

# BRAG! THE ART OF TOOTING YOUR OWN HORN

March 27, 2013

## 7 Bragging Myths

- **A job well done speaks for itself**—if others don't know your accomplishments, how can you be rewarded for them?
- **Bragging is something you do during your evaluations**—if you are not bragging outside your evaluation, you are missing opportunities
- **Humility gets you noticed**—women are often taught self humility and this hurts them in the workplace. We often downplay our role in our work and spread the credit instead of stating our accomplishments
- **I don't have to brag, people will do it for me**—No one will have your interests at heart like you do so Brag! Bragging about others will not mean they will brag about you.
- **More is better**—Your messages should not be overwhelming, but specific to your conversation
- **Good girls don't brag**—failing to self-promote will hurt your salary, promotions and opportunities because the boys WILL be bragging!
- **Brag is a 4 letter word**—bragging does not need to be distasteful or about overbearing self-talk. Those who are good at it brag without it being obvious or self-serving. It is about telling your story while showcasing your strengths with authenticity, pride and enthusiasm. It is really a way to honor your spirit.

## SO WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT YOU?

The author, Peggy Klaus, a Hollywood communication consultant, suggests that bragging is an art. The purpose of the lessons that she provides are not to teach you how to make a lot of noise, but to turn us into good self-promoters. She does not want us to BOAST, sound obnoxious or egocentric. Instead, we are to better connect with others and provide them the specific information they need through our stories. The techniques provided seek to help us to see negatives as positives and overcome our barriers to good bragging.

Being prepared to brag is critical to good bragging particularly if it does not come naturally. To begin to prepare, we should do the "Take 12" Self-Evaluation. This may be challenging for some and you might need to ask others for help. The more colorful details the better. Our responses will make up your "Brag Bag".

Our *Brag Bag* is a collection of all the information about us that 's fit to mention in polite company: our accomplishments, passions, interests, details that describe who you are personally and professionally.



Brag—not boast—using your candy-jar like brag bag!

Like a candy jar filled with our favorite treats, our Brag Bag is filled with *brag bites* and *bragalogues* in all shapes and sizes. *Brag bites* are snippets of information expressed in a short, pithy manner. They are memory insurance or a way to ensure that people who walk away from us remember something about us. They can be dropped into conversations like gems or woven together to create longer *bragalogues*. *Bragalogues* are 30s elevator pitches to 3 minute dialogues.

They are stories about ourselves conveyed in conversational style that can be stretched and altered in any way during evaluations, interviews, meetings, presentations or on the fly.

Your brag bad should be updated at least on a weekly basis and might also include statistics, quotations, cartoons, and other anecdotes to make them more entertaining. Use a 3-ring binder or computer file.

## MAKING BRAG BITES, WEAVING BRAGOLOUES

Take 12 Self-Evaluation Question 2—What are 10 interesting things about you?  
Melinda's Answer—I showed dogs growing up .

Someone asks me "Why did you decide to go into research?"

My old response, "I showed dogs growing up and was really good at science, so I saw it as a good fit."

Better response: "As a teen, I traveled the country serving as an assistant to a professional dog handler and breeder. A number of the dogs that

the handler bred developed cataracts. As I had a scientific mind, I began researching cataracts in dogs and found little published information. Upon graduating from college with degrees in both biology and chemistry, I ended up at Ohio State in the Department of Veterinary Sciences....."

## MORE LESSONS

Don't have time for this? We shouldn't complain when we miss an opportunity or someone forgets our name. It is OUR problem not others!

Getting the credit and recognition we want indeed takes work. It is our sole responsibility to do while being gracious and genuine when doing it. We should always be armed and ready with our brag bites and we should not assume anything. For example, unless we have been very friendly with a colleague, we should not assume he/she knows our name and position. We should instead introduce our selves and our position just to help them out. We should be careful not to swallow our

name and be clear and perhaps even colorful in our description of our position. Remember, sweeping generalities leave no impact!!!

Timing and delivery is critical. Asking for a raise after our boss just discusses layoffs is probably not ideal. We need to keep our sensitivity antennas raised and reframe our responses to reflect the times. Introducing brag bites naturally rather than making



them the sole point of our discussions.

Step into the spotlight and fight back when others try to steal your thunder. That may not mean responding to the stealer directly. Instead, brag more regularly to get the thunder back! This may mean spending some time at the water cooler or getting over social phobias. This may mean sending "updates" by email or picking up the phone. Finally, make your brags meaningful to your audience or group. This will help you connect like nothing else!

## EVALUATIONS

- Plan well in advance what you are going to say
- Accept compliments
- Brag about the right stuff (the stuff relevant to your position)
- Help your Chair see the forest through the trees
- Ask the hard questions so you can learn from your weaknesses
- Make your brag bites stick not by using clever or corny slogans, but catchy and humor may work for some (even Chairs)- back it up with substance

*If bragging isn't working,  
STOP and re-evaluate*

- 1) *Were your brag bites relevant?*
- 2) *Within the scope of the conversation?*
- 3) *Delivered with style & substance?*
- 4) *Was it the right time to toot your own horn?*

## DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are some examples of times when others have boasted and we found their boasting distasteful? How did this influence our bragging?
- What are some of the other lessons we have learned from our families or cultures that have prohibited our abilities to self-promote?
- What examples of missed opportunities or bragging can we provide?
- How might planning our stories using the Take 12 Self-Evaluation help us to miss less opportunities?
- Who has taken the "Take 12" Self-Evaluation? Can anyone share one?
- Did anyone ask others for help with their answer responses?
- **Let's Practice!** Pair off and share with your partner a response to a "take 12" question. Partners—ask a relevant question that the other can respond to using a brag bite from this question. Give/get feedback.

## BRAG! TAKE-12 SELF-EVALUATION



We don't need to answer these in order. As you move through the questions, you'll likely think of things you might have overlooked when answering earlier ones. In fact, you'll probably want to go over your responses more than once. Remember, the more time you put into this exercise, the more specific details you provide, the easier it will be to create brag bites and bragologues that will be clear and interesting to those who don't know you well.

1. What would you & others say are 5 of your personality pluses?
2. What are the 10 most interesting things you have done or that have happened to you?
3. What do you do for a living & how did you end up doing it?
4. What do you like/love about your current job/career?
5. How does your job/career use your skills & talents, & what projects are you working on right now that best showcase them?

6. What career successes are you most proud of having accomplished from current position & past jobs)?
7. What new skills have you learned in the last year?
8. What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are today, (professionally & personally) & what lessons have you learned from some of your mistakes?
9. What training/education have you completed & what did you

gain from those experiences?

10. What professional organizations are you associated with & in what ways - member, board, treasurer, or the like?

11. How do you spend your time outside of work, including hobbies, interests, sports, family, & volunteer activities?

12. In what ways are you making a difference in people's lives?