

Career lessons from the campaign trail

With election season behind us, I am relieved that the barrage of political advertisements has finally stopped.

Slogans and campaign propaganda were inescapable – touting candidates who will bring “change” or “experience” and everything in between. The basic ideas behind campaigning are simple, in fact, we all could learn some important lessons from them to apply to our own careers.

Whether you realize it or not, you are a campaign manager. You are in charge of promoting the candidacy of, well...you. If you are looking for a new job, you'll be heavily focused on the marketing aspect of your campaign. If you feel secure in your job, but aren't actively promoting your value, you could be making a big mistake given our rocky economic future.

Think back to the presidential campaigns. We all know which presidential candidate hung his hat on “change,” and that is no accident. A campaign slogan is a powerful way to communicate and get people to buy into a candidate's proposed reputation.

What reputation has your career earned you? What are you known for?

As campaign manager, it's your job to figure that out and then share it with the world.

Start by looking closely at your professional accomplishments. What makes you stand apart from everyone else?

Consider your work ethic, personal values,

Career Wise



By Michelle St. Onge

and what you are exceptionally proud of. Your professional reputation is less about what you do than it is about how you do it, so don't look for answers in your job title or job description.

You may be the person in your work group who always volunteers to take up the slack, or the one who never misses a deadline. You may be known as a fountain of creative ideas, or the one who always seems to find a way to put a plan into

action.

Once you identify an area in which you excel, you have a product to bring to the market. Large corporations bring their products to market with expensive advertising campaigns. Political hopefuls use similar tactics.

I'm certainly not suggesting that all of us regular folks in the workplace go out and market ourselves with a television or radio ad. On a smaller scale, however, there are simple, significant ways to increase your visibility and widen the scope of your reputation.

This just makes sense in the midst of rising unemployment rates and real fears about job loss.

Free marketing is out there for those who want to take it. At work, roll up your sleeves and volunteer to lead a project or take minutes for meetings. When you start to think of your skills

and reputation as a product you can market, you realize that you are not defined by your job description.

You may work for an employer, but the reputation you develop there is yours forever. Step away from your traditional role and get involved in projects that are on the fringe of your usual area of expertise to solidify your value to your employer.

You can find ways to increase your visibility outside your main occupation. If you are an expert in something, share your skill and passion with others by teaching it or writing about it.

If you can't get paid to do this, volunteer your time. Keep the reputation you want

to project in your mind as you go out each day, and be ready to embrace little opportunities to demonstrate your value. Above all, remember that you don't have to be running for office to benefit from effective campaign management.

Michelle has served in various roles as a counselor, educator, and trainer in both higher education and corporate settings. An experienced group facilitator, educator, and career counselor, she is committed to helping people discover and achieve their potential. Michelle and her young family recently relocated to the North Country, which is closer to her native Vermont.

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