

Positioning Yourself as an Expert

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In an era when job security is often questionable and the potential for finding yourself in a position where you do not have a steady income stream, being recognized as an expert in your field makes sense. People who are well known by their peers and others often get opportunities not afforded to the average person in society. Call it celebrity or just common sense, but those who are in demand are the ones who have laid a solid foundation for themselves and created potential networks and revenue streams to see them through hard times. Waiting until you are faced with adversity or a layoff is not the time to start thinking about preparing for such stressful occurrences.

Create a Strategy

Like any successful initiative, your first step is to take the time to think about what you have to offer and develop a strategy to let others know it. This means that you will need some “alone” time to write down your strengths, competencies, past experience, and anything else that would help you target potential opportunities.

Ask others who know you well what they believe to be your strengths, both personal and professional. Factor this feedback into your plan, since others often see things that we do not recognize in ourselves. For example, you might not see yourself as an organized person because that skill comes naturally for you. Less organized individuals might recognize your abilities in this area and covet the ease with which you manage multiple projects and your life.

Once you have everything in writing, you are ready to embark on your journey to educate the world about you. The following are some tips for accomplishing this:

- **Incorporate technology into your efforts.** Set up accounts on social networking sites, such as, LinkedIn, FaceBook, Twitter, MySpace, and YouTube and paint a positive picture of yourself, your background and capabilities. Be careful about what you post on such sites. Non-compromising personal photos of you with family and friends are fine. Party photos are probably best thought through before posting. Remember that once you put something out on the Internet, the whole world might see it and it could potentially be misinterpreted or at some point come back to cause problems for your professionally.
- **Write articles to share your expertise with others.** Offer them to newsletter editors of publications such as this one, magazines, local newspapers, through professional organizations to which you belong and on various websites. A number of sites allow you to set up a profile and post material for others to read and download for reprinting or distribution. For example, the next article in this newsletter came from such a site. Three possibilities are www.selfgrowth.com, www.ezinearticles.com and www.hubpages.com. Many of these sources do not pay for pieces, but your goal is really to gain visibility.

- **Get published.** By writing a book, you become an instant expert! How many people have you heard say, “One day, I’m going to write a book?” The reality is that most people never do because they come up with too many excuses not to. There are thousands of books and articles on the market and the Internet on the process, so that is little excuse. As for time, if you created an outline and write one page a day for the entire year, you would have 365 pages done at the end of that year, which equates to a book of almost 200 pages. By the time you throw in a table of content, index, introduction and miscellaneous page, you have an average size book
- **Engage in professional networking.** Find local and national organizations that focus on professional areas in which you specialize (e.g. training, education, speaking, or management) and join these groups. One established as a member, get actively involved in the organization by attending meetings regularly and networking with peers. Also, take an active role in the group by volunteering for projects, serving on committees or joining the board of directors. In addition to giving back to the profession by doing so, you potentially gain new knowledge and skills (e.g. project, time, resource and people management or leadership skills). As people get to know and trust you and your abilities, they may call upon you to work with them or their organizations on projects or might even offer you employment on a full-time or contract basis.
- **Teach or Train Others.** Depending on your educational and professional background, you may be able to provide classroom and one-on-one training or educational experiences for others. Check with local colleges and universities, vocational schools, schools, companies that deliver seminars and other groups where training is offered (e.g. non-profit groups). In most of these cases, you can receive pay for what you share with others. You might even be able to share your knowledge online with electronic learning (eLearning). Explore these opportunities on the Internet, in your local phone book or by talking to others you know who are already tapping this sector.
- **Share with others.** One of the easiest ways to build lasting relationships that can lead to professional opportunities is to be willing to help others succeed. Look for opportunities to share what you know with colleagues, friends and others. You can do this by becoming a coach or mentor (possibly through one of your professional organizations) or through volunteering to speak to groups (e.g. professional, local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary groups, volunteer and religious organizations, or leadership programs). People who give unselfishly, even though they have other personal and professional commitments often get returns later in their career and life when they need it. This is the whole concept of the “pay it forward” belief that many people support.
- **Stay in Contact.** If you really want to establish yourself as “the” source for others to come to when they need someone in your field, put in the time to contact friends, family members and professional contacts regularly. You can do some of this through the social networks mentioned earlier. You can also use the

old fashioned way of calling someone to get together for coffee, lunch, or after work just to catch up and let them know what you are doing. Do not assume that because you told someone once a year ago what you do, that they will remember. Most people are terrible listeners and need reminding. Also, you likely have learned new things or had additional experiences that you can share since the last time you spoke. An acceptable, but not as personal way to maintain contact is via email or text messages. The down side of using this approach exclusively is that you lose the interpersonal aspect of communication and sometimes messages go astray.

Stay Focused

Very few people have enough time to do everything required of them or that they would like to get done. Get over that excuse. Yes, all of the above strategies and others that you might use will take time. If you allocated just fifteen minutes a day or in the evening to one or more of the approaches suggested, your efforts would take less than a total of 4 days a year. The potential return on that investment could be a new career opportunity, your own business, or residual income to help get you through a down period or provide money to buy or do something you always wanted to, but for which you did not have the spare money.

No matter what your profession or area of expertise, there is someone out there who has less of it and wants to learn how to improve and gain new knowledge and skills. By putting yourself in the expert seat and sharing what you know, opportunities can easily come your way.

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