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Tooting Your Own Horn

By C.J. Hayden

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"If he who has a thing to sell Goes and whispers in a well, He won't be so apt to make the dollars As he who climbs a tree and hollers!" -- Anonymous

Every day in your business, something happens that others should know about. You give exceptional service to a client; you reach out to a new type of customer; you demonstrate your expertise on an important topic. Yet most of the time, the only people aware of these significant events are the individual you are speaking with and you.

We might chuckle at artists or performers who are waiting to be "discovered," but sometimes business owners are just as guilty of hanging back when there's boasting to be done. Below are some examples of occasions for informing the media, your clients, referral partners, and very importantly, POTENTIAL clients that you have done something special: Winning an award or competition Being elected or appointed to office in a professional or civic organization Obtaining an important new client or contract Giving noteworthy service to an existing client Opening or relocating your office Expanding to serve a new market Offering a new product or service Launching a new or redesigned web site Publishing the first issue of a newsletter Reporting an invention or discovery Expressing a unique opinion on a topical subject Being selected to speak at a major conference Completing a survey or study Having an article, white paper, or book published Getting a mention in the news Landing an interview on radio, TV, or a live chat

When any one of these events occurs, notify all your clients, prospects, and referral partners by letter or e-mail. Include a copy of any item referenced in your letter, or let readers know where they can learn more. For example, if you will be speaking at a conference, mail a copy of the program, or mention the conference web site.

It gives you extra credibility if the event you're reporting is also acknowledged by someone else. When you give great service to a client, ask for a testimonial letter. Then include the letter in mailings and

Tooting Your Own Horn

your marketing kit.

Many of these developments are newsworthy enough to inform the media. Write a news release describing what has occurred and your opinion about it. If you win an award, describe how it made you feel. If you are elected to office, outline your goals for the organization. Include in your release a brief paragraph about your background.

Send your news release to your own trade press and all your local media outlets. If you are nationally known already, include national outlets as well. Follow up with a phone call to offer additional information and find out if they plan to run the item.

When you do appear in the news, no matter how small the mention, capitalize on it. Unless you are on the cover of a major publication or featured on national TV, don't expect a lot of people to contact you as a result of your appearance alone.

In addition to reprinting articles about you or by you for everyone on your mailing list, keep them on hand. Include them in your marketing kit for prospective clients, speaking engagements, and future media opportunities. Use them as handouts at trade shows. Frame them and hang them on the wall of your office. Post links or entire articles on your web site.

When you land a radio, TV, or live chat interview, let everyone on your mailing list know when you will be on. You'll probably get more business from telling people about it than you do from the program itself.

C.J. Hayden is the author of *Get Clients NOW!* Thousands of business owners and salespeople have used her simple sales and marketing system to double or triple their income. Get a free copy of "Five Secrets to Finding All the Clients You'll Ever Need" at

<http://www.getclientsnow.com>

Car Horns

By Michael LaRocca

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CAR HORNS

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Let's pretend that you live in China. Perhaps not in my neighborhood, but in China. Let's also pretend that, unlike me, you own a car. A Volkswagen Santana, of course. Who do you honk the horn at?

Tooting Your Own Horn

Well, you honk at everyone who's in your way, and who you think is in your way, and who you are passing, and who you think is trying to pass you. Every bicycle needs a honk in case the driver can't see you. Every pedestrian, most definitely, because they're not looking at anything except their feet as they float out in front of you.

Every car does this, and the roads become a constant cacophany of car horns. The noise is such that everybody tunes it out in order to function, so the horns are pointless. Nobody is listening to the horns. But honking them is a habit the Chinese driver can't break.

Okay, now here comes a legitimate reason to honk the horn, an emergency, perhaps some fool walking right in front of your car. What do you do? Flick the headlights. Just how stupid is that? If he can't hear your horn, he sure can't hear your headlights. Of course he can't see your headlights, because he's not looking at you. That's what caused the crisis in the first place. Plus, it's daytime.

I offer this little tale for authors who wonder why I prefer understatement. Superlatives are your car horns. Save them until you actually need them.

Michael LaRocca's website at <http://freereads.topcities.com> was chosen by WRITER'S DIGEST as one of The 101 Best Websites For Writers in 2001 and 2002. He published four novels in 2002 and has two more scheduled for publication in 2004. He also works as an editor for an e-publisher. He teaches English at a university in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, China, and publishes the freeweekly newsletter Mad About Books.

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