

Standing Out in a Noisy World

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Many influential thought leaders have come to realize there are three foundational elements to getting your ideas understood and appreciated: social proof, which gives people a reason to listen to you; content creation, which allows them to evaluate the quality of your ideas; and your network, which allows your ideas to spread.

Without these it is difficult for your message to break through. Understanding this dynamic can help talented professionals know where to apply their efforts in order to ensure their true value is recognized.

Social Proof

It is virtually impossible to independently evaluate every person we come into contact with to determine, “Is this person credible?” That’s why social proof is so critical. Social proof is a heuristic that allows people to judge you based on your affiliations with brands they already trust.

You can leverage the power of social proof by aligning yourself with people and institutions that are known and respected within the industry.

For instance, if you start blogging for a publication that everyone reads, that can be a quick shortcut to credibility. If you take on a leadership role in a professional association, it sends the signal that your peers respect you enough to select you as their leader. People don’t need to be so vigilant in evaluating your credentials because you’ve already been vetted by others. That primes them to listen to your ideas more carefully and with an open mind.

Content Creation

You can’t be recognized for your ideas if you don’t share them. Creating content—whether through audio, video, or writing—serves multiple purposes.

First, it forces you to clarify your thoughts on a topic, making you sharper. Second, it gives you the opportunity to network. It’s an invaluable form of credibility when a colleague mentions a problem she is having and you can tell her “I just wrote a piece about that—let me send it to you.” The fact that you’re the one creating content makes you an expert in many people’s eyes.

Your Network

Having a robust network can help you to be recognized for your expertise in three ways. First, access to a diverse group of people exposes you to different perspectives that enables you to refine your ideas. Second, a wide network enables your ideas to spread faster. Third, your network can itself become a form of social proof because you’re judged by the company you keep. Affiliation with top performers (whether they retweet your work, ask you to speak, or invite you to a key meeting) enhances your credibility.

There are many ways to ensure your expertise is recognized. But at a foundational level, you need to be viewed as credible, you need to share your ideas publicly so others can see your expertise for themselves, and you need to have a network that’s eager to spread the word. With those three elements in place, you are well on your way to ensuring your voice is heard and your talents are recognized.

Reference

Clark, Dorie. *Stand Out*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015.

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