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Wisdom From The (Not So Secret) Order of The Titanides: Vol. 11

It's Not Bragging if It's True



I've known Lois Mentrup for over a decade now, and we've worked together for just as long. She's an incredible copywriter and editor, and I trust her instincts. That's why, every month, I ask her to review this patron newsletter and give me her feedback.

Last month, she was reviewing my newsletter on how to deal with "imposter syndrome." You can read it in the [patron archives here](#). She highlighted a particular section where I was talking about my experience, and she said, "I worry that maybe some of the women will perceive this as bragging..."

And it stopped me in my tracks. Because if she felt that way, I knew other women would feel that way too. The irony is that I was deliberately trying to practice credentializing myself better!

I reached out to my coach, Cristy Lopez, Ph.D., for advice. Together we talked about how women resist talking about our own accomplishments. We both shared how we "catch" ourselves diminishing our experience or failing to take credit for our own work.

So I did what I always do when something stops me. I went digging into the data.

Are we shooting ourselves in the foot by being modest?

I wanted to know WHY so many women have such a hard time owning our own accomplishments. WHY does it feel like bragging if a woman touts her successes in public but not when a man does it? What is going on here?

Good old Google Scholar led me to a study called *Communication essentials for*

*female executives to develop leadership presence; **Getting beyond the barrier of understating accomplishment*** by Anett D. Grant and Amanda Taylor at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University.

Now Grant and Taylor knew the grim statistics about women in the business world. They knew that there is a shortage of female CEOs, directors, and board members at the highest levels. And they knew that despite a lot of attention on this fact, progress has been very slow.

Here's where it gets interesting...

Grant and Taylor wondered if there was something about HOW women talk about their accomplishments that could be getting in the way of their success. In other words, could a little more bragging and a little less humility help us rise higher?

To find out, they interviewed 20 men and 20 women with similar titles, industries, and years of experience. They asked both men and women the same question.

It's a question you might be asked when interviewing for an executive position. And it gets to the heart of how men and women talk about their accomplishments.

The researchers asked all the participants, "In your career, what are the accomplishments you are the most proud of?" Then they analyzed the answers. They were shocked at what they uncovered...

Men give credit to themselves, but women give credit to the magic elves...

Turns out there is a significant difference in how men and women credentialize themselves.

What Grant and Taylor discovered is that in general, as women, we downplay or simply fail to mention our significant accomplishments. We have difficulty owning success, demanding recognition and projecting confidence.

When they reviewed the tapes, Grant and Taylor found that we tend to use fewer numbers. Women make fewer references to the impact our work has on the bottom line. Or any line for that matter. We take less credit for products or processes that we've developed that helped the client or company.

We also use fewer "I" statements. Instead we default to "we" statements or we remove the subject altogether, even when we did most of the work ourselves.

This is a problem because it means we are not seen as leaders.

As one researcher explained, "Women may be passed over in favor of men because males, who are often in a position to hire, are predisposed to hiring individuals similar to themselves."

Because we do not credentialize ourselves in the same way as men, with the same kind of language, our experience can be misinterpreted or overlooked.

But as Lois pointed out, it's a double-edged sword. Because, as a woman, if you DO tout your own accomplishments, you can be perceived as bragging, even if it's true.

A few clever women came up with a creative solution. They used the impersonal voice to list their accomplishments. Instead of saying, "I completed the project three weeks ahead of schedule..." They said, "THE project was completed three weeks early." Or instead of saying "MY copy generated \$10 million in sales..." They said, "THE copy generated \$10 million in sales."

The danger is, when you remove the actor altogether, it sounds like magic elves did all the work! And it can make you sound more removed or detached. So use the impersonal voice if it makes you feel more comfortable listing your accomplishments. But make sure to use "I" on occasion to remind your audience that there is a real woman behind that curtain.

The Best Way to Add Specifics to Your Bio

In addition to using "I" more, it turns out there are some very specific ways you can talk about your experience that increase your authority – without making you sound like "you're so vain," as Carly Simon so famously put it.

