

Tip of the Week from WMPKG When All Else Fails, Write a Press Release

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Bonus Article:

10 Fatal Mistakes for Women @ Work

by Holly Maher

When All Else Fails, Write a Press Release

By JoAnn R. Hines Chief People Packager

Ever wonder why you never get asked for a media interview or invited to speak at an upcoming conference? Curious as to why you never got a call back from a job interview? Can those who are looking find you easily or do they even know who you are? Are you reinforcing your professional image in the minds of those that count? Why not? It's all part of your personal marketing plan to keep your name in front of those seeking your expertise.

Need a little ego boost? Last week we talked about doing an ego search on GOOGLE, but it's really more than doing just that to improve your media persona. I know I have said this before but you need to spend considerable time promoting and marketing yourself personally. If you are self-employed, as much as 50% of your time should be spent marketing. What is your plan? Do you have an idea where to start?

What gives an easy fix AND an ego booster? Writing a personal

press release, of course. You are going to say, "What's news worthy about me?" Everything. Anything can be newsworthy with the right angle. Remember the creative aspect of marketing yourself? Think about what intrigues you.

When you read your email or snail mail, which ones do you open? I expect that you go to the ones with a strong hook that say, "Read me. I'm interesting or important." Which would you rather read? "More Consolidation in the Packaging Industry" or "Warning Signs that Your Job May Not Be Secure"? (This is a real article you can order by returning the word "warning" via email.) Do you see the difference? The first one says "Ho hum, so what is new." The second screams "My job might be in jeopardy and I better check it out."

What words will capture your interest? If you are an expert, use that angle to hook your audience.

Take an example from yesterday's headlines that has strong packaging related issues that an expert (you) can address. Doctors Warn Against Obesity in Toddlers. Stumped? (The article is about the role of ingredient labels that explain exactly what is in packaged products that mothers may not know about.) This is a hot button that a packaging expert can address. Can't talk about this?

What about: Packaging Kills X Number of People Every Year.

Tell them how your expertise can resolve their problem or why it is a problem.

If you are still confused, my friend Joan Stewart has a list of 89 reasons why you should write a press release.

Here are 10 from her list.

1. Accomplishments
2. Alliance with another organization
3. Anniversary
4. Annual report
5. Appearances at major events
6. Appointment to a board or committee
7. Articles by or about you
8. Awards you are receiving
9. Books you have written
10. Books you are mentioned in

"For the entire list of 89 reasons, sign up for The Publicity Hound's Tips of the Week," a free ezine on how to generate thousands of dollars in free publicity, at <http://www.publicityhound.com/>."

10 Fatal Mistakes for Women @ Work

by Holly Maher

Women occasionally make mistakes in an office environment, often unknowingly, that cause them to sabotage their own careers. The following is a Top 10 list that describes some of these fatal mistakes.

1. Gossip and Complaining as Solidarity

Women have a language code of their own. From early on, we learn to commiserate in order to build closer relationships with other women. We talk to other women about a problem we have, and they respond by commiserating about the problem. The shared problem becomes a way to build a bond. We show that we understand each other, and the shared problem keeps us on equal standing.

The problem with this is that men, who do not use this manner to build relationships, tend to view the complaining as a request to solve a problem. A woman who complains often to build solidarity can be viewed as a whiner, or worse, as someone incapable of solving her own problems.

Gossiping to build solidarity stems from similar roots. Women tend to gossip as a way to build rapport. Sharing sensitive information is a way to prove to other women that we are friends. Men gossip too, but they tend to do so to impress another person with their knowledge. Unfortunately, there aren't too many ways to put a good spin on gossip. It's immature, and we know it.

2. Conditioning Comments

Many women confuse demonstrating self-confidence with displaying arrogance. There is a fine line between them, to be sure, but women tend to see conceit sooner than men. (Furthermore, we tend to give men a little more slack in the self-confidence department. My mother likes to tell me the story of how the confident boys in my kindergarten class were called "leaders", while I was called "bossy".)

The problem with this is that women often use conditioning comments in order to avoid appearing presumptuous. We say things like, "You probably already know this, but..." or "Maybe you've already tried this but..." I said that very same thing yesterday and I feel like slapping myself across the face. Whatever I said after that comment was diminished.

3. "I'm Sorry" and "Thank You" as Conversation Rituals

Women often say “I’m sorry” and “thank you” when they don’t mean it. We do this as part of our conversation ritual. We don’t say, “I’m sorry” to apologize, or accept blame. We do it to express general regret that something happened. We then expect the other person to share the regret, or the blame, and then we have equal footing. Unfortunately, the apology can actually be perceived as an acceptance of blame, and we lose status.

The constant use of the words, “thank you” in an office environment can be dangerous as well. Many of us use these words as a ritual way of ending an encounter. We aren’t really offering our gratitude. When we try to end an encounter by saying, “thanks” and others respond by saying “you’re welcome”, then we’ve created an imbalance of power, however slight.

