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MAKE SURE YOUR FANS GET IT RIGHT!

Six Tips To Insure You're Introduced With Impact

By Peggy Klaus

As an entrepreneur, I have counted on numerous friends and family members to be important sources for contacts and to spread the word about my business. Over the years, I've discovered I must literally put the exact words in their mouths to ensure they convey an accurate message about who I am and what I do. Well I guess it just shows that no matter how well you know the lesson, you can always screw up—because that's exactly what happened the other day at lunch.

I recently offered to put together a meeting to introduce a writer friend to some clients of mine—four partners in a well-established marketing and public relations firm who were looking for a freelancer. I thought I had prepared for everything—from a restaurant close by to everyone's office to a pre-lunch email outlining three things we were going to discuss. The one thing I failed to plan was a bragologue about my friend. Bragologues are succinct, story-like monologues that memorably capture and portray a person's interests or accomplishments. So when my introduction of her tumbled out, it was less than stellar. I tangled the details of my friend's job experience so badly that by the time I was done, she had worked for 79 years. Also, I was uncertain about her current projects and so incorrectly placed her at a job she left more than three months ago.

My friend graciously transitioned into telling her story without so much as a raised eyebrow or dirty look. Fortunately, after an hour and half of great damage control by the two of us, the partners asked her for a follow-up meeting the next week. As I was driving home, relieved that things had ended well, I couldn't help but reflect back on the situation. I realized my mistakes: I should have checked in with my friend prior to the meeting (and not just when we were walking to the table). I should have written down her information and turned it into a bragologue. And I should have practiced several times out loud, paraphrasing the facts until they felt comfortable rolling off my tongue. Okay, so that's where I goofed. However, as much as I blamed myself, I had to admit my friend was also culpable. After all, it was her big chance to sell herself, so she should have given me articulate, entertaining, and up-to-the-minute bragologue material to work with. Truth be told, the couple of times I had asked her to go into more detail about her professional background, she sloughed it off saying, "Oh let's talk about something more interesting." Not a good sign!

The day after the meeting, when I called to apologize for my mishap, my friend asked for feedback about how she had presented herself. I suggested including more about the exotic places she's lived in, flushing out one or two of the most interesting articles she had written, and dropping the names of a few of the prestigious publishing houses she's edited for. And when at her next meeting with the partners, she did all of that—it worked! They commented about her breadth of expertise and gave her the coveted first assignment.

I can't stress enough the importance of making sure that people who are slated to introduce or talk about you—at a luncheon, an industry panel, a keynote speech, or even a cocktail party—have the facts straight. We tend to believe we have little control over what our friends, relatives, and colleagues say about us. Yet when others introduce you, they often either repeat what they have heard from you or make something up. So get your bragologues down, keep them current, and repeat them often. And make certain that everyone around you has the most up-to-date version. Remember: A successful word-of-mouth bragging campaign is contingent upon getting the right words in the mouth to begin with.

TIPS FOR GREAT INTRODUCTIONS

- Weave the details together in a story-like fashion to create a memorable bragologue.
- Be succinct.
- Keep the content fresh and updated,
- Be clear with others about what you want them to emphasize about you.
- E-mail your bragologue to everyone who might need it.
- Don't get lazy about preparation—even with your spouse or best friend.

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