

Forget the «we» in self-marketing!

When storytelling during job interview training, many of my clients communicate in the «we»-form, occasionally even in the «one»- form. Even if the «we» has something appealing about it in contrast to the «one», both forms have something in common: the personal contribution and the strengths of the person telling the story are not visible in the descriptions.

Peter Näf

«In our company, it is not acceptable to speak in the «I»-form - we always describe our achievements in the «we»-form; after all, we can only achieve our goals together.» This was a customer's response to my suggestion that she should speak more in the first person for good self-marketing.

This language rule is widespread in many companies, especially international ones. It appears to be an attempt to use language rules to influence employees' attitudes and bring about a change in awareness. Whether attitude change can be achieved through language rules is the subject of heated debate in other contexts and need not concern us here.

Self-confidence requires the «I»

However, there is another reason why I have difficulty with this requirement: in all my years as a career coach, I have come to realise that perhaps the biggest stumbling block for my clients on the way to a fulfilling career is a lack of self-confidence. All too often, even highly qualified people struggle to recognise what their strengths are and what sets them apart from others. People who

are not blessed with natural self-confidence can only gain this realisation by experiencing and evaluating their own self-efficacy. To achieve this, employees must have the opportunity to recognise their achievements and their personal contribution to the achievement of goals and to pin them on their own lapels.

Promoting good teamwork is important and an understandable concern. But it must not be at the expense of employees' self-confidence.

Getting to know yourself with storytelling

I'm not talking about the kind of frothing-at-the-mouth who take credit not only for their own achievements, but also for the achievements of others. Managers would do well to sanction this kind of self-aggrandisement in the team. For me, this is about self-promotion in the best sense of the word: realising what I have done and telling the truth about it - storytelling in the best sense of the word. As part of retention management, companies also have an interest in ensuring that their employees know what they are capable of and, ideally, that they develop successfully internally.

There seems to be a consensus in our society that people should be able to take the skills they have acquired within a company and bring them to another organisation. It is therefore only logical that the self-confidence they have acquired through their achievements should also belong to them.

#selfmarketing #personalbranding #application

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