

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS

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Building Confidence at Work

Lack of confidence can spawn a self-fulfilling prophecy: If you believe you're going to fail, you will fail. Success comes with confidence and this can prove especially true at work. Only you have the ability to determine whether you meet your career goals. So if you think self-doubt is undermining your chances to excel, try these tips for building confidence at work.

Carry yourself with confidence. Stand up straight—don't slouch—and hold your head high. Steady eye contact, a firm handshake and an easy smile also are hallmarks of self-confidence. Speak loudly enough so that people don't have to strain to hear you. Even if you feel a little unsure of yourself your body language will display control and can even positively affect your own state of mind. If you want to improve your performance consider signing up for a public speaking class.

Gain confidence through experience. You can't become an expert in your field overnight. But you can speed up

the process. Read as much background information as you can on your company and projects and practice the skills you need on the job whenever you can. For example, if you need to know how to operate a certain computer software program quickly, check out a library book about it or sign up for a class that might help. In the process, however, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Rather than shy away from new tasks, learn by trial and error. That can be the best way to learn exactly how and why certain methods work.

"It's never too late to gain confidence."

Make the first move. Rather than letting fears about others' opinions sap your confidence, approach them first. Don't waste time wondering if your colleagues like and respect you. Ask them questions or strike up a chat when you have a couple minutes of free time—circulating will boost your confidence and keep you too busy to worry about yourself.

Break large tasks into manageable chunks. Don't let the weight of a big job collapse your confidence. Make a list of smaller, individual tasks and set a timetable for their completion. Crossing

them off your list will help provide motivation to finish the job.

Find a mentor or role model. Even if that person is a character in your favorite book, learn what makes him or her successful. Try to find ways to emulate that person's best qualities and the strategies he or she used to get to the top. Listening also plays an important role in gaining experience. Have the patience to listen to others' advice or tips and try them out for yourself.

Seek professional help. If you feel overwhelmed by your lack of confidence or if your lack of confidence seriously affects your day-to-day functioning, you might want to talk to a mental health professional or even a career counselor. They can help you confront your fears and make progress toward your goals.

Most importantly, remember that it's never too late to gain confidence. People don't inherit confidence, they learn how to possess it.

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