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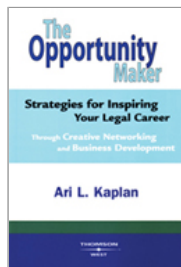
Selfless Self-Promotion

Make friends to build your career, one author advises

October 2008 Issue

By Terry Carter

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See Ari Kaplan's [top five networking tips](#).

Warning: this story in effect promotes a lawyer who promotes himself by teaching other lawyers how to be self-promoters.

And he's doing so in ways that get the attention and respect of ... well, some accomplished self-promoters.

Call it marketing, rainmaking, networking, professional visibility or whatever. Everything comes back to the simple concept of self-promotion. Google it along with shameless and watch the screen overflow with hits.

But self-promotion needn't be a pejorative term, at least not in Ari L. Kaplan's recipe for success. Being credible and authentic—the key ingredients—requires genuine interest in others.

"Self-promotion has nothing to do with promoting yourself," Kaplan says. "It has everything to do with taking time to learn what others are doing, how they are doing it, and finding ways to spotlight that good work—and in doing so develop deeper relationships."

A lot of people spend hundreds of hours and tens of thousands of dollars on the couch expecting psychiatrists to develop that capability in them—usually to no avail. But for those who are less neurotic and narcissistic, there is Kaplan's recently published book (with a title whose length rivals that of an elevator speech): *The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development*.

Kaplan had first said no when an editor at Thomson Reuters asked him to write a book about what he teaches. An article of his published in the ABA's *Student Lawyer* magazine had caught someone's attention. But he said he was too busy to do a book.

Then a light came on: Kaplan teaches lawyers and law students about writing and getting published as part of networking to gain credibility, authenticity, friends and eventually clients. Duh!

The book made early buzz. Law marketing guru [Larry Bodine](#) immediately got a copy from the publisher and a willing reviewer from his paid-subscriber discussion list for law marketers. Bodine, a former *ABA Journal* editor and publisher and big-firm marketer, is now working as a law firm consultant out of Glen Ellyn, Ill. He also operates a website found at [lawmarketing.com](#) (where he is happy to publish works by others).

"Ari Kaplan writes about networking as making friends," says Bodine, himself a network-aholic and self-promoter. "That's the way I've always done it, getting to know people beyond just targeting someone as a business contact. But he's the first I've seen articulate it that way."

Kaplan teaches tools and techniques for anyone and everyone practicing law, knowing that personality types and skill sets vary. His book even has a section on networking for non-networkers: If you don't like working a room or speaking to groups, try one individual at a time. Learn about someone by inviting him or her for a cup of coffee, he says.

But cold-calling can be tough even for schmoozers. How best to present oneself as interesting enough to spend so much as coffee time with? Kaplan's answer: Write something and get it published; it doesn't matter much where.

"If I'm cold-calling and say I'm a writer and want to talk to them for 15 minutes about what they do, they're a hundred times more likely to consider the request and spend valuable and limited time with me," Kaplan says.

LAW AND LIT

He should know. during his nine years practicing law with big firms in New York City—seven of them with McDermott, Will & Emery—Kaplan published about 125 pieces in various publications. In the summer of 2006, he decided to go full time with writing and speaking on how to develop opportunities.

His plan is not a good fit for those focused on ROI—the folks asking what specifically their return on investment will be for this effort and how soon. That mindset is more prevalent among those in a hurry for the fast track.

"I believe there's a generational difference, and that the smartest will adopt the best of the old ways and develop the best of the new," says Martha Fay Africa of San Francisco. She is a principal in the legal search firm Major, Lindsey & Africa, as well as founder of the Women Rainmakers committee of the ABA Law Practice Management Section.

"A lot of people just don't find the time to do their work and all the old-style things that work," Africa says, "like writing an article, giving a speech or heading a national committee on a complex subject."

Ross Fishman, one of the earliest and best-known law firm marketing consultants with his Highland Park, Ill.-based Fishman Marketing, has met and watched Kaplan over the past few years and says that he practices what he preaches.

Kaplan once approached him just after Fishman gave a speech, and then e-mailed him later and stayed in touch, asking his opinion on occasion. Kaplan has also quoted him in articles and in his book.

"He's smart and good at his job," Fishman says. "I don't really know that because I have no evidence, except I sincerely believe it because of how he's behaved. I infer that he's good at his job. And that is good self-promotion."

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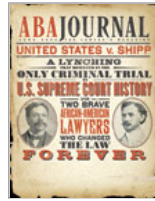
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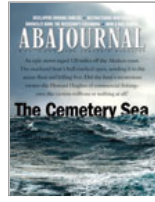
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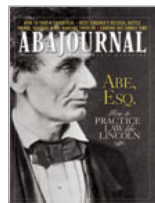
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