



## BRAG!

The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It

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### About the Authors



Peggy Klaus

President of Klaus & Associates in Berkeley, CA, Peggy Klaus is a much in-demand consultant who has spent nearly a decade advising some of America's top Fortune 500 executives in the art of self-presentation and promotion. She reaches thousands of professionals a year through speaking, coaching, and workshops for leading organizations including Levi Strauss, Disney, JP Morgan Chase, General Mills, NAFE, Count Me In, 100 Women in Hedge Funds, and The Harvard Business School Alumni Association, among others. Her colorful and frank advice is frequently sought out by journalists, and she has been featured and quoted extensively in a wide range of media including ABC's *20/20*, NBC's *Today*, *CNN*, *Business Week*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Glamour*, *Working Mother*, and *Family Circle*, among others.

Klaus is also a frequent speaker at conferences. In keynote presentations, she has addressed the Women in Leadership Summit, San Francisco Trial Lawyers, Pharmacia-Upjohn, and the Financial Women's Association, among others. Over the last two years, she has led some 50 BRAG parties and workshops for leading organizations nationwide.

For more information, visit:  
<http://www.klausact.com/bragbook.html>

### Wisdom in a Nutshell

Bragging in today's competitive world is a necessity and a matter of choice to promote one's self. Downplaying your own success could allow others to grab credit for your achievements. If done with grace and style, bragging successfully while artfully communicates your talents and accomplishments without you sounding like a pompous ass. A person can gain connections, motivation, and skills that can lead to plum assignments, raises and promotions, and stronger professional relationships. By learning this book's guiding principles, tips, and best practices, you can toot your own horn in a manner that is sincere, comfortable, without antagonizing anyone.

## Chapter 1 - Bragging Myths We Live And Die By

Myth #1: A Job Well Done Speaks for Itself. Today, there is no such thing as job security. Years of loyalty and hard work no longer apply. With constant changes like mergers, management shifts, and downsizing, a person should recognize the value of self-promotion to maneuver in a shifting, volatile and unpredictable workplace. People who get passed over for promotions are those who have not let their organizations know who they are and what they have accomplished.

Smart self-promoters always show up prepared for job interviews. They value time with others and are always ready with positive and exciting stories about themselves that break through the verbal clutter. These people know how to make their interviews happen.

Myth #2: Bragging Is Something You Do During Performance Reviews. The road traveled by lackluster self-promoters is paved with missed opportunities. (e.g. Keep a record of the dates of milestone accomplishments and send out a carefully worded e-mail to "update" people on the progress of your department.)

Myth #3: Humility Gets You Noticed. The truth is humility does not get any one noticed. It is considered wimping out. Humility makes you invisible.

Myth #4: I Don't Have To Brag; People Will Do It For Me. Letting others do the talking for you is a poor substitute. Also, some people tend to deflect compliments with self-deprecating comments that belittle their achievements. Looking out for your self-interest is not bragging but simply a matter of survival and spotting good opportunities.

Myth #5: More Is Better. If you cannot sell yourself in a way that is inviting to others, then people simply shut down or forget about you.

Myth #6: Good Girls Don't Brag. This belief among professional women that it is unbecoming to self-promote has far-reaching consequences when it comes to getting referrals, negotiating work hours, salary, or fighting for high-visibility assignments and promotions. Guys get ahead faster because they do not down play their achievements. Women need to find their own unique way of blending feminine

sophistication while highlighting their professional achievements and making it look effortless.

Myth #7: Brag Is A Four- Letter Word: Brag is not a four letter word. It is self-promotion that is not obvious to others and does not come across as self-serving. It is telling your story and showcasing your the best of what you have to offer, with authenticity, pride, and enthusiasm.

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## Chapter 2 - What's So Good About You?

Most of us when asked by interviewees would invariably give answers that on second thought should have been answered differently.

Many of us know what to say perfectly about ourselves after the fact. The main reason behind these lapses is unpreparedness.

Effective bragging means having a clear sense who a person is and what he has accomplished. The skill in communicating this can make a person unique and interesting in the eyes of the people this person wants to impress.

