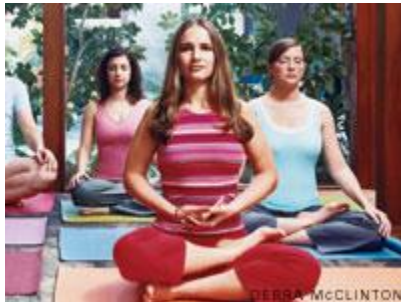


Marketing 201: Promote Yourself

Learn how to begin shame-free—not shameless—self-promotion.

By Sage Rountree



Shameless self-promotion: The phrase evokes a negative image of a pushy hard sell. Some teachers feel shy, uneasy, or negative about discussing their classes, services, and products; others would prefer to avoid any association with grasping or greediness. But you deserve to be paid for your time. Taking an approach based on integrity and a sense of *seva* (selfless service) will allow you to promote your work without shame.

Getting over the Stigma

The first step toward successful self-promotion is examining any aversion you have. "It goes all the way down to the root of people's core connection with their self-esteem," says Sadie Nardini, director of East West Yoga in New York City, creator of the *Power Hour* DVD and author of *Road Trip Guide to the Soul*. "It's not so much the promotion itself or money that can be uncomfortable, it's the statement each teacher must get behind in order to offer services to others for an exchange of money or equal energy."

Stephanie Keach, owner of the Asheville Yoga Center, author of *The Yoga Handbook*, and creator of two yoga DVDs, agrees. "I encourage people to regard money as an energy exchange," she says. "And we all know that the more bodies in the room, the more collective energy is created for healing and transformation. So to do a little self-promotion is necessary to get the word out, to get people on the mat, where the magic happens."

Next, understand that you are not promoting yourself, you are promoting your work, and your work is bringing yoga's benefits to your students. Megan McDonough, owner of Mindful Marketing (mindfulmarketing.net), warns that teachers must not conflate their work with their self-esteem. "The work stands on its own merit," she explains. "You are not self-promoting. You are promoting yoga." Contemplate the service your teaching gives to the community, and you'll start to see its value.

Then recognize that time spent planning and teaching takes away from other work opportunities. "In order to be able to give students the teachings and classes, goods and services they both want and benefit from, I have to be making enough money to not have to work a nine-to-five desk job," Nardini says. "The more I am able to support myself through my teaching, the more I am available to my students, who want to study with me. It's a win-win situation."

When to Discuss Your Offerings

Consider the best time to describe your services and products. This could come at the beginning of the class, during the class, or at the end. Nardini has found that a brief announcement before class is effective. "It's a good segue into the class itself, since it starts to turn [students'] thoughts toward their yoga practice. After class, people are soaking in the *prana* [life force] and release of their practice, and the heart and spirit are predominating. Students should not be bothered with mental information at this time, except for a gentle mention such as, 'If you'd like to sign my email list and receive the newsletter, it's right up here.'"

Keach has also found that such a short notice at the end of class is useful, because "the announcements at the beginning might get forgotten in the bliss of class.

"I prefer a short mention," Keach adds, "like this: 'I also teach at such-and-such, and if you'd like a schedule or flyer, they are by the door.' We come to a yoga class for a yoga experience, not 15 minutes of announcements."

The right time for promotion is whenever it feels most natural. "If you feel awkward, it probably is an awkward and wrong time to do it," McDonough says. Before you teach, think through what you might like to say and when it might feel appropriate. This could be as simple as practicing a short script for mentioning your schedule, promoting an upcoming workshop, or explaining how to sign up for your newsletter.

What to Promote

Al Lipper, who advises teachers and studios through Centered Business, says most teachers fail to "describe what they do in a compelling way." Your audience needs to hear what's in it for them. "Be able to describe what you do in 15 seconds or less, and make sure it describes how you solve a problem for someone with what you do," he says. For example, if you teach senior citizens, you might want to emphasize that your classes can help them improve flexibility and balance.

Try promoting free offerings rather than paid ones. This emphasis on *seva* is both yogic and good business, and it's a great way to get comfortable describing your services or products. If your studio offers free classes or a bring-a-friend discount, mention it. Create a blog where you post class sequences or articles about yoga, then direct your students to that address. You can add photos, videos, or podcasts to add value to the site—it's free both for you and for your students, it shares your work with others, and it drives students to you.

Nardini has just finished work on an e-book on marketing for teachers, *The Karma of Money*, which will soon be available at sadienardini.com, a website that offers many giveaways. "If

teachers adopt this kind of abundant attitude," she says, "and give as much as they're asking for through free giveaways and online postings, they will see the number of students they have, as well as the numbers on their bank statements, significantly increase."

Sage Rountree, author of The Athlete's Guide to Yoga, coaches runners and triathletes and teaches yoga for athletes in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and nationwide. Find her on the Web at sagerountree.com.

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