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HOW DO I GET MORE SAVVY ABOUT SELF-PROMOTION

Welcome to The Highly Valued Leader podcast where I make it simple for leaders at all levels to amplify their value. My name is Mel Savage and I went from working in the mailroom at a small ad agency to making multiple six figures in senior management at McDonald's, to running my own multiple six-figure executive coaching business. I've had huge successes in my career and epic failures. All of it taught me the world-class leadership, mind and skill sets that I simplify for my clients and share with you on this podcast. I'll help you reset your leadership style, demystify the politics, and help you become the highly valued leader everyone wants on their team. Get ready for the most honest, direct and revolutionary leadership coaching you've ever heard. Let's simplify leadership together.

Hello, leaders. Welcome back to the podcast. Today, we're talking about something that so many of us avoid doing, and that is self-promotion. It actually just sounds icky, even saying it—*self-promotion*—it sounds like something self-serving and terrible, salesy, awkward, and all the things. And you know what? I do want to say that self-promotion is a little bit self-serving, but I want you to question what is wrong with that. What is wrong with being a little self-serving when it comes to your career development?

Because it is your career, you're the one who wants to develop it. You're the one who has the goals. And self-promotion is one of the many strategies—not just the only strategy, but one of the many strategies that you're using to grow your career. It's just like you working extra hours, working on certain projects, or working at certain companies—all of those decisions are self-serving. They're all ultimately about what's good for you in your life with the people that you care about.

So ask yourself why self-promotion gets such a bad rap, considering the things that you need to do that are self-serving for your career. Because being self-serving for your career is not a bad thing. It is actually the thing that you've been doing. It's your career. So everything you do in your career, to some extent, is self-serving, but not just self-serving. There are lots of great things that you do in your career that also help serve others and help grow others. Not everything that we do has just one purpose.

I want to speak to the leaders out there who know that self-promotion is critical when you're a leader, and I want to talk about why that is even more important, but also how to do it in a way that isn't icky, weird, or awful, and doesn't come across like you only care about yourself. We want to be savvy about how we do self-promotion. We want it to be natural, authentic, and effective in the way we do it. And that's what I want to cover today. I really want to cover how to prioritize and create a savvy self-promotion strategy in a way that feels authentic, not only to you but also to your audience. That is what I want to cover today.

I thought we could start by identifying why we don't do it and why we should do it. Maybe I'll start with why we should do it. What is the benefit to you in doing self-promotion? Why do we need to do it at all? I think the main reason I want to offer you is that when you're a leader, you are often leading from behind. You're not doing the

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work anymore. You are the one getting results through your team, so it's really important that you help people see your value. People tend to see the tangible things; they don't necessarily see the intangible things that you're doing behind the scenes.

Your job is to make the intangible tangible to your audience—the things that you do in the background, how you lead from behind—become something that you need to shine a spotlight on so that people see it. It's part of you differentiating yourself, and as a leader, it becomes your job to do that. You can't expect all the key stakeholders who are sitting around the talent roundtable making decisions about which senior leaders are going to be top talent or future leaders in the organization to laser-focus on every little achievement you've made when they also have a million things going on. It's your job to lead their awareness in all of this.

I think that's something I really want to draw attention to: self-promotion is, I consider, marketing. It's like your own personal marketing plan, which I think is different from selling. I think selling and marketing are two different things when it comes to your self-promotion. Let me explain why. I feel like the word *selling* has sort of convincing energy like I need to convince you that what I'm selling to you is worthy, whereas I feel like *marketing* is different. Marketing is about generating awareness of benefits that are already relevant to your audience.

Selling, I feel, is convincing, grasping, needy, desperate energy, whereas I feel *marketing* is more about generating awareness of benefits that are already relevant to your key stakeholder audience. You're just shining a light on them. And that is your job. The reason we don't like doing this, of course, is because it feels uncomfortable. We are socialized to not talk about ourselves, particularly women. That it's wrong, that it's selfish, that it's— I don't know—tacky. Maybe that's the word.

All of a sudden, we already have this predisposition that it is wrong, and we think we need to sell ourselves like we need to convince people that we're great, which is not what we're trying to do at all. One, we try to avoid it because it feels naturally uncomfortable. Two, I think we don't do it because we don't know how. We haven't really been taught how to do it effectively, and so all the ways that we've seen it done feel icky and weird because if you're noticing people selling themselves, it obviously is coming across icky and weird.