The author, Peggy Klaus, suggests for us to take a set of questions called "Take 12" that will help us to think about our history, where we have been, what we are doing now, what we have to offer and what makes us memorable. Peggy Klaus also suggests that when taking the "Take 12", colorful details should be added since these make all the difference from being a bore to becoming extraordinary.

Answers to your "Take 12" questions then become your collection of brag bag that is fit to mention in polite company your accomplishments, your passions and interests including details of who you are and what you are professionally. This should be updated regularly.

When creating your brag bites and bragologues, make sure that what you tell are creative stories about yourself and simply not reciting boring list of facts or in generic terms that can make you come as colorless and unmemorable.

Also make your brags and bragologues interesting and colorful so that they illustrate your competence.

*Throwing kisses does not  
mean kissing up.*

### Chapter 3 - Bragging In And Out Of The Office

Peggy Klaus advises us never to assume anything and always be ready under any circumstance or scenario to present your "brags". Also, she adds that timing and delivery are everything. Step into the spotlight as much as possible and let your boss know what you have accomplished and what you are doing.

Gathering around the water cooler, the coffeepot, the vending machine, and other office spots are your bases for launching your impromptu bragging operations.

Also don't let your numbers do all the talking. Share your successes since people are interested to learn how you have overcome difficulties and obstacles.

Humour Me

Peggy Klaus tells us one of the most effective ways to break the ice at a cocktail party where we don't know anyone is to tell the person standing next to you that you don't know anyone.

After breaking the ice, then you can now proceed to introduce talking and bragging about who you are and what you do.

You can also make it meaningful by matching your bragging with the specific needs of your client.

Throwing kisses does not mean kissing up. The game of getting ahead is the game of being secure and confident in blazing your own trail, and getting in front of the people you need to impress.

### Chapter 4 - Techno-Brag: Tooting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Peggy Klaus tells us that in today's workplace communication have become more faceless. It is also important to take advantage of technology to cast ourselves in the best light and to deliver our messages with the right impact whether it is in the form of an email, a voice mail, or on the telephone receiver.

Klaus also tells us that techno-bragging is important to keep people you want to impress up to speed on your progress and successes in an instant whether you are travelling or thousands of miles away from your head office, or have customers around the globe, or even when you are in your office and you can't seem to catch your boss or the next person in your booth.

Techno-bragging can help you open doors that were once closed that will let you make personal contact with professionals whose opinions count. It can keep you in front of every person's mind for all sorts of career opportunities. With today's internet and intranet, techno-bragging campaigns can even be made even smarter.

Learning how to replace face with time is an art and a challenge by itself especially when you don't see your boss anymore. With today's wired technology and the busy nature of most superiors, it is very important to remain at their radar screens at the critical moments by being pro-active and extrovert in virtual communications so that your presence is felt daily. You have to keep it constant and keep it coming.

Always develop an interesting and provocative storyline and how your clients can benefit when making your bragologue cold calls.

Put your best self on the line and try to connect with everyone when making your bragologue particularly

for those connected remotely. You can do this by building a bridge to them and acknowledging their remote presence. Otherwise, your bragging will sound offensive and boring to the remotely connected client.

Reach out and check out with your prospective client to break the ice before finalizing your brag bag presentation.

Get a plan in place that will always keep you visible in the office and in the loop particularly when you are telecommuting. Peggy Klaus suggests the following:

1. Arrange a designated time each week for a talk with your boss during which you can underscore how you are performing. Regularly send email updates talking about your accomplishments and any client feedback.
2. Check in with colleagues by phone and email to find out also what is going on in the office.
3. Pick out 5 people that you need to establish visibility with. Create a techno-bragging trail with them and schedule monthly trips to the city and invite them and your boss for lunch.
4. Make it a priority to attend corporate functions and get involved in organizing an event.

Get personal with your techno-bragging. It is offensive to send spams of your bragging achievements. Put in a little common sense when using the efficiency of emails by putting in a little common courtesy and seeing to the personal side of your communications.

Be careful what you brag about as it could haunt you. With the power of email, choose your words carefully and give credit where credit is due. There is nothing more disturbing than to send emails that are less than true or written so as to grab all the glory.

