

PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Confidence Illusion



WHY COMPETENCE DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE CONFIDENCE

You know how to do the job. You have solved difficult problems, handled challenging conversations, and learned from mistakes. Yet, when the moment arrives to speak up, decide, or step into something unfamiliar, you may still wonder, ***"Am I really capable of this?"***

This is the confidence illusion: competence and confidence do not always rise together.

Confidence is not a direct measurement of ability. It is influenced by how we interpret our experiences. A successful presentation might become evidence of capability for one person, while another thinks, ***"I got lucky this time."***

Why Confidence Fluctuates

Our sense of confidence is shaped by more than what we know. Comparison, perfectionism, past criticism, uncertainty, visibility, and high expectations can all affect how capable we feel.

Imposter syndrome can add another layer. Even with clear evidence of competence, people may discount their achievements, attribute success to luck, or worry that others will eventually discover they are ***"not as capable"*** as they appear. A promotion, new role, or high-profile assignment can sometimes amplify these feelings rather than eliminate them.

Competence can also make confidence more complicated. The more we understand about a subject, the more aware we become of what we don't know. Confidence can also be situation specific. Someone may confidently lead a familiar project but hesitate when presenting to senior leaders.



Instead of asking,
"How confident am I?"

ask, ***"What is influencing my confidence in this situation?"***



One-Week Confidence Practice

Day 1 BUILD YOUR EVIDENCE BANK

Write down three things you have handled well at work, including the situation, what you did, and the result.

Day 2 CATCH THE CONFIDENCE STORY

When self-doubt appears, write: What happened? What did I immediately tell myself? What evidence supports that thought? What evidence challenges it?

Day 3 SPEAK ONCE

In your next meeting, make one deliberate contribution: ask a question, share an observation, or build on someone's idea. Don't wait for the perfect contribution.

Day 4 MOVE AT 70%

Choose a reasonably reversible task where you're waiting to feel completely ready or perfect. Ask: **"What is good enough to move this forward?"**

Day 5 PRACTISE CONFIDENT UNCERTAINTY

When you don't know something, say: **"I don't have that information yet. I'll check and come back to you."** Confidence can include saying, "I don't know."



Day 6

ASK FOR SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Ask a colleague or manager: "What's one thing I do effectively that I should continue, and one thing I could make more effective?" Look for behavioural feedback, not reassurance.

Day 7

TURN EXPERIENCE INTO EVIDENCE

Complete:

- I am more capable of _____ than I thought.
- My confidence tends to drop when _____.
- Next time, I will _____ instead of waiting to feel confident.

The goal isn't to become confident in seven days. It's to collect real evidence that confidence can be built through action.



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