

WE ARE ALL MAD MEN (AND WOMEN)

By **Bill Smith, APR**

From the youngest entry-level employee to the CEO, we are all constantly marketing ourselves, our organizations, and our industry. The things we communicate and the ways we handle that communication affect the way people perceive us. At the same time, we are continuously (often inadvertently) promoting our organizations and the parking industry as a whole.

When you talk to a client or business association about yourself and your work, you are marketing. When you talk to your boss about your latest project, you are marketing (in this case, you are marketing your personal brand). When you talk about your job at a summer barbecue, you are marketing. Whether you like it or not, you are a marketer. And you are always marketing.

Chances are you've never thought of marketing in quite this way. If not, it's time to rethink what marketing means to your career (or personal brand), your organization, and your industry, and how the three complement each other. As President John F. Kennedy famously said, "A high tide lifts all boats."

Dual Marketing

When you promote your personal brand by talking about your work, you are also communicating about your organization and about parking in general. For example, if you are a planner and you talk or write about how your planning work has made a community more livable and promoted business development, you aren't just demonstrating what a good planner you are. You are also demonstrating the type of work your firm does, the high level of talent it employs, and the importance of parking to the community.

Likewise, when you communicate about your organization and its work and values, you are also communicating about yourself (as an employee of that organization) and your industry.

So now you know that you are a marketer. What do you do next?

Making it Work

The kind of personal marketing we are talking about needs to become part of your professional DNA. You can't go into every interaction thinking, "Jeez, I'd better do some marketing." It needs to come instinctively. Give some thought to why you think your work is important and exciting, and get comfortable talking about these points. Don't be afraid to brag about the quality of your work, how great your company is, and the importance of parking. The more you talk about these things, the easier



it will become. In fact, over time you will develop a sort of elevator speech about you, your company, and your industry, probably without even realizing it's happening.

There will be plenty of opportunities to give this speech. It will happen when you are in meetings with clients and prospects, with strategic partners and community leaders, and with colleagues and company executives. You'll have opportunities to talk about yourself and your work pretty much every day and in every setting imaginable. Eventually you'll start giving your elevator speech without thinking about it.

Of course, there are plenty of other ways to market. For instance, public relations offers great opportunities. By writing articles for industry and business publications, you can demonstrate your expertise, the quality of your work, and the importance of parking. Likewise, speaking opportunities create great opportunities to demonstrate your expertise. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are also great marketing tools.

There are numerous ways to promote your personal brand, your organization, and your industry. But the vital first step is to recognize that you are, in fact, a marketer with compelling story to tell about the work that you do, your firm, and your profession. When you accept this role, you'll find that the high tide does indeed lift all boats.



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