One of the most important things you can do when writing your bio, creating your website, or pitching a client... is add "dimensionalizing content."

Basically, you need to add details, facts, figures, and descriptions to dimensionalize your accomplishments.

According to the study authors, there are 5 simple ways you can dimensionalize your accomplishments that increase your authority...

1. Use numbers

2. Describe the positive monetary impact your work had on the client or company
3. Talk about your people skills; take credit for mentoring and team building
4. Detail any products or processes that you've developed that benefited your client or company
5. Talk about how long you've been in the industry or at the company

When Grant and Taylor compared the responses, only 45% of the women hit more than two of these key authority categories in their answer compared to 90% of the men. That's HUGE.

In fact, this was the single biggest difference in how men and women responded to the question about their accomplishments.

For example...

- 9 out of 10 men used specific numbers in their answer. But only 5 out of 10 women used numbers.
- Not only that, but while 9 out of 10 men talked about the positive monetary impact of their work... Less than half of the women talked about monetary impact.
- And while 9 out of 10 men described a product or process they had developed, only a little over half of the women did the same.

Ladies, it's time to get specific with our answers.

Use This Checklist When Writing Your Bio For Your Website

Now before you run out and re-write your bio, I have another resource for you. This year, I met Adam Witty, author of the book *Authority Marketing*, at the Titans Mastermind.

Adam gave a great talk on how to build up your credibility with your audience. Here is his checklist for writing an awesome bio for your website:

- ✓ Lead with your title
- ✓ Wow them with your numbers
- ✓ List your awards
- ✓ Feature your publicity (Were you on the news recently?)
- ✓ Feature your owned media (like your podcast, etc.)
- ✓ Position yourself as a credible expert outside of the practice/business (For example, do you

sit on the board of a non-profit, etc.?)

After I read the results of Grant and Taylor's study and reviewed Adam Witty's checklist, I went back and looked at my own bio. Sure enough, I was missing a lot of the pieces.

I've included the "before" and "after" here so you can see the difference. You'll notice that I included some numbers in my "before" example, even from when I was first starting out as a copywriter.

You can do this too. Even if you're early in your career as a copywriter, pull in numbers from all your work experience. I made the connection between my career in the art world and the venture capital world because all of my clients are "entrepreneurs" in one way or another.

Remember, your bio is a work in progress, and you need to revisit it often.

MY BIO BEFORE:

Marcella Allison, <https://marcellaallison.com/>, has over 25 years of experience working with successful entrepreneurs. She managed a multimillion-dollar art gallery and performed venture capital due diligence for over \$50 million in financing for biotech start-ups. Now, as a copywriter and consultant, she works with some of the top direct-response copywriters and marketers in the country.

Her company, Copy Harvest, assists companies in maximizing their copywriting resources. Her clients include *The Motley Fool*, *Bottom Line, Inc.*, *Advanced Bionutritionals*, *Money Map Press*, *Natural Health Sherpa*, and others.

She is the founder of <https://Titanides.com>, an organization dedicated to promoting female entrepreneurs, marketers and copywriters. For more information, contact Marcella at Marcella@titanides.com.

MY BIO AFTER:

Marcella Allison, <https://marcellaallison.com/>, is the CEO of Copy Harvest LLC and the founder of Titanides LLC, <https://titanides.com>, an organization dedicated to promoting female entrepreneurs, marketers, and copywriters.

As a copywriter, she currently works with some of the top direct-response companies in the industry. Her clients include *The Motley Fool*, *Bottom Line, Inc.*, *Advanced Bionutritionals*, *Money Map Press*, *Metabolic Living* and more. Her copy has generated over \$100 million in sales for financial trading services, alternative health supplements, and information products.

As a mentor and copy chief, she leads *Money Map Press's* proprietary training program for in-house and freelance copywriters. She also mentors over 600 women in the Titanides.

