

Speak Up. Stand Out. Be Heard! - By Charmaine McClarie Executive Coach, McClarie Group

2007-09-13

When you speak, is anyone listening? Do you communicate succinctly and with confidence? Are you recognized for the results you deliver?

If your answer to any of these questions is 'no,' it's time for you to speak up, stand out and be heard. And when you are able to create 'strategic witnesses' to your great works, there's no limit to the success you can achieve.

Your professional advancement depends on the recognition you receive-from your boss, peers and executives-for your achievements. No matter how solid your accomplishments are, they will not lead to that long-awaited promotion or salary increase if you blend into the corporate background.

That's where my Executive Success Principles (TM) come in. These are the 'six degrees of separation' that distinguish you from the rest of the pack. Using these principles will help you go from invisible to visible: You'll improve your ability to communicate both up and down the food chain, you'll build self awareness, confidence and credibility, and you'll be seen and heard as a leader.

Remember, it's not about what you know, it's about how you leverage what you know.' That begins with successful and effective communication, in which you...

Communicate the vision. Know what you stand for, and talk about the results and impact first. The details of the tasks you perform are far less important than the outcome. And when you are speaking about your results, be sure there is alignment between your personal vision and that of the organization.

Speak in headlines. This is the ability to capture people's interest with one single, well-crafted statement-much like the headline of a newspaper. Use precise, concrete words and images to bring your message to life. When you do this effectively, you find that people want to listen further.

Deliver three 'must-make' points. Each time I speak, I am clear on three fronts: 'Why should they listen to me?' 'What's in it for them?' And 'What do I want them to do about it?' All the information in the world isn't going to be of value unless your audience is motivated to absorb it, remember it and act on it.

Create witnesses. These witnesses will testify to your long term value to the organization. How do you create them? Of course, you must first perform well. But you must also communicate effectively about that performance, communicate its value to the organization and communicate your value as a leader and strategic thinker. Notice that the word 'communicate' appears three times and 'performance' appears only once. An outcome without a witness is not an outcome-it's just a completed task.

Don't audition for the part. You are already successful. You have an important role in the organization. Know how you want to be perceived, learn what you need to do to increase your credibility and practice (in front of the mirror, if you need to) until you are comfortable being the expert and taking the spotlight.

Embody your message. In other words, 'walk the talk.' You know you have what it takes, does your image communicate that? Are you comfortable in your own skin? Everything about you is a part of what you communicate, make sure your image-from your posture to your tone to the clothes you wear-is congruent with the message you send when you speak.

You can do anything you envision. Consider the great works of Nelson Mandela, a man who went from prisoner to president of his country. He communicated a vision that changed a nation and inspired the world to do better and be better. When you consider his accomplishments, it seems as though anything is possible.

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