## Chapter 5 - Job Interviews: Bragging Your Way In The Door

When doing job interviews, your bragging campaign should always be prepared with focus. Choose words that honestly describe your strengths and

experiences that will convince your audience that you are capable of doing a great job. Develop answers to spotty or gaps in your job history, how your skills translate from one field to another, your lack of experience, or questions like "Tell me about your weak points."

Always do your homework on the company hiring before you go for your job interview. And don't let your resume speak for you. You should bring your resume to life by talking about them with high energy and enthusiasm since employers want to meet you to know your accomplishments. Employers are not psychics.



***"Tell me about your weak points."***

Get creative in your presentation during your job interview that will show your passion or interest for the job.

Zap those zingers by preparing a careful evaluation of your answers that is honest, straightforward, and is logical.

Make the leap by telling your job prospect that if you can deliver for big employers you can also deliver for small companies with a passion.

When your work experiences and accomplishments is from a team effort, Peggy Klaus suggests breaking the project into 10 parts that were key to the project's success. By doing this, you can actually talk about the 2 or 3 parts where you were most involved while underscoring team effort.

Truth tricks when you need to get references from your boss you didn't like or never bonded with is to tell your interviewer honestly that you had differences with your boss and that you can get good references from your colleagues or partners or even superiors with your boss.

When you need to brag about your weak points it is best to acknowledge them gracefully while putting in

a positive spin to them.

There is no such thing as a small detail. All those important nuggets and details in your resume that tell or spin positively your story or your interest in a particular slant will help you get the job that you want. You need to craft creative messages and stories about your accomplishments that will be at the heart of your bragging campaign.

Do a simulation with your friend to prepare you with the actual interview by knowing how you distinguish yourself with others applying for the same job.

## Chapter 6 - Performance Reviews: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

No one has your best interest but yourself so don't expect anyone tooting your horn especially during your performance reviews.

Don't wing it. Never walk into performance review cold. You need to be hot and ready with your brag bag. Many employees look at performance reviews as bothersome instead of as an opportunity to talk about their accomplishments and spend some quality time with their boss.

*Never get  
defensive and emotional  
during your reviews.*

Preliminary work and preparation is essential to a successful performance appraisal. Create and rehearse a conversational bragologue that will highlight your accomplishments and positive contributions to your organization while getting ready for those zingers thrown your way.

Remember treat performance appraisal as one of the most important moments of your career. You should give it the same attention and enthusiasm as you would when you landed the job in the first place.

Stick to your guns when talking to your boss. Let

him know that your accomplishments and achievements made a solid contribution to the firm's bottom line and that you are ready for more responsibilities and that a raise is a just reward for your efforts.

Learn how to accept compliments since these are essential as launching pads in underscoring your accomplishments and contributions during performance reviews.

Brag about the right stuff by tooting your accomplishments that relate to your position and responsibilities. Leave out the peripheral deeds and focus on the strategic about what you brag about and prioritize your accomplishments.

Helping your boss to see through the forest is to acknowledge each criticism and shortcoming with a reminder of your strengths. Never get defensive and emotional during your reviews. Stay calm and collected while asking for specific and measurable goals to improve your performance so the next time around you can brag about your having them achieved

Learn to ask about the hard questions about yourself especially in areas where you are deficient with a well-crafted bragologue how you have improved. Weak points can be turned to a plus.

## Chapter 7 - When You Don't Have A Real Job

To rebuild your brag campaign when you don't have a real job by choice or by default, you need to review your answers to your "Take 12" survey knowing that not having a real job does not in any way erase or diminish what you are doing now.

Think of interesting and exciting ways to describe what you are up to now that appeals to different mindsets. Don't dwell on the gloom and doom stories filled with self-doubt. Don't let people be sorry for you instead get them excited about you.

Knowing what to leave out in your bragologue will enable to create a coherent summary of where you have been, where you are at, and where you are going. Make it easy for people to know you and your story so they will keep you in mind when they hear of that perfect opportunity. Remember your audience loses interest if your story is fuzzy or disjointed.

Say it anyhow when there is a need to mention your career shift or if you don't know which shift would you like. However, you have to prepare a bragologue on what your passion is and what you prefer to do as a career shift.

