

How to toot your own horn: the balancing act

Bragging about your achievements doesn't always come easily to us Kiwis. Yet it's so important. We don't like to toot our own horn. Yet being too humble can cost you a job, promotion or a pay rise. If you want to get the reward and recognition you deserve, sometimes you need push yourself out of your comfort zone and start talking about your accomplishments.

To do that you need to know what you're good at, what you struggle with and what your ultimate career destination is, says Gaynor Topham, [Vodafone](#) resourcing manager.

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Nick Deligiannis, [Hays](#) Managing Director for Australia and New Zealand recommends finding out what you do that others can't at your organisation and then bragging (or at least talk openly) about that in life, performance and job interviews.

Think of it as selling yourself subtly. But beware of 'humble bragging'. That's false modesty. A classic humblebrag is: "I can't let anything go, I always have to keep trying until I succeed." Or: "I work too hard," when asked what your biggest weakness is. Yeah right!

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Here's how to get the balance right:

- **Turn it into a story.** Storytelling really works at interviews, in performance reviews and in fact any person-to-person communication. And it's a great way to spell out your achievements without bragging. Instead of saying bluntly, "I won XYZ award" or "was promoted five times in two years", create a story around how that happened. Tie your story in with your [unique selling point \(USP\)](#), says Deligiannis. If you don't have a USP, identify it so you have an authentic and consistent story that communicates in the value you provide at your existing organisation or could provide to a new employer, he says.
- **Share your sense of wonder.** Rather than just toot your own horn, talk about how you felt when you accomplished something that you want to share. Instead of: "I did this", say: "when I did this, I felt...."
- **Talk about the people who did it with you.** If you can talk about your achievements as part of a bigger [collaborative](#) event, you will avoid looking like you're all about: "me, me,

me". If you're talking to colleagues that will give you brownie points as well.

- **Use brag bites.** Keep it short, to the point and then move on. Nobody wants to hear endless monologues of all of your achievements.
- **Back claims up with proof.** Instead of: "I'm the best salesman they ever had" back it up with facts. Says Topham: "When people talk factually it makes it much easier to articulate when they have done well. 'I increased this by 12 per cent' or 'I did this for a customer' are great ways to phrase your accomplishments.
- **Get others to vouch for you.** Let references and recommendations from colleagues, clients/stakeholders, and former managers do the bragging for you. If you get some great feedback, don't be afraid to share that with your boss or prospective employer.

Lastly, it's important to remember that sometimes you're the only person who knows how hard you work and what you're achieving. So, next time you have a win at work, use some of these tactics to start getting noticed. Toot! Toot!