In 2018, Marcella was awarded Copywriter of the Year by American Writers and Artists Inc. (AWAI) for her outstanding performance record and impact on the copywriting industry. She's a regular featured speaker at industry events, including AWAI's Copywriting Success Bootcamp, Copy Chief LIVE, and The Copywriter Club In Real Life.

Marcella is the co-author of *Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me This Sh*t Before?*, a collection of wit and wisdom from women in business. As the founder of the Titanides, she is dedicated to building a new arena, where dynamic, creative women co-mentor, elevate, and support each other on the journey to success.

How does this sound to you?

Now, I'll confess that it was hard for me to write that second version. I even called one of my mentors, Henry Bingaman, to confirm that it wasn't bragging to use that \$100 million sales figure. I swear I could hear him rolling his eyes over the phone.

I forced myself to pretend I was writing about someone else. I imagined myself as the client. You can do the same thing.

Or pair up and have a fellow Titanide write your bio and then do the same for them. You could interview each other, following the categories and checklist above. I remember Kim Krause Schwalm telling me years ago that she swapped with fellow Titanide, Belinda Brewster, for her first website. I thought it was a brilliant idea.

Finally, practice owning your success. Don't be afraid to use an "I" statement now and again. It's fine to include your team in the "we," but be willing to say "I" as well. When you feel like you're bragging, check in with someone. Just ask, "How does this sound to you?"

In the end, Lois and I figured out that it was all the "name dropping" that felt like too much for her. So, we removed a few of the specific names but left in the numbers, and that felt right to both of us. And she is the one who wrote the press release when I was awarded Copywriter of the Year by AWAI, because I literally couldn't do it myself.

So I hope you'll take some time in the new year to review your own bio and see if

it needs updating. Feel free to post your bio in the [Titanides Facebook group](#) for feedback. Or you can ask someone to partner with you in revising it.

Let's all practice getting comfortable taking credit for our accomplishments. After all, those magic elves never show up to do the dishes or decorate the tree when I ask them to. I'm done giving them credit!

Love,

Marcella

P.S. Because we're all crazy busy with the holiday season, we've very efficiently combined both your newsletters into one issue this month. Please read on to find all your December Titanides updates below.



TITANIDES

December Updates

Welcome to your December Titanides updates. This is your quick and easy way to catch up on what's going on in the Titanides community. These emails sum up and link you to all the insightful conversations, events, and networking opportunities for the month.

Lessons Learned

Our fearless leader was a guest on the Business of Writing Podcast with fellow Titanides hosts Laura Gale and Rachel Mazza. If you haven't listened to their podcast yet, you'll love it. Plus you'll find lots of great Titanides in their podcast archive. So take a listen while you're wrapping those presents...



In this podcast, Marcella reveals...

- What she learned in the art world that helped her understand the passionate, high-intensity world of copywriters
- The rule she lives by when employing junior writers, passed on from salty old art trader
- How to keep the lights on when you're working on a big project and haven't gotten paid (yet)
- Why she's never stopped writing "quick and dirty" emails for publications that can't pay her marquee rates (ya know, the big bucks)
- How she handles the intense criticism and copy fatigue that rains down on you during major projects
- Why she started a co-mentoring group for women, and how that's grown into a whole movement (and why mentoring is so important for *all* writers)...

And a whole lot more practical, applicable insight that will have you itching to sit down and get writing.

Follow this link to listen to Marcella's lessons learned:

[Click Here to Listen](#)

Featured Titanides

Let it go LIVE!

Maybe you're just starting out and still await the day when all your hard work pays off. It isn't just the payday that is so satisfying but also seeing your work go live on the Internet or get mailed out. Titanide, Liz Farr, is no stranger to this feeling. But she still gets a huge kick out of it.

Congratulate Liz on her accomplishments!



Mentoring Moment



A note from Marcella about the first ever Titanides Literary Salon:

Thank you so much for participating in our first ever Titanides Literary Salon with my friend and mentor, Brian Kurtz.

To be honest, I wasn't sure how this was going to go. And Brian was a little nervous too! That's because the Salon is more intimate and personal than a podcast or book club. It's a unique experience that combines journaling with in-depth mentoring and conversation. Plus, Brian was the first man to share this intimate writing exercise with us.

