10 Ways to Promote Yourself at Work

The secrets to getting ahead in this economy

Dan Schawbel
1. Be accountable for your own career
2. Do something you’re good at and enjoy
3. Let your ideas be heard
4. Become a subject matter expert
5. Know your social media
6. Help others first
7. Adapt and benefit from change
8. Focus on soft skills over hard skills
9. Spend time reverse-mentoring
10. Have an entrepreneurial mindset
1. Be Accountable For Your Own Career

- In today’s economy, you can’t rely on anyone or anything. Instead, you have to be accountable for your own career and take charge of your life.
- When it comes to training and development, expanding your role, promotions, and other aspects of getting ahead, you have to speak up and be persistent.
- Tips for getting things done:
  - Always plan your next step while leaving your options open.
  - Be in the know – ask around to see what the available opportunities are.
  - If you see an opportunity you’re interested in, go after it. Don’t let someone else snatch it from you.

“I just believe that you have to be the master of your own destiny. You can’t sit there and wait for anybody to make your opportunities for you.”
– Kathy Mandato, SVP of HR at NBC Entertainment
2. Do Something You’re Good at and Enjoy

- Always play to your strengths because you can improve more in things you’re already good at.
- Let your results speak for themselves. If you work hard and deliver strong results, you will be trusted with more important projects and people will speak positively about you. It’s much more effective than to self-promote.
- If you don’t love what you do, your performance will suffer and it will be hard to get promoted. If you hate what you do, you have two options: improve the way you’re doing work or leave for a different job.

“When you feel good about what you do, you perform at a high level.”
– Liam Brown, COO and EVP, Marriott International
3. Let Your Ideas Be Heard

- When you’re in a meeting, don’t be afraid to speak up. Listen to what everyone else is saying so that you know how to best contribute to the discussion. It shows that you respect your team. Also, if you don’t say anything, people will be more inclined to ask your opinion.

- Do your research before you speak up so that you can prove what you say. It also helps to back up your ideas with facts and get the group members to buy into what you have to say before the meeting starts.

- You should also let your ideas be heard on social networks. It’s a great way to test new ideas out, get feedback and think of even better ones.

“Lots of people don’t like to speak up and the ones that don’t care never going to get anywhere.”
– Matt Nordby, CRO and EVP, Playboy Enterprises
4. Become a Subject Matter Expert

- Pick a topic or skill that you’re interested in and master it. To acquire and improve your skills, read books, blogs, magazines, and take classes.
- You want to stick with one topic or skill instead of spreading yourself out. In this economy, the winners are the specialists and the losers are the generalists. People want to hire and promote those that are the best in their fields. If you’re a subject matter expert you become more valuable and thus have more staying power.
- In order to prove your expertise, you need to do the work, possibly get certified, write articles on the topic and get results.

“Look for areas to be a subject matter expert where others are not. It differentiates you from the rest of the employee base.”
– Susan Gambardella, Vice President, Coca Cola
Social media is becoming a powerful force in corporations and has permeated most business functions, including HR, PR, marketing, and customer support.

It’s important that you have your own professional social media presence, including a website (yourname.com), and profiles on the most popular sites including Facebook and LinkedIn. Even if you choose to leave your employer, your reputation carries with you through your online presence. It’s your most valuable tool in attracting and seeking new opportunities.

Use social media to crowd-source the answers to your most pressing problems and to collaborate with your co-workers.

“Social media has become a de facto part of many people’s career search. It’s not that we have to go looking for it – in many cases the future employee puts their social media ‘footprint’ forward first.”

– Todd Davis, Head of Recruitment for NAFC, Amazon.com
6. Help Others First

- The best way to get other people to support your endeavors is to help them out first. People naturally want to reciprocate once you’ve helped them solve their own problems.
- Before you ask for something, help someone else with no strings attached. This will catch them off guard and see value in the relationship.
- The problem most people have is that they are seen as “takers” or those who are only out for themselves. If you can be seen in positive light, you will attract more support to your cause.