Ideally, when it's done well, you're not even noticing people are influencing you to believe in them without you feeling like you're being worked, manipulated, conned, or sold something. You just naturally believe it, and that's what we want to create for you. So the first reason we avoid it is that it feels weird to do it. The second reason is that we don't know how to do it in a natural and authentic way. And the third reason, for a lot of people, is that we don't understand why we have to. We resent it. We think our work should speak for itself. We don't want to add this other thing to the list of things we have to do.

But like I said, it's your job to do it now at a leadership level. And if you're not doing it, you're not going to be able to grow and reach the goals that you want in the timeline that you want to grow in. So this isn't an add-on. I wouldn't think of this as an add-on; it needs to be part of your job. If you think, *"I work 40 or 50 hours a week or whatever, this is a project that I need to make time for."*

And when you're doing it well when you treat it like a project that has a strategy and a focus and some tactical executions that you are consistently implementing, you better leverage every hour that you're at the job just doing your regular job. You better leverage that work like you get better ROI from the work you're already doing. Plus, the best part is—and this is my favorite part—you feel so empowered because you are intentionally taking control

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of your career, and you're really pulling all the levers you can to get to where you want to go, not in a manipulative way, but in a strategic, thoughtful, intentional way.

When you're really driving your own career, it's such an empowering feeling. It's so much better than feeling trapped and like you're not in control of your career. And when you feel empowered in your career, you're more confident, you make better decisions, and you don't worry as much—all this goodness comes from that. You're really leading what people think about you. You're controlling your own narrative. When you don't control your own narrative, people fill in the gaps with their narrative about you. I would rather—and I think you would rather—be the one controlling your narrative, rather than trying to fight what other people are saying about you or fight other people's narratives about you that are probably unfair and not fully formed.

I have a few different things that you need to do to start really building a savvy self-promotional strategy for yourself. The first thing, always, is you need a career goal. Your career goal grounds all the decisions that you make about your career. I am a big believer in strategy. If I don't have a strategy that I'm working towards, I don't know how to make decisions.

I think it's really important that you ground your decision-making in a career goal. Because when you have a career goal, the next thing you can do is understand where you are performing versus that ultimate career goal. Where are the gaps that you have in terms of your development with your career goal? Then you can actually know what you need people to know about you, think about you, and where you need to develop. All of a sudden, it informs everything that you do and every decision you make in your career.

Part of that is when you have a career goal, like, say, you want to be the head of operations, whatever that looks like in your organization—a COO or a VP or whatever it is—where are your development gaps, not only between where you are now and that, let's call it a VP of Operations role, but what are going to be the differentiators that you want to create for yourself as a potential VP of Operations? I'm sure you've worked for lots of VPs of Operations or VPs in your field, let's say, and they all have different styles, different skill sets, different specific strengths, or things that they bring to the job.

And I want you to think about what's going to be yours. What's going to be that specialness that you bring to that specific thing? When it comes to operations, maybe your specialty is customer service, systems, ROI, people leadership, or innovative thinking and solutions. There's not just going to be one thing. I always say to pick two or three things that you really, really want to be known for. Maybe you're a big-picture thinker. Whatever it is, you need to start thinking about it just like a marketing plan.

Think about what the key benefits are. What are the key specific specialties of you in that future role? Then, what you can do is integrate those specialties that you want people to know about you into how you do your job today. It can be about whatever project you're working on and how those elements that you've decided are your specialties are being integrated into the project. How are you highlighting those areas and the great work your team is doing in those areas? Even if people don't necessarily know you for those things yet, how are you trying to develop your skill set in those areas?

For instance, if you know customer experience or customer service is a key thing you want to be known for, like exceptional customer service, how are you making sure that either you get on projects like that or you maximize existing projects in those areas? How are you talking about the wins in those areas? You really want to start

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forming this brand and creating a lot of evidence for your specialties in this area. What is it that you want people to know about you, and how are you integrating it into everything that you do day-to-day?

