

CRACKING THE CODE TO WORKPLACE CONFIDENCE

FINDING YOUR INNER CONFIDENCE
TO CULTIVATE A POWERFUL
PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE



The Plank Center
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**AUTHORED BY THE PLANK CENTER'S
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Confidence is the gateway to advocating for and advancing your career, signaling you're ready for more responsibility and to climb the workplace ladder. While commonly thought of as a state of mind, confidence is also a muscle. The more you flex it, the more confident you become. Whether you're navigating a new role or project, even early in your career, it's always beneficial to assess your confidence level to boost your professional presence and, in turn, your career.

Even if your natural tendency in certain situations is to undervalue sharing your perspective, retreat to the back of the room during meetings, or avoid being in the spotlight, low confidence doesn't have to define you or create a barrier to career progression.

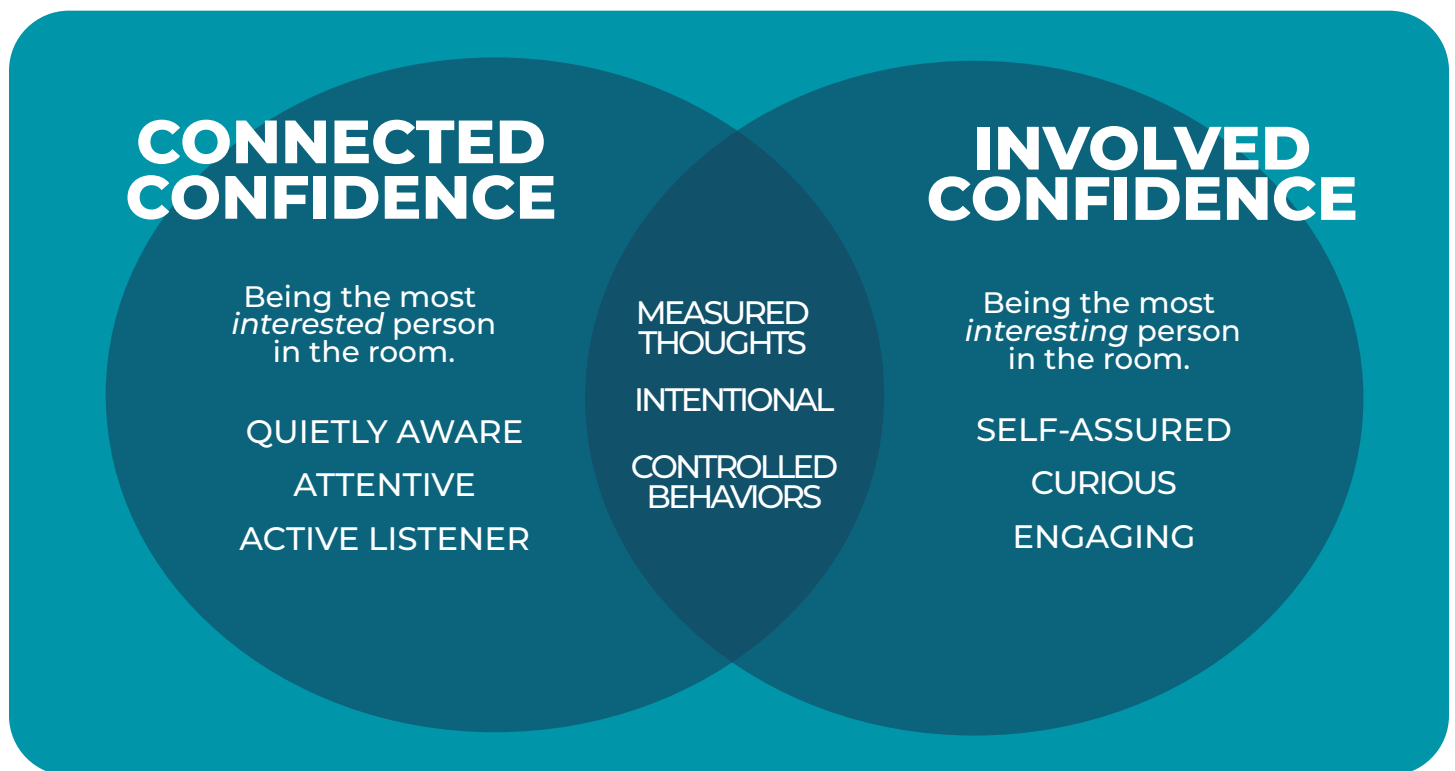
This guide will share insight and practical advice on how to build and leverage your personal confidence until it becomes muscle memory.

CONFIDENCE (N):
A FEELING OR BELIEF THAT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING
WELL OR SUCCEED AT SOMETHING
(SOURCE: MERRIAM-WEBSTER)

SCALING CONFIDENCE TO THE SITUATION

ASSESS WHEN AND HOW YOU SHOULD FLEX YOUR CONFIDENCE

Confidence is a careful balance between being the most interesting person in the room and the most interested. You may find yourself in situations where one is more beneficial than the other. Before you can master the art of confidence, it's important to understand the difference between these two types of confidence levels and when you should utilize them.



CONSIDER THE CONTEXT — POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY WHICH TYPE OF CONFIDENCE IS BEST:

- What situation(s) would I benefit from being the most interesting person in the room? The most interested? And what would most benefit the situation and my colleagues?
- How will I build credibility?
- What are my unique belief(s) and experience(s) that create my point of view?
- How will I connect with others?
- How and when can I make the greatest contribution?
- How can I positively engage in conversation?

SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPACT: HOW TO CHANNEL YOUR MOST CONFIDENT SELF

Confidence can be both learned and practiced, turning workplace competency into an authentic, influential presence. It will require your body, voice and mind to work in unison. Since change won't happen overnight, it will be important to give yourself grace as you personalize your approach to gaining more confidence. However, deliberate practice will lead to these behaviors feeling more natural, eventually becoming a part of your everyday presence.

PERFECT THE POWER POSE

Your body language shapes who you are and how others view you. Instead of committing potential body blunders, such as playing with your hair, closing off your body with crossed arms or slumping in your seat, give a power pose a try. These include moving with a purpose, resting your arms on the table, sitting with an upright posture, and keeping your body open and relaxed.

LEARN FROM OTHERS

From surveying more than 400 millennial communications professionals (ages 21-36), The Plank Center found that mentors play a vital role in developing future talent by sharing knowledge and skills. If you don't already have a strong mentor or two who can coach you through the confidence quest, we recommend finding one ASAP! It can be as simple as identifying confident co-workers, industry peers or leaders to learn from their approach to commanding confidence. Also tap into resources like The Plank Center's ["How to Get the Most Out of a Mentoring Relationship" guide](#).

HIGHLIGHT YOUR CREDIBILITY

Confidence is often an indicator of being trustworthy and credible. When working with leaders, reporters and other stakeholders, lean into your strong suits. Showing your skills can help you speak to areas you're most confident in, and in turn, your credibility and rapport may increase as a result.

TRASH THE TIMID TALK

Learn to remove qualifiers from your speech to sound more confident and polished. Instead of prefacing your thoughts with "I could be wrong but..." or "Apologies but...", cut to the chase and lead with the thought you want to express. It may feel awkward at first, but with time, you will smooth out your communication to land succinct, confident delivery.

GET OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

Imposter syndrome is a common feeling for many young professionals as they adapt to the post-grad environment. These feelings of self-doubt can negatively impact your mental health and also harm your work output. To achieve true, unhindered confidence, eliminate the narrative of self-doubt. Consider setting goals for yourself on a more frequent basis, using these wins to redefine how you view your professional prowess.

DON'T LET ZOOM ZAP YOUR CONFIDENCE

With remote work on the rise, it's equally beneficial to know how to properly command confidence on the screen. While different from meeting in person, most of the same rules apply — think strong eye contact (look directly into the camera instead of at someone's face when you are talking), good posture, undivided attention, expressive storytelling, etc. There are also a few extra tips to maximize your on-camera time. Muting yourself can be a courteous gesture, especially if you have distracting background noises, but it can also quite literally keep you from sharing valuable contributions. Next time you're on a round-robin style call, consider passing on the mute button to emulate more of an "in-person" meeting. Use the chat feature to build on others' points or share more context on your own.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK

You don't have to wait for your formal review to discuss growth areas. Whether your direct manager, peers or both, having a group of advisors who can provide you with informal feedback can strengthen your confidence-building techniques. Identifying a co-worker as your "accountability partner" will ensure follow-through. Even asking them to count the number of qualifiers you use during a meeting can enhance your progress.

CONFIDENCING YOUR WAY TO THE C-SUITE

It takes more than an impressive roster of wins in the workplace and a firm handshake to reach the corner office. As you take on more responsibility and reach new heights in your career, confidence should continue to be a tool in your arsenal. No matter the path you take to get there, here are three techniques to continue leveraging confidence along the way.

Lean into the unknown: Growth cannot come without a little discomfort. You can exhibit a high leadership aptitude by embracing the unfamiliar and raising your hand to take on new projects or roles.

Challenge the status quo: Skilled communicators are never afraid to ask thought-provoking questions or present a new way of approaching things. To be a leader, sometimes you have to chart a new course, and displaying these tendencies confidently and strategically from the get-go can prove rewarding short term and down the road.

Stay ahead of the curve: Today's industry is ever evolving, and while leaders are not perfect or all knowing, they must anticipate. The Plank Center's ["Beyond the Tactics"](#) guide shares the importance of remaining an eternal student. Be curious and have the confidence to continuously look for ways to improve.

CLOSING THE CONFIDENCE GAP

Women generally reflect less confidence and are viewed as less confident, than their male counterparts. A [study](#) has revealed that even male Supreme Court justices interrupt female justices three times more often than each other, and the best way to avoid this is for the women to behave more like the men and avoid traditionally female speech.

Specifically, foregoing polite phrases when framing a question, such as "May I ask," "Can I ask" or "Excuse me," as it presents an opportunity for someone to interject. Instead, take the lead. There's likely no need to ask permission to simply ask again.

The Plank Center's ["Report Card 2019"](#) indicates women want more involvement in strategic decision making and their opinions to count for more, setting confidence up to play a vital role in changing the status quo.

CONFIDENCE IN YOUR OWN BRAND CAN INSPIRE THE SAME FROM OTHERS

Confidence goes deeper than just how you conduct yourself in a meeting. It impacts how you position yourself and earn other people's trust. Once you have a better understanding of who you are and what you bring to the workplace, exuding confidence will become natural, where you don't need to consciously think about it. If you have confidence in your brand, then others can't help but think the same of you.

A personal brand should be built around your natural strengths, but it may require some self-discovery to unearth your passions and external perceptions.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AS YOU REFINES YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:

- What are my values?
- What are my strengths?
- What is my legacy and/or what do I want my legacy to be?
- How am I and my ideas perceived when I share them with others?
- What stories and actions can I share to match what I stand for?
- What am I OK being vulnerable about?

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