The result was absolutely magical. Brian wrote with us and shared his personal experience as well as wisdom from over 40 years in direct marketing. We had such a great time together that Brian joked that he was thinking of becoming a woman so he could join the Titanides.

I am so grateful for all of you who joined in to listen, jumped in with questions and emailed your feedback after the call.

FOR PATRONS ONLY

Several of you asked about getting the recording. GOOD NEWS! If you are a Titanides patron, it is now available to watch on the Titanides website.

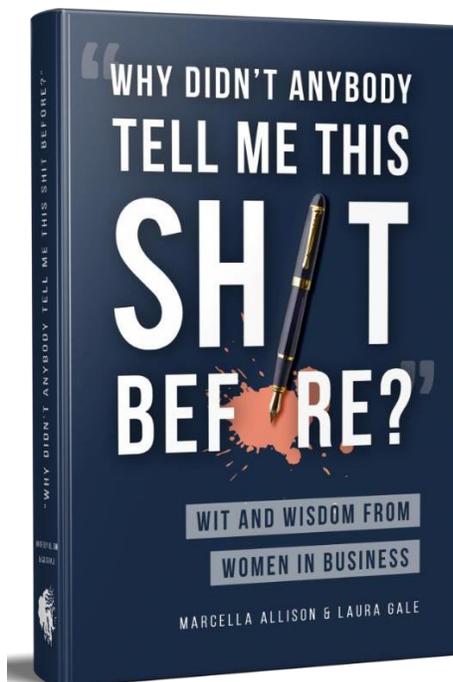
If you're a patron member of the Titanides, go [HERE](#) to check it out.

Reminder: As a member, you also have full access to the entire video archive that holds a wealth of wisdom from my talks, vlogs and Titanides conferences. Not to mention [videos from women like Lorrie Morgan, Pauline Longdon, Allison Comotto, Mary Kincaid, Carline Anglade-Cole, Tiara Cole, Monica Day, Illise Benun, and Annie Hyman Pratt!](#)

If you're not a member, go [HERE](#) to join. After you join, login, go to [The Titanides Literary Salon Archive](#).

I hope this Salon brings you great wisdom each time you watch something new!

The Book



Marcella recently invited several of our authors to read their letters aloud from *Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me This Sh*t Before?* Then she spent time talking with them about the lessons they've learned over their career. [Check out these inspiring interviews on the new public Facebook group](#) built just for the book!

And remember, the book makes a terrific holiday gift for the women (and men!) in your life. This isn't like those trashy romance novels I'm fond of reading 😊... this is like having a tribe of brilliant female mentors in your back pocket wherever you go. And if you order your copies on [Amazon](#), we'd be ever so grateful if you could leave us a review.

Upcoming Events

Titanides West Coast Women's Breakfast @ The Copywriters Club In Real Life event (TCC IRL)!

ADD TO 2020 RESOLUTIONS

In the new year, resolve to make it to an in-person Titanides gathering!

First on the list: A breakfast with Marcella and Titanides gals on the West Coast at [The Copywriter Club In Real Life event in March](#)

Kira Hug and Rob Marsh are gathering RSVPs now for the event!

WHERE: San Diego, California

WHEN: March 12-13th, 2020

Stay tuned for more updates on the breakfast in the new year.

For now, [RSVP for the TCC IRL event](#) and keep a look out for the details from us about a delectable Cali breakfast with your favorite ladies in the business!



Where in the World is Marcella?

Here are just a few places you can find Marcella travelling in 2020.

The Copywriter Club In Real Life March 12-13, 2020, San Diego, CA
AWAI Copywriting Bootcamp May 12-15, 2020, Delray Beach, FL
Copy Chief Live October 2020 (dates and location TBA)

We'd love to get your feedback on what you enjoy most in these updates. What helped? What do you still feel like you're missing? Reach out to us at support@titanides.com to let us know!