“Find out how your work can assist others in accomplishing their goals and make sure you are making a positive impact on others through your work.”
– Dean Lawyer, Sr. Manager, T-Mobile
7. Adapt and Benefit From Change

- The workplace, and the world for that matter, is constantly changing. Your company could be acquired or merged, you could get laid off or put in another group on a moment's notice. How you react to that is what's most important.

- Always assess how relevant your skills are to the market, pay attention to what's going on at your company and in your industry and stay well networked.

- Be optimistic about change and figure out how your skills can best transfer to your new position. Make sure you have a positive attitude if you want other people to work with you.

“You have to be able to embrace change and roll with it even if change is not a good fit at first, you have to be able to embrace it.”

– Andrew Goldman, VP of Program Planning and Scheduling, HBO
Companies hire and promote those with strong soft skills over hard skills. They feel that it’s easy to find those who can get the job done but hard to find those who are good communicators, have emotional intelligence and being able to develop work relationships.

If you want to work on your soft skills, then you need to force yourself into a situation where you’re around people. The more you start talking to people, the more you learn from them and what you’re doing right and wrong based on their reaction to you.

“Communicating, networking, and being responsive, respectful and open to ideas are all important.”
– Nancy Altobello, Vice Chair, People, Ernst & Young
More and more businesses are pairing young employees with executives in order to transfer knowledge and share expertise.

By figuring out what value you can offer executives, you’re better able to build a relationship with an executive. For instance, an older executive might not understand social media, while a young worker is looking for a stronger internal network. They can help each other achieve their own goals, which will in turn help the company.

Ask your manager about reverse-mentoring before you step on their toes to connect with an exec.

“I believe in reverse-mentoring. I look for mentors who are looking to learn from me as much as I am in them.”
– Michael Brenner, Sr. Director of Global Marketing at SAP
10. Have an Entrepreneurial Mindset

- Employers are desperately searching for entrepreneurs to help them stay competitive and innovative. Intrapreneurs, employees that are entrepreneurs within a major company, are on the rise. Companies, and even colleges, have created intrapreneurship programs which help them to decide on new product and service lines.

- The definition of entrepreneurship has changed over the past few years. It’s now a skillset instead of a business owner and the skills match perfectly to the needs of corporations. Entrepreneurs are self-starters, persistent, natural salespeople, take risks and think outside of the box.

“In thinking like an entrepreneur – this enables employees to think creatively and cost effectively about solutions that have the potential to make a big difference.”
– Ingrid Vanderveldt, Entrepreneur-in-Residence, DELL
Promote Yourself Today!

- *Promote Yourself* is the definitive book on how to build a successful career in the modern workplace. It draws on proprietary research in partnership with American Express and countless interviews with the most dynamic professionals in business today, from companies such as Ernst & Young, DreamWorks and PepsiCo. You will learn what managers look for when promoting, the skills you need to get ahead and how to stand out from the crowd. The subtle and amazingly effective art of self-promotion is the razor-thin difference between success and failure.

- “I learned a lot from it and so will you!”
  - Brad Smith, CEO of Intuit

- “If you want to promote yourself with power — but also with grace – this is the book for you.”
  - Susan Cain, NY Times Bestselling Author of Quiet

- “An insightful and inspiring book.”
  - Daymond John, Founder of Fubu and investor/shark on ABC’s reality hit Shark Tank

- “Will motivate you to make a positive difference in your own career.”
  - Patti Stanger, Star of Bravo TV’s The Millionaire Matchmaker

Order Your Copy!
About Dan & Millennial Branding


- **Millennial Branding** helps companies understand the emerging Gen-Y employee by providing research, training, and advisory services. As representatives of Gen Y and advisers to management, our goal is to provide research and insights that will make you more profitable, grow your market share, help you understand your Gen-Y employees, and turn you into an industry leader. As ambassadors to Gen-Y, we want to give our generation a voice, support their careers, and connect them with brands that understand their needs.
Share This With a Friend