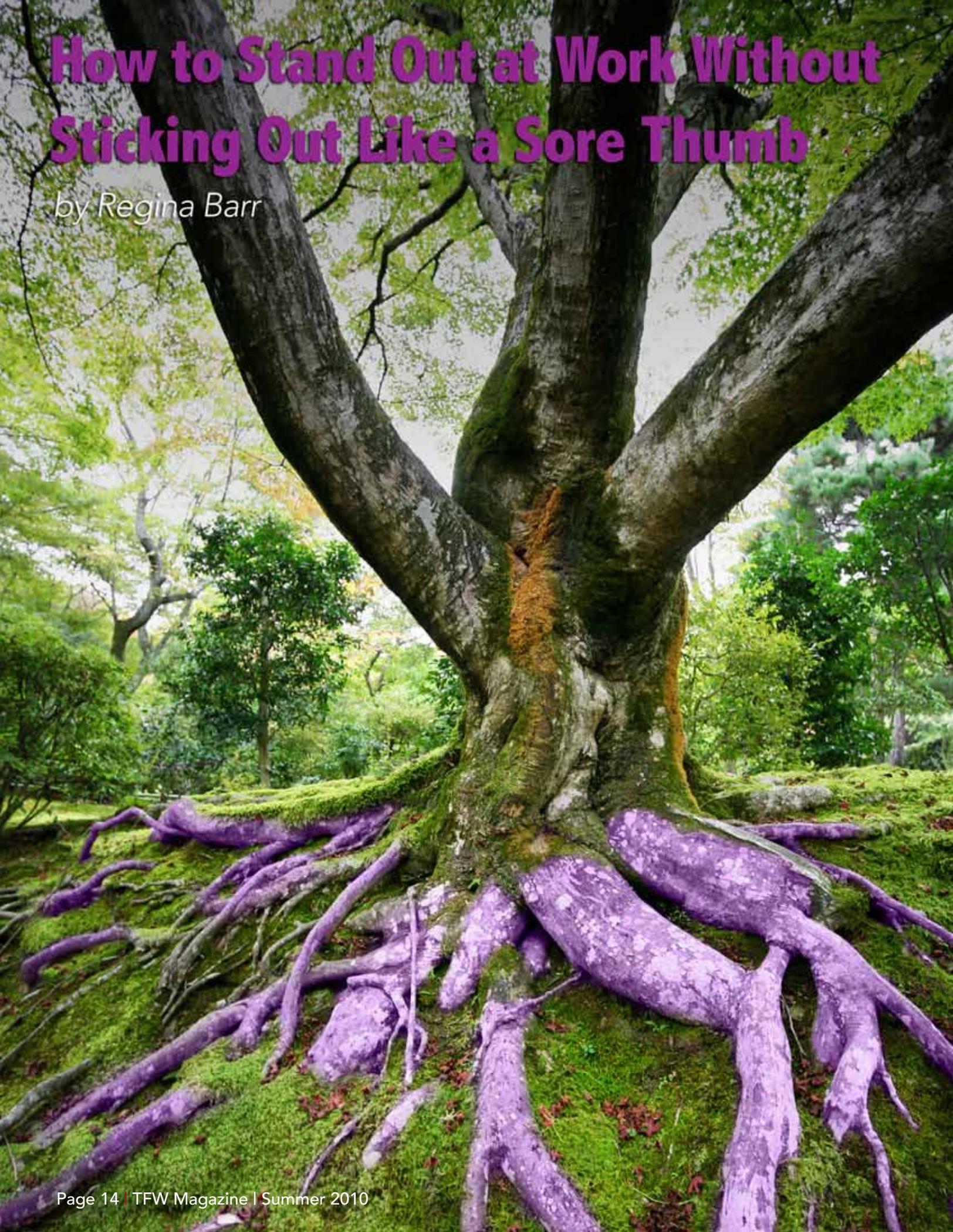


# How to Stand Out at Work Without Sticking Out Like a Sore Thumb

by Regina Barr



I was walking in my neighborhood recently and noticed that most of the trees sported leaves in various shades of green. That is, all but one. This one particular tree had leaves that were so purple that they almost looked black. I had a Sesame Street moment where I thought: just which one of these trees doesn't belong?

Then I did a complete flip-flop and thought, no, just which one of these trees really stands out? Obviously, it was the one with the unusual colored leaves.

When you think about how you're viewed at work, are you just another shade of green or are you the purple stand-out in the crowd?

Here's a news flash: if you want to be considered a high-potential employee earmarked for advancement, then it's your job to figure out how to stand out in a sea of green and do it without looking like a sore thumb.

**Here are some ideas to get you started:**

**Do more than is expected.** You'd be amazed at how many employees are not doing much of anything (although they always manage to look busy) or are doing only the bare minimum of what they need to do to get by. Simply doing a bit more than expected will get you noticed faster than greased lightning.

**Complete work in a timely fashion.** Even better, complete it ahead of your deadline. Everyone is working at capacity, so missing even one deadline can wreak havoc on organizational initiatives -- let alone your organizational relationships.

**Raise your hand first for work assignments.** That means the good, the bad and the ugly. Be ready to take on plum assignments when available but remember those are often few and far between. Don't wait to be asked or worse, volunteered, for the mundane projects. Never underestimate the value of taking on assignments that no one else wants.

**Focus on solutions.** Everyone has problems they need help with but it's the rare employee that also comes prepared with solutions. Even if your solutions aren't used you'll still earn points for showing that you took the initiative to develop your own ideas.

**Pay attention to details.** We've all heard the saying that the devil is in the details. What's the difference between a pot of rice cooked with a teaspoon of salt and one cooked without? One simple ingredient. The outcome? Edible versus inedible. Remember to pay attention to details, no matter how large or small. Those who pay attention to details are often the most successful. Why? Because details managed well can mean the difference between success and failure or profit and loss for your company.

**Help others look good.** Sometimes the best recognition we can receive comes by way of what we do to help others look good. Think of it like making deposits in a bank account. One day you may need to make a withdrawal, and those that you have helped look good along the way will likely be willing to return the favor when you need it.

**Be known for the right things.** You're going to be known for something, so you may as well be known for something that is important to the success of your company and ultimately, the success of your career. Is it flexibility in getting your work done? Is it resiliency in the face of obstacles? Is it your ability to manage or lead people? Whatever it is you want to be known for, be sure not only to showcase it but to showcase it to the right people.

No matter how large or small your company is, if you select even one or two of these ideas and implement them well, you will be on your way to standing out in the crowd. Implement all of them and you will likely find yourself leader of the pack.



*Regina Barr is a leadership development consultant, executive coach, speaker and writer. Follow Regina at [www.twitter.com/reginabarr](http://www.twitter.com/reginabarr) or connect with her at [www.linkedin.com/in/reginabarr](http://www.linkedin.com/in/reginabarr). Contact Regina at [info@theWATBlog.com](mailto:info@theWATBlog.com) or at 651-453-1007.*

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