

Summary: Your career advancement is predicated not only on your being a good leader but also on your being recognized by others that you're a good leader. Many leaders, however, handicap their careers by failing to have this recognition come about in the right ways. The author shows the right ways to cultivate the right recognition of your leadership.

Blowing Your Own Leadership Horn by Brent Filson

There are two streams of competitiveness running through every organization. The first goes outward: It's the organization's competitive activities toward its competitors. The second goes inward: It's the competitiveness of leaders inside the organization who are vying against one another for power, recognition, privilege and promotion.

To be successful in the second, leaders must not only do well in their jobs but they must also be able to have their bosses and colleagues perceive they do well.

In other words, they must be able to publicize themselves -- or, to use the vernacular, blow their own horns.

I submit, however, that if one simply puts lips to the horn of publicity and blows hard -- i.e., makes an outward show of publicizing oneself -- such efforts will turn out to be discordant and counterproductive. The result will be people turning their backs on you rather than having them hum your tune.

Though it is necessary to blow one's own horn as you climb your career ladder, it is also necessary to know how to do it. After all, there is an art to the effort. Here are four steps that you can follow.

(1) Identify an area in your organization that needs better results. The art involves not just selecting the right results but doing so in cooperation with others. Make sure that when you shine light on the lack of results, you do not embarrass somebody who has been tasked to get those results. Instead of making beautiful music, you could end up on somebody's enemies list! Get the responsible person's permission to focus on the area.
(2) Put together a team whose task it is to achieve those results. Blowing your own horn means that you want to be seen, not as the Lone Ranger, but as a team player. Ensure the results can be achieved with a team. Enlist members to join the team by giving leadership talks. (What's in it for them to be part of the team?) Be aware, as you form the team, of any hard feelings or rough edges that might surface between and among team members and others in your organization who have a stake in the results. If you lead an endeavor that causes hard feelings, it's better to have never started it in the first place.

Moreover, the new team must be not only be formed, it must be MARKETED. Both of these efforts require communications tools and skills, which can take numerous forms. First, to describe the new team or service, communications must be employed to fully define its purpose and operating principles, and the people who are involved in it. These communications tools are descriptive in nature and may include everything from biographical back-grounders to product descriptions and data sheets.

(3) Achieve the results. Execution and achievement of the targeted results is absolutely critical to this phase of horn blowing. Make sure you score a win even if it's only a partial win. The idea is to get the low hanging fruit at the outset to show others that your team is succeeding, and then go for the bigger results later.

(4) Publicize the results. This is one of the most important steps of all, and it is a step that few leaders follow. They might put together a team that gets a few wins, but they have no idea how to publicize their efforts. The first rule in this is: To blow your own horn most effectively, make sure YOU DON'T TAKE CREDIT FOR THE RESULTS -- YOUR TEAM MEMBERS TAKE CREDIT INSTEAD! Your efforts will get torpedoed if they look at all self-serving.

To highlight the successful products and services achieved by your team, you can put together white papers, data sheets, presentation papers and case-history articles.

Don't make this a one-time effort. You must be continually looking for results that are flagging, putting together teams to achieve the results, then marketing and publicizing the achievements.

In this way, when you blow your horn in your organization, the music you'll be making can accompany you on a fast-rising career-trajectory.

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The author of 23 books, Brent Filson's recent books are, THE LEADERSHIP TALK: THE GREATEST LEADERSHIP TOOL and 101 WAYS TO GIVE GREAT LEADERSHIP TALKS. He is founder and president of The Filson Leadership Group, Inc. – and for more than 20 years has been helping leaders of top companies worldwide get audacious results. Sign up for his free leadership e-zine and get a free white paper: "49 Ways To Turn Action Into Results," at www.actionleadership.com For more on the Leadership Talk: <http://www.theleadershiptalk.com>

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