

## Boasters and Braggers Beware: Honest Self-Promotion Key to Success

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As a leading executive search consultant, believe me, I'm the first to advise candidates to toot their own horn and brag about their work accomplishments. That being said, there is self-promotion and then there is overly-aggressive self-promotion! And I can guarantee this: those self-promoters who exaggerate and/or significantly overstate their abilities in job interviews will soon find themselves in trouble and probably back out on the street looking for a new job.

So, what does appropriate self-promotion look like? In my view, if you're a candidate, you need to be very concrete in terms of the specific involvement you've had in the accomplishments you state as work examples. Overly-aggressive self-promoters, on the other hand, take an unfair share of the credit for the full team's success rather than focusing on their own contributions to the project. This is essentially false advertising, which eventually causes candidates to crash.

Keep in mind that candidates who overly promote themselves are not necessarily poor performers. These candidates, actually, are usually good performers, but they demonstrate a major flaw: they exhibit poor self-awareness. In other words, they see themselves as better than they actually are, and/or they see themselves as above their true level of competency.

Research continues to indicate that candidates with poor self-awareness will continue to fail in their long-term career goals. Individuals with low self-awareness tend to change jobs frequently as they are always chasing what they view as their true success which, unfortunately, never seems to materialize. When questioned why they left their last job, their response always rings false; it's simply not their fault. So what's wrong here? Well, in my view, the problem is that these candidates just don't get it! Their self image is distorted. They believe they're better than they are!

So how does someone go about gaining self-awareness? If you're a professional climbing the corporate ladder, I recommend that you independently secure a personal review from colleagues and those subordinates who report to you. This is known as a 360! While it is somewhat fearful to be judged by others, you need to know how others perceive you so that you can ensure there is congruence between your view and that of your colleagues and direct reports. If you identify this early in your career you can develop strategies and plans to increase your strengths as well as develop areas needing work.

A "360" performance requires you to invite colleagues with whom you work directly, incumbents that you supervise and perhaps customers you work with to evaluate you on several items. These evaluation items could include leadership, customer service, delegation, teamwork,

and/or operations management; in other words, any element that is important to your firm's success. This feedback will give you a realistic evaluation of how people see you versus how you see yourself. Balancing the two opinions and developing strategies to overcome any of the challenges identified will help you move ahead in your career.

Secondly, I recommend that you undergo a series of assessments related to personality and communication style, success characteristics and personal motivators. These assessments identify areas of strengths and areas of challenge. Work with an executive coach to put strategies in place to develop your strengths and overcome your challenges.

Undertaking a personal assessment takes courage, but you will need that type of courage if you want to progress in your career to higher-level roles and responsibilities. Success comes to those who truly understand themselves, so work at building strengths and learn to identify and overcome your areas of challenge.

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