared. Had we had a full armament of head shots, we would likely have gotten more ink in better, upfront positions in the publications.

Here are some tips to get started in putting together the tools you’ll need to promote your most valuable asset.

Spiffed-Up Bio

Stephanie Lowder of Graphic Solutions says, “Think of your bio as personal branding. It should create awareness of the brand with you as the product. Be sure you define the brand’s rational and emotional benefits.”

Second, pick a style that fits your position in the industry. If you’re in a creative or design field you may write it very differently than if you’re in accounting. Also, you may need a couple of versions. One may have a more technical essence by containing an overview of your qualifications; the second could be witty. Either way, know your audience and make it interesting for the reader.

List everything there is to know about your background including education, skills, hobbies, interests, organization affiliations and personal tidbits. With a degree of humility, note what makes you different and unique. Then edit, edit, edit. Stay away from a mundane listing of degrees and dates. This is not a resume. Your bio should tell the reader about you, not list the schools you attended.

Have it reviewed by someone with strong grammar and writing skills.

Ask yet another person with a good sense of humor if it’s too dry. You want to end up with no more than two paragraphs, but

ideally just one quick, insightful paragraph about the real you.

Once the bio is written, think about how it’s presented. Choose the paper, font, color and composition to reflect your personality. But be careful: too cute or whimsical can be detrimental.

Head Shot

The most important thing to remember here ... SMILE. I am amazed at the photographs of sullen, serious, barely-crack-a-smile and even grim-looking faces used in new employee announcements. Aren’t you happy to be there? Isn’t the company pleased and proud you are joining them? Smile about it!

If possible, use a photographer and stylist who work as a team. Cameras and lighting may accentuate uneven skin tone or blemishes and stray hair. A good stylist will ensure everything is perfect, giving direction on posture, eye contact with the camera, and clothing.

Take several outfits, including not only a basic black or navy, but also something with a bit more personality. Ask for some three-quarter versions in addition to the traditional head and shoulders image. Update your photo yearly. Just say no to using 10-year-old photographs. Your image will appear dated.

Now that you have the right tools, use them wisely. Give a copy to your HR and communications departments. If you’re quoted in publications, send a current version to each to keep on file. You never know when they may use them, and once an article is printed, your opportunity’s gone.

Remember, self-marketing is something most of us don’t do nearly enough—so get in the habit of promoting yourself through print. The ability to show others who you are and what you’re about is just good business sense. **HFB**