4. Affairs with Coworkers

This one seems pretty obvious, but it’s amazing how many professionals engage in inappropriate inter-office romance. I think inappropriate could be described as anything between a subordinate and boss, and those that are adulterous. An affair between a boss and a subordinate severely damages the dynamics of an organization. Other employees fear preferential treatment, sexual harassment, and the emotional fall-out at the end of the affair. Adulterous affairs are simply dangerous. They cause your coworkers to disrespect you and they are a distraction in the workplace. Everybody having an office romance thinks they can hide it from everybody else. Trust me, we already know about it.

5. Dressing Too Sexy or Too Casually

Simply put, if a woman’s clothes are too revealing, it sends the message that she wants to be attractive and that she wants to be available. The first part is probably intentional, but the second part might not be. This message isn’t just sent to men, but to other women as well. Revealing clothing is inappropriate because it distracts your coworkers from paying attention to your work. Cleavage at the office is never a good idea. Period.

Dressing too casually can also sabotage your career. It can give the unintended message that you are not serious about your career. The “rule” is to dress two levels up from where you are now. I think that’s a pretty good guide. Dressing like a VP will help your coworkers picture you in that role.

6. “My Boyfriend/Husband/Girlfriend Says...”

Don’t ever begin a sentence this way if you are in an interview, asking for a promotion, or discussing your annual review. A friend of mine was reviewing one of his female subordinates a few months ago. When they began discussing her work skills, she said to him, “My husband says I should ask you for a raise.” Why not just say, “I am completely incapable of making major decisions and taking major actions on my own?”

7. Letting Your Work Speak for Itself

We've already established that women don't like to appear arrogant for fear of peer resentment. Telling our coworkers about our accomplishments is almost always viewed as bragging. In contrast, many men assume they have to tell coworkers about their accomplishments or they won't get the attention they deserve. This is a huge gap in thought processes, and certainly a problem when management teams are made up of mostly men. It is simply not enough to know that you do good work. If you are the only one who knows it, you may not get credit for your work. If you don't show others that you value your work, why should they?

8. Not Asking for a Raise/Promotion/Big Project

Many of us are hesitant to ask for raises or promotions because we feel they should be offered to us based on our performance and not because we asked for them. Unfortunately, raises and promotions are often given because they are negotiated. If we got paid for talent alone, Paris Hilton would be a pauper.

Furthermore, if you don't ask your boss for a promotion, he or she may not know that you want one. If you think you deserve a raise, spell out the reasons why and then ask for it. If you ask to manage a big project, you show your coworkers that you are serious about developing yourself and your career.

9. Crying

Repeat after me - D-i-e...b-e-f-o-r-e...y-o-u...c-r-y. Do not ever, ever, ever, cry at work. Whether you like it or not, your coworkers' level of respect for you will plummet. People will think you are easily overwhelmed and overly emotional. If you feel you must cry, leave the building first.

10. Not Supporting Other Women

When I first started my professional career, I worked at a small, conservative company where all the women were in support roles – accounting, human resources, and customer service. I was the first woman hired to fill a marketing/sales role. When I did not make an effort to eat lunch with the rest of the ladies at least twice per week, I was sneered at and gossiped about and branded as conceited. The fact of the matter is that I wasn't arrogant, but I did have self-confidence. I enjoyed eating lunch with the ladies, but only every now and then. They were older and we didn't have much in common, and they tended to spend the entire lunch hour gossiping about the rest of the employees. I was stuck between a rock and a hard place because simply eating with them branded me as something to the management team and simply not eating with them branded me as something else to the lunch ladies. All I can think about now is, why didn't those ladies support me in my role instead of hating me for it? I was the first woman to break into a management role at the company and it would make sense that the other women would be happy about it. We need to support each other in our career development.

The best way for our voices to be heard is to put them in managerial roles where they can make a difference.

This article does not suggest that women be more like men, or that their language style is faulty. The article suggests instead that we can unknowingly jeopardize our careers when we don't recognize the effect of our behavior style. As Deborah Tannen puts it in her book, *Talking From 9 to 5*, "...all styles are equally valid...and...they can all work well in some situations with others who share that style. But this does not mean that all styles work equally well in every situation. And that is why, in the end, the best style is one that is flexible."

Holly Maher is a National Sales Manager for ORBIS Corporation. In her position she works with strategic customers to convert them from expendable to returnable plastic packaging. Holly began working for ORBIS 10 years ago as a Product Manager and has since been promoted through marketing and sales. Previous to ORBIS, Holly worked as a marketing professional for Charter Wire, a steel manufacturer. She has appeared in National Provisioner Magazine, Meat Processing Magazine, and Modern Materials Handling Magazine.

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