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Ask a Director: Reporting Accomplishments

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ASK A DIRECTOR

Reporting Accomplishments

Question: What advice would you give to librarians to help them more effectively inform those they report to about their accomplishments?



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You should openly share and talk about your successes. When we share our accomplishments, we become more memorable and we reveal something about our true selves that leads to meaningful connections with friends and co-workers.

Ideally, your goal is to create a narrative—a story or a sound bite. Telling a story demonstrates your expertise and engages your audience in a memorable way so they are more likely to remember your story. Your first step is to do some brainstorming. Think about the “w” questions: who, what, when, and why. Be honest when you are considering the w’s, because if you are not, your story is likely to miss its target and fail to create that meaningful connection, and you may ultimately defeat your intended purpose. Start by thinking through the following questions:

- Who is your intended audience? Think about how you appeal to that specific person or group of individuals. Are there multiple audiences? What makes a specific audience distinct? How might you shape your message for different audiences? Consider why your audience will or

should care about the thing you seek to share. Focus on making a specific appeal or connection.

- What is it you wish to share? What is the relevance of your accomplishment to those you singled out to share your accomplishments? Consider the facts associated with the news you seek to share. Create talking points that embrace clarity; three is generally the magic number. Be brief as you likely will not have a lot of time. Make certain your message is authentic and lean toward humble. Your message should be clear and focused, and should avoid sounding rehearsed.
- Why this information, why this person or group?
- What is it you hope to accomplish by sharing with this specific individual?

Be honest here. This is the difficult question. If you are not authentic, your message is likely to lay an egg.

- When do you intend to share this information? Consider the occasion and environment: Is it an elevator speech, is it lunch, or is it a social event? Be mindful of the amount of time and others who might be present. Timing is critical to successful sharing. Learn to walk away if the timing is not right.

What to Avoid

- The humble brag, that self-deprecating way of sharing an accomplishment that attempts to diminish the accomplishment, but at the same time tells everyone within range how wonderful you are. This is destined to fail as it feels deceptive. Honesty

wins here. If you are proud of an accomplishment, then share it and embrace the bragging rights.

- Do not force an opening in the conversation. Wait for a natural opening to share, even if you have to wait or walk away from what was seemingly a great opportunity. Your goal is to share and participate in the conversation in a seamless manner.
- Do not hog the spotlight or fail to give credit to others when due.
- Do not force someone to pull information out of you.

Remember, you are a talented, successful professional, and those around you want to share in your success. Do not hide your accomplishments, but rather, be genuine and pick the right time and place to share.



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Whether I am telling my supervisor about a recent success, or receiving good news about an accomplishment from a member of my team, the best communication results from applying four basic principles.

1. Tailor your format to your audience. Think about the ways you enjoy getting information. Your preferences may be shaped by type of content, what you're expected to do with it, the amount of time you have, or the number of people and issues vying for your attention. Supervisors, directors, and deans are influenced by these same factors, so set yourself up for success by aligning the way you deliver good news with what you know about your supervisor.

If you have regularly scheduled meetings, put your recent success on the agenda. If you provide quarterly reports, include your accomplishments in the

report. If you don't have a set structure for providing updates, consider the following: Does your supervisor have an open-door policy, or would they rather schedule meetings? Would they prefer a brief email, a more formal executive summary, or a phone call? Good news will be received more warmly if it is given in a way that works for the recipient.

2. Focus on the impact of your accomplishment. Talking about professional success is a delicate business. How can you highlight your accomplishments without seeming to brag? Instead of describing the specific

tasks you completed or focusing on the minutiae of a project, describe the positive impact of your work. Put your individual success in the context of institutional or professional innovation and advancement. For example, when you've finished a complex and time-consuming weeding project, you can report that there's now more shelf space for growth or that the next phase of a larger project can begin.

3. Give credit where it is due. If there was any teamwork in the project, credit your team at the outset. As a director, hearing about the accomplishments of librarians and staff is

more meaningful when I know that the success grew out of collaboration and that the person reporting the success is recognizing their colleagues' success as well.

4. Tighten your prose. When reporting your accomplishments in writing, find an editor to help you write more effectively. Brevity is almost always an asset. However, tightening your prose is more than reducing your word count. A good editor can help you balance an emphasis on impact with inclusion of enough detail to help your supervisor understand the extent and value of your efforts. ■