

Contact: Jane Rohman, 413-848-1407, jr@janerohman.com  
Word Count: 720

## **IF YOU REALLY WANT TO GET AHEAD, LEARN HOW TO BRAG!**

By Peggy Klaus

As commencement day approaches on campuses across the country and as graduates set out to fulfill their life's dreams or to simply find a job, I have one piece of advice something that most commencement speakers will fail to mention: If you really want to get ahead in the world, you better be willing to brag!

Yes, brag—that four letter word that makes you cringe and conjures up unpleasant images of obnoxious, self-aggrandizing, pushy people. With recent studies showing that self promotion is essential for career advancement and that those who don't "toot their own horn" will most assuredly stall or derail in their climb up the success ladder, you've got no choice but to brag—*the right way of course!* Fortunately there is an artful way of turning the spotlight on yourself that will not only feel natural and comfortable to you, but to those on the receiving end as well. You start by learning to talk in a story-like manner about your interests, ideas and accomplishments, making your life sound interesting and entertaining. This is what I call a bragologue and it can be designed for any audience, for any length of time—from a 15 second introduction or a two minute answer in an interview. And when you deliver your bragologues with passion and enthusiasm to interviewers, I guarantee their ears will perk up and that they will listen intently to your story.

You see, now that you are out on your own, you won't land a job simply by wearing your best suit and your best shoes-or even by having a \$50-an-hour writer put golden touches on your resume. You no longer have the advantage of a ready made cheerleading squad of parents, grandparents, teachers, and coaches to toot for you. And you shouldn't assume that your college placement office knows everything there is to know about getting a job. Unfortunately, my second-hand experience leaves me more than just a little wary of the advice being offered at many such offices. Let me give you an example. The daughter of a client, a soon-to-be graduate, came to me for some interview advice a few weeks ago. She had already attended three seminars at her university's placement office on "How to Get a Job in this Difficult Market." Their advice to her (and thousands of others) was full of "don'ts." Don't draw attention to yourself in a job interview. Don't wear clothing or jewelry that might make you stand out or distract the interviewer (women in particular!). And definitely don't use humor—applicants should answer all questions in a serious tone to appear older and more mature. Can you believe this advice? If after four years of higher education you don't have enough sense not to wear a halter-top to a job interview, you should have your diploma rescinded. For this young woman, the placement office advice resulted in her wearing an oversized, gray flannel suit-more befitting a 60-year-old matron than an attractive and petite 21-year-old newly minted graduate. And when I asked her to respond to typical interview questions, her delivery was so lifeless that I could barely stay awake. She projected such an unassuming, self-deprecating personality

that I felt annoyed just listening to her talk. Is it any wonder that out of her five interviews to date, she hadn't received even one offer?

Absolutely not!

So before you leave those hallowed halls, make sure you have your bragologues in your back pocket at all times, ready to pull out at a moment's notice. You never know who you will meet in an elevator, at a party, or standing in line at a check-out stand. Someone might just know someone who knows someone who heard about a great job in Chicago that is perfect for you. Make your story memorable, and I promise you will find getting a job much easier. Then after landing one, you can brag your way to the top, directly into that promotion or raise you will undoubtedly deserve.

**Peggy Klaus is a Berkeley, CA based Fortune 500 communication and leadership coach and the author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It* (Warner Business Books, Hardcover, \$24.95, May 21, 2003).**