Then I would say, after having a career goal and knowing what it is that you want to be known for in those areas, it's about how you communicate it consistently and where you communicate it consistently. It could be in your one-on-ones, how you talk about your team, how you highlight things in your department plans, or how you create consistent communication vehicles that talk about the team's celebrations and achievements in a natural way. Starting speeches with appreciation and celebration of what you guys have been doing is another way.

You really want to be able to shine a light on these things that you want to be known for, these specialties that you're creating, and why they're a benefit to everybody. Why is customer service not just something about who you are but so important to what you guys do? Or if you're a big-picture thinker, how would you frame that in a way that is important to your audience? What does it bring?

Remember that most people care about two things: money and ego. So, how is this creating more money for the organization? What is your team doing in terms of thinking big-picture, looking forward, ROI, or whatever it is? Or how is it helping people be their best, be more successful in their field, or whatever? You always want to bring everything back as a benefit to other people so that they appreciate you more and it's easy for them to see why they need you.

That's where I was kind of thinking before—though I can't remember if I said this earlier or not—when you think about the leaders that you appreciate in your organization, it's not because they're selling you on the fact that they're great. They're not like, *"Hey, don't you think I'm great? Here's what I've achieved."* They're not doing that, but what they do—how they behave, their skill sets, their strengths, their specialties—are somehow something that you see as a benefit to you.

They may or may not be intentionally doing it; who knows? But what I'm suggesting to you is that you should get strategic about it. This is how you can get really savvy with it—by getting really strategic about it. Not in a *salesy*, *"I'm going to con you"* kind of way, but in a way that considers who you want to be, that's going to be in service of this job that you want, that's going to actually be a benefit to people who will hire you one day, who will work for you one day, or who will work with you one day. You know what I'm saying? You want to understand what that benefit is going to be, and you want to communicate it as a benefit to people in a way that they can understand.

The last thing I would say to you is that you really want to do this not only internally but externally, too. I always talk about inside and outside; there has to be some kind of balance. When I say balance, I'm not saying 50/50, but there has to be some kind of ongoing drumbeat outside the organization, where maybe you're doing LinkedIn posts or sharing LinkedIn posts in the areas where you have your specialty specifically in your field.

If you're an ops person with a specialty in customer service, you become a student of customer service. You share posts about customer service. You have perspectives on customer service. You pick places to speak in your industry around the need for customer service or the future of customer service. You get involved in industry events that speak to customer service—all the things. When someone says, *"We need someone who's really good at customer service,"* people will think, *"You know who's really great at that? This person,"* because you're top of mind with them.

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What I'm talking about here is that when I think about self-promotion, it is your personal marketing plan. That's what you need to think about: what is my personal marketing plan, what is my strategy about myself, why is it a benefit to my audience, and how do I communicate it consistently, in which channels? This isn't just about selling yourself in one-off situations like this project or that project. It's really a full-on concerted strategic effort. And it can start small. You can have this vision for where you want to get to, but just start with one thing and create momentum. You don't have to do it all at once.

That's what I have for you this week, my friends. And of course, as I always say, if this is something that's of interest to you to build for yourself, and you want to work with someone who's going to be building these things, I have two options for you. Sign up with me now, one-on-one. We'll do this specifically for you. And I always say to people, we will work one-on-one, not only on making you a great leader but also on building a great leadership brand for you. We can do both of those things one-on-one.

What I want to let you know is that in December this year, I will be launching my first group program called *"Promotions on Demand."* But it's not just about promotions; it's also about building great opportunities for you. And we're going to be talking all about building your marketing plan and shining a spotlight, building that strategic plan specifically, and shining a spotlight on you and what you do so that you can get opportunities dropped in your lap. I'm doing that in December. I'm going to be opening up a waitlist for that in November, so block it now. And if you want to do that, it's going to be a little bit less expensive than one-on-one, but it is going to be in a group format. Whichever one is of interest to you, we can make this happen.

That's what I have for you this week, my friends. Have a fantastic week and a great rest of the summer, and I will speak to you in a couple of weeks. Bye for now.

Hey, if you want to simplify leadership while amplifying your value, then you need to get your hands on my free training. Head over to melsavage.com/simple for instant access to the training and get a taste of how I help my clients lead with ease and make more money in the process. I'll see you there.

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