People who retire now bounce back to accept part-time or full-time jobs to relieve them of the boredom of retirement. With healthier living and longer lives, retirees can now join the job stream as a consultant or as a full-time employee. If you are a retiree seeking a job, you must craft a bragologue that will highlight your accomplishments and seek an industry standard compensation given your experience and skill sets.

If you are not doing anything, brag anyway. Talk about your accomplishments.

Go beyond just talking about your kids and come prepared with bragologues about yourself.

## Chapter 8-When You're Out On Your Own

When you are the company or the entrepreneur, promoting yourself takes on a new meaning. You have to sell yourself first in a personal and memorable way before you can sell anything.

Make sure that your friends or family members should be able to convey the correct message about who you are, what you are, what you are doing, and your goals. Otherwise you could be introduced the wrong way and you could lose out on opportunities.

Don't overlook the most important element in making your presentation, which should be a pithy bragologue of how the product came to be, how it will benefit a company or a customer, ease of usage, and is it affordable.

Believe in yourself or no one will. If you believe in yourself then you can do it.

Make your brag bites stick not corny. Be sure to think of telling your story in a humorous or metaphorical way and make it sound original and authentic.

Back up your style with real substance by backing up your claims with honest to goodness research and preparation. Dressing up for success is simply

that and without substance it looks like a sham. But substance without style will put your client to sleep. Seek a balance in your bragologue. It should be invisible and seamless yet loaded with genuine pride and enthusiasm.

## Chapter 9 - Brag Nags

*Believe in yourself  
or no one will.*

Peggy Klaus writes the following brag nags:

- Brag # 1: Bore no more. Presentation Training 101 is a bore. To be perceived with a fresh perspective and your audience actually looking forward to hear what you have to say, you have to genuinely engage yourself, combine your warmth and strength while marrying your style with substance.
- Brag #2: Bring your best self forward. This means just being your personable you that brings you positive feedback from your colleagues and your clients. Bringing your authentic best self to every interaction both personally and professionally is at the very core of your competent bragging.
- Brag #3: Recognize the importance of first impressions. They are important but it is easier for you to let people see you the way you want them to see you rather than worrying about what they think about you. About 55% of the messages received by others is through nonverbal cues according to a UCLA study.

Below are some of the nonverbal cues that you can use in any communication situation:

1. Smile
2. Maintain eye contact for at least 8 seconds.
3. Maintain good posture.
4. Project a confident voice.
5. Dress for strategic reasons.
6. Personal grooming

- Brag #4: Act like your best self (even when you don't feel like it) and rise to the occasion. Peggy Klaus suggests using the Over the Top (OTT) technique as an excellent approach for self-promoters since people always want to be around who are upbeat.
  - Brag #5: Convey excitement about your work and accomplishments.
  - Brag #6: Schmooze! Effective schmoozing is a sincere exchange of experiences and ideas that help people develop rapport and intimacy. It is a two-way communication. A good schmoozer connects. A bad one repels.
  - Brag #7: Take the emotional temperature of your listeners.
  - Brag #8: Leverage the power of humor, stories, and anecdotes.
2. Think about to whom you are tooting.
  3. Say it with meaningful and entertaining stories.
  4. Keep it short and simple.
  5. Talk *with* me, not *at* me.
  6. Be able to back up what you say.
  7. Know when to toot.
  8. Turn small talk into big talk.
  9. Keep bragologues and brag bites current and fresh.
  10. Be ready at a moment's notice.
  11. Have a sense of humor.
  12. Use it all: your eyes, ears, head, and heart.

## Chapter 10 - A Confession and Twelve Tooting Tips



When Peggy Klaus “confessed” to a group of lady physicians that she is no communications expert, she made it appear so humorous a story that she was able to relax the group while forming a deep bond by personally relating to them to the point and every one talked about their own experiences.

By showing her humanity and exposing her vulnerability, the group was able to relate to her while conveying to them her expert qualifications in the context of a self-deprecating story.

Finally, Peggy Klaus give us the 12 tooting tips for bragging, which are:

1. Be your best authentic self.