

Solve Anything with Dr. Mark

Career Advice
for the
Working Class

Be excellent and multiply

Q: I really hate having to sell myself to potential employers. It makes me nervous and I don't think that I come across very well. I am a competent software programmer, IT network designer, Web site developer and have good references and I should be more confident but I'm not. Since it looks like this process is going to take a while, I need to be able to persevere. Any suggestions for calming myself down and settling in for the long haul?



Q&A

of making referrals to others, which has a way of coming back to you. They'll start to think of you when they think of excellence.

I face some of those same challenges. I write and speak pretty well. I do a good job of coaching executive and upper management, providing team building and training sales teams. I think, however, I may be excellent at seeing things that others don't see, pointing it out to them and prescribing (I am after all a medical doctor) solutions they can immediately use to be more productive and successful and even occasionally more happy. At least that is what I am told by a fair number of clients.

A: If you're like most technically skilled people — and you seem more multi-talented than many — there's a good chance that your interpersonal skills are a tad underdeveloped. You probably find this thought running through your head: "Just hire me to do the work and I will do a great job for you." You get frustrated with having these soft squishy factors be part of the mix.

Something I have observed in the workplace

is how impressive and how impressed people are with what I call "relevant excellence."

Relevant excellence is greatly exceeding the expectations of people in doing something that is important, if not critical to them, and that few others can do. Being excellent at something that isn't important to them is irrelevant. I think people are more impressed by your excellence than what you're excellent at. Maybe it's because there is a great deal of mediocrity in the world or because you are just that good.

After people become impressed with your excellence, they will often ask you what others skills or capabilities you possess. They also may ask if you know people who are as excellent at what they do as you are in what you do. And that becomes the basis

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greatest value to you was and I am too close to look at myself objectively. I would really appreciate it if you could say what that might be. Thank you. Best regards, yyyy"

After you conceive your answer or receive it from them, choose that as your "brand." Think of companies and jobs where what you are excellent at

is mission critical to their success.

Then think of your network and who might help you to get an interview with people at those companies who most urgently need what you offer. And once they see that you are excellent they will spontaneously pursue you.

And trust me, one of the best things for settling your nerves is being pursued instead of your being the one to do the pursuing.

Ask Mark • Mark Goulston, M.D., is a Santa Monica-based business psychiatrist, executive coach and author of "Get Out of Your Own Way at Work." Ask him questions at mgoulston@markgoulston.com.

CAREER BRIEFS

New year, new stress

Many Americans take advantage of the New Year to better their lives through healthier eating and daily exercise, but one barrier often stands in the way — stress. It's important for your health to be aware of stress and how it's impacting you, says Dr. Penny Kendall-Reed, author of "The No Crave Diet" (Virgin Books, \$14.95). "Stress stimulates the hunger center in the brain, destabilizes our blood sugar, makes us resistant to our anti-hunger messengers, and reduces our levels of 'happy hormone' serotonin, all of which trigger cravings that inevitably lead to weight gain," Kendall-Reed says.

Reaching out

You may want to consider a career in social work. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of social workers is expected to grow faster (22 percent) than the average for all occupations through 2016.