

Self-Confidence: It's All in Your Head

By Jeff Davidson

Everywhere you look, there are "life-long" real estate professionals losing confidence in their ability to stay competitive in our rapidly changing society. Concurrently, no one in society has a long-term lock on any market niche, and no body of information affords a strategic competitive advantage for very long. The reality of our times is that everyone is feeling at least a little unsure of himself or herself, and in that sense everyone is in the same boat.

In an environment of information and communication overload, it is easy to feel anything but confident. After all, your ability to keep pace is all but impossible. You can remain confident, however, despite the pace of change. What do confident people do to maintain confidence despite the frequency of change they're exposed to? How do they maintain a sense of "breathing space" along the way?

Self-Confident People Radiate Power and Health

People want to be around self-confident people and to be like them.

Self-confidence, fortunately, is a skill you can practice. Self-confident is the person who walks into a sales situation knowing that he or she has the skills and knowledge to adroitly wrap up the deal. Self-confident is the woman who asks to be promoted based on an assurance that the promotion is deserved due to her past work. Self-confidence comes from feeling you deserve to have – and be – what you want.

Why is it so important? Self-confidence is a prerequisite to success and happiness, since performance is so often based on attitude, rather than aptitude. Success or failure can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Confidence can help increase your effectiveness through the idea of positive reinforcement. If you expect to do well at any particular endeavor – from performing a task on the job to achieving social acceptance outside the job – you are extremely likely to do far better than you would if you expect mediocrity or failure.

Teachers have known for years that students who are told they are progressing well in spelling or math tend to achieve far more than students who are told they are having problems. Doubts compromise your effectiveness, and self-doubt makes it unlikely that you can effectively market yourself. It's like trying to sell a product you don't believe in. You can't commit yourself to it wholeheartedly.

How to Become More Attractive

Self-confidence increases your attractiveness to other people, and that in turn can increase your effectiveness. So much of what we do – at work and outside work – is done with or through other people. When they sense you are confident, they want to be around you, support you, and even be like you. They "go to bat" for you and generally assist you in being as effective as you can be. It makes them feel good to be around someone who has a positive, enthusiastic, "can do" attitude. On the other hand, people tend to shirk away from someone who is continually worried, self-doubting and skeptical.

Peace of mind, a contentment with life, is only possible through acceptance of yourself, which will lead to acceptance of others. Many forms of destructive behavior can be traced to a lack of self-confidence.



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For instance, a mid-level manager at a high technology firm constantly befriended new employees, only to spread rumors about them later. This man, unsure about his own place in the company, felt it necessary to destroy the reputation of new employees. Obviously, such behavior could only destroy his own position in the long run.

Confidence seems to create a resiliency that allows you to bounce back from failures. Positive self-esteem provides a reservoir of inner strength – a constant that is not dependent upon others or the situations in which you find yourself. Conversely, a lack of self-esteem saps your energy with worries about acceptance and accomplishments, creating a downward spiral when those worries do begin to hamper your effectiveness.

Strategies for Building Self-Confidence

You are not stuck with your present degree of confidence. If you have ever found yourself thinking, “I’m just not a very confident person,” you are wrong. Confidence is not handed out at birth – it can be developed. But developing it can be hard work, even lonely work. When you begin to work on becoming more self-confident, you may not even get a lot of support from others. Do it anyway; they’ll come around sooner than you think.

A first step in building self-confidence is to take a good look at the roots of your lack of confidence: Where does it come from? In what situations is it more of a problem? In what situations do things seem a little better? Finding the answers to questions like these can help you dispel personal myths, emphasize positive occurrences, and begin a realistic program to build your confidence.

I find it helps to determine the exact situations in which one feels more or less confident. Don’t ruminate about them, write them down; and continue by writing a plan of action for improving the situation. For example:

- I feel most confident when ...
- I feel least confident when ...
- Some things I can do to improve a situation of low confidence are ...

For example: I feel most confident when I know I am wearing clothes appropriate to the situation, when I am physically fit, and when I am among people I know well.

I feel least confident when I am among strangers and when I feel I have taken on more than I can achieve in a given time.

To improve a situation that instills low confidence, I need to look and feel my best, to be organized in my work, and to recognize that everybody suffers a certain amount of discomfort in a room full of strangers.

Practice Confidence Building

Beyond analyzing the sources and situations concerning your level of confidence, there are some specific strategies you can adopt and steps you can take to learn and practice confidence building. First, set reasonable expectations for yourself. Practicing self-confidence won’t change you overnight. Self-confidence will allow you, however, to make the best of what you can do.

The suggestions discussed here are strategies for you to try one step at a time – gaining self-confidence in increments and allowing each small achievement toward it to spur you on to even further confidence.

Know what you do well. Your confidence may be so low that it seems you do

nothing well. But stop and think about even the small things that you do each day – from organizing your mail to meeting self-imposed deadlines for routine chores. You may be surprised to find some abilities and positive features that you haven’t given ample credit to in the past. Making a list works well. You’ll find that by emphasizing the positive, you’ll gain confidence to work on the less positive.

Reward Yourself. Enjoy Your Successes.

Celebrating success helps you take the focus off your mistakes. When you finish a project on deadline, take yourself – and others – out to a movie. When you get some long-overdue positive feedback, treat yourself to a lunch hour at a museum or buy yourself a book. Let other people know you are celebrating and that they are important enough to you that you want them to share in it.

Learn from mistakes. Don’t let mistakes drag you down by dwelling on them.

Instead, regard them as lessons, stepping stones that give you a higher vantage point for better knowledge and wisdom.