

By Calvin Sun

Being recognized in your field can make you more valuable in your current job and more marketable if you decide to change jobs. The tips below can help you gain that visibility and exposure. The first four are aimed primarily at the employee of a company, while the rest apply either to the employee or to the independent consultant.

1 Develop your elevator talk

The elevator talk is the 15- to 30-second talk you would give to a senior executive while both of you are in an elevator. It's your chance to impress that person, so make the most of it. Important parts of the elevator talk include:

- ◆ Who you are
- ◆ What project you're working on
- ◆ A significant accomplishment you've made

2 Talk to bosses during office social events

During an office social event (for example, the holiday or Christmas party), it's generally easier to approach your boss and his or her boss to say hello. At those times, it's important to have your elevator talk prepared. Business talk is good, as long as you stay away from salary, benefits, and other personnel questions. Try to make your approach, if you can, out of the sight and earshot of your peers, so they don't think that you're being fawning toward your bosses.

3 Introduce yourself when in another location of your company

Your job may take you to another part of the country, where you might be working with another part of your company -- for example, with a different branch office. In that case, make an effort to introduce yourself to the head of that office. You really don't need a formal appointment. Simply introduce yourself to that person's assistant and find out whether you can just "stick your head in the door" to say hello. Tell that person who you are and what you're doing for that person's office or staff.

4 Volunteer for company events

United Way drive... company picnic... holiday party. All of these events need company employees to run them. They take time, but helping with them can bring you recognition, especially if you're working side by side with upper-level people who one day could be your boss.

5 Speak to outside groups

Speaking to groups can give you credibility and increase your professional contacts. It also builds your own knowledge of your topic, because in researching and creating your talk, you inevitably will learn more about it.

Look for a topic you're familiar with and which would interest an audience. Focus on how your information can benefit audience members. Avoid simply repeating facts. Share any analysis you have done, offering insights for the audience. When looking for groups to speak to, consider industry and professional associations, local chambers of commerce, and service organizations, such as Rotary. Your initial talks probably will need to be given free of charge. However, as your reputation expands, you might be able to charge a fee for them.

One variant of speaking is to teach, perhaps at a local community college. Be aware, however, that such an obligation can involve significant preparation time and little pay.

6 Write for professional publications

Nothing beats seeing one's name in print, with a byline following the title. The same approach applies to writing as with speaking to groups: Pick a topic you know well and which would appeal to the readers of a publication. That means, of course, that you have to know the types of readers a publication has. Most publications will ask for a query letter or e-mail first. In it, you outline your proposed article and possibly submit samples of your previous work. On the other hand, I have gotten articles published simply by sending them in.

The publication *Writer's Market* has been tremendously helpful to me in this regard.

7 Serve as a source for news media

Reporters like to quote authorities when writing a story. If they quote you in print or on the air, your reputation is enhanced. Once you identify a reporter, introduce yourself by phone or e-mail. If you call, and the person answers, ask first whether the person is on deadline. If he or she is, offer to call back. Such a question indicates that you're sensitive to the reporter's time. If you're sending e-mail, include a biographical statement or resume if possible and stress why your knowledge is important to the reporter's readers, viewers, or listeners. If you work for a company, be careful about mentioning the company by name. Your employer might be upset if you appear to be speaking for the company rather than yourself.

8 Mentor or advise a student group or club

I've never done it, but advising a student group, such as a student chapter of the Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP), is another way of gaining exposure and contacts.

9 Moderate a panel discussion

Even if you aren't able to give a presentation at a conference, you still might be able to participate by moderating a panel discussion. The responsibilities will vary depending on the conference and the conference organizer. However, most moderators are responsible for making sure the discussion starts and ends on time and that all participants have a chance to speak. You might want to have some questions prepared beforehand that you can ask the panel to answer.

When taking questions from the audience, always repeat the question so that the entire room (panelists and audience) can hear it.


10 Serve as board member or officer of a professional association

It's pretty easy to serve in either of these capacities because generally, no one wants to do it. If you're the treasurer, you'll be responsible for keeping track of money for the association, such as registration fees received for any conferences, and expenses incurred for speakers, facilities, and other reasons. The other officer and board positions generally are concerned with maintaining and increasing membership, for planning and finding speakers for meetings, and various administrative tasks. If you're willing to put in the time, having such an accomplishment would look good on a resume.



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