

SELF-CONFIDENCE (SCF)

Self Confidence is a belief in one's own capability to accomplish a task and select an effective approach to a task or problem. This includes confidence in one's ability as expressed in increasingly challenging circumstances and confidence in one's decisions or opinions.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standing up for your ideas in the face of criticism or opposition from others, including more senior employees while being sensitive to other people's perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sounding unsure or uncertain; backing down, or remaining silent when someone criticizes your position on an issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking action based on your expertise and understanding of the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> double-checking all your ideas with others, and waiting for their agreement before continuing with the plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuing with an appropriate action plan, even when there are political pressures to stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using the opportunity to behave arrogantly, not taking other's interests into considerations, and blatantly acting against other's wishes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seeking out new challenges and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> playing it safe by confining one's tasks to a specific well-known area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaking in a confident and assured manner even when you will need to think for a moment to find a solution or when others disagree with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sounding uncertain to your peers or clients or deciding you are always right and never taking others' interests and wishes into consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> believing that your course of action is the correct one even when initial attempts may fail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> backing down or changing major plans at the first sign of failure or dissent

Developmental Activities

Level (1) Activities

Keep track of successes.

- Keep track of successes- things you do well.
- Make a list of your personal strengths.

- Read your list to remind you of your positive qualities and where you are feeling less confident in your ability to act.

Reflection Tip:

- * Ask peers and your manager to review your list – do they have anything to add?

Do attainable tasks first.

- Identify those workday tasks and activities which you must accomplish.
- Select those which you know you can accomplish, and complete those first.
- Reward yourself upon completion of those activities by going for a brief walk, discussing a recent accomplishment with a colleague, and so on.

Practice speaking confidently.

- Identify a co-worker who shows self-confidence.
- Listen to their tone and the words they use.
- Practice speaking with authority and confidence by emulating your co-worker.
- Ask your co-workers to listen and let you know if you sound confident or are going overboard.

Reflection Tip:

- * Consider the circumstances of the particular situation. Under what circumstances would this tone and choice of words not be appropriate?

In conversations with others, express your opinion.

- Voice your opinions, even if it differs from others.
- Respect others' self-esteem. Don't tell them you think they are wrong; just state that your point of view is different, and express it.

Reflection Tip:

- * Take note of others' arguments and research them so that next time you'll be able to explain more clearly why you disagree.

Establish a development plan with your manager to increase your self confidence.

- Identify areas with your manager where you both feel impressed with your performance.

- Make a list of those areas in order of the difficulty in performing them.
- Determine other tasks which require many of the same capabilities but are at a slightly more difficult level of performance.
- Establish a development plan with your manager to work on these tasks.
- Review your performance and comfort level with these tasks, and begin to increase the level of difficulty as you come to feel more comfortable with the tasks you are currently performing.

Analyze specific situations.

- Recognize people and situations with which you lack confidence or assertiveness. Write down what your thought processes are during interactions with them.
- Look for patterns, and try to identify particular actions or characteristics that you subconsciously may find intimidating.
- For situations in which your thoughts include negative “self-talk,” learn to counter your negative thoughts with rational, positive messages.
- For example, some people experience anxiety in certain situations because of the fear of failure—frequently due to the fear of making a mistake in front of others. One effective way to overcome this is to train yourself to view all interpersonal communications as learning opportunities, where the “worst-case” scenario is that you’ll learn a better way of thinking about an issue.

Reflection Tip:

- * Address those particular actions, so that you’ll be able to handle them more confidently in the future.

Identify someone whose confidence you admire.

- Work with your manager to identify a person who has an acceptable level of self-confidence, and establish a mentor relationship with that person.
- Ask how he or she feels about his or her own skills, abilities or character shown while interacting with people.
- Listen for the type of “self-statements” used to build his or her own confidence.
- Commit to use any you feel are relevant to your own situation.

Reflection Tip:

- * Speak to the person specifically about their self-confidence – what do they do in situations where they feel they are lacking?

Level (2-3) Activities

Consider ways of enhancing your self confidence in your interactions with others.

- Prepare a list of situation with peers, customers and /or team members that you regard as outstanding. For each situation identify:
 - ⇒ What you did or said that led to a successful outcome.
 - ⇒ The one or two positive feelings you had about yourself at the time.
- Refer to this list just prior to important interactions with others to enhance your self-confidence.
- Visualize the outcome you want to achieve prior to important meetings with others (e.g., team members and key customers).
- Picture what you will say and do to make the contact a success (athletes use this technique to achieve peak performance).

Reflection Tip:

- * Can you identify any themes within this list? Are there any noticeably absent themes that you should address?

Build your experience base.

- Acquire information and knowledge within your organization area and related sectors within or outside the government.
- Seek to maintain a broad understanding of your level of ability and area of expertise relative to the service your organization provides. Consider the community as well as the social, political and economic factors affecting the environment.
- Speak with people internal and external to your organization in an effort to develop your own ability and approaches to the work you do.

Reflection Tip:

- * Seek to maintain a broad understanding of your level of ability and area of expertise relative to the service of your branch provides. Consider the community as well as the social, political and economic factors affecting the business environment.

Overprepare and overpractice.

- Do as much background work and checking relative key deliverables you are able to respond with authority to any question when asked.

- Practice giving arguments to support their position. Play “devil’s advocate” and practice responding anticipated roadblocks.
- If pushed towards a decision against your better judgment, ask for time to think about it before committing.
- In thinking about the issue, over prepare and over practice before moving forward.

Reflection Tip:

- * Information gathering is an important part of Self Confidence. Having all of the relevant information is the first step in building your confidence.

Strengthen your confidence in taking a clear stand on difficult or unpopular issues.

- In conversations with others, express your opinion when it differs from someone else’s.
 - ⇒ Make sure you think about your opinion before you state it.
 - ⇒ Maintain the other person’s self-esteem - don’t tell them that you think they are wrong, just state that your point of view is different, then express it, and seek feedback to ensure your opinion was expressed clearly.
- Talk with a colleague who has made a good decision that was initially unpopular.
 - ⇒ Ask him or her how they dealt with other people’s opposition and how he or she presented arguments in favour of the decision.
 - ⇒ Incorporate some of the strategies in presenting your own arguments.
 - ⇒ Make a practice of acknowledging that your stand on an issue may be unpopular with others.
 - ⇒ Be sure to explain why your point of view should be considered.

Reflection Tip:

- * Ask what they were really thinking or feeling during these discussions. What techniques did they use to get through the times they weren’t feeling so self-confident?

Practice imagined behaviours.

- Identify a situation in your present weekly work life where you need to exhibit more Self Confidence.
- Visualize the situation and how you would respond as a successfully self-confident person.

- Re-play the scenario in your mind several times until you are comfortable with the images, words and behaviours; continue to re-play until you feel the new approach is second-nature to how you act.
- Wait until the situation arises in reality. (You will hopefully have chosen a situation that occurs with some regularity in your week). While you are waiting, keep re-playing the successful scenario in your mind.
- When the situation arises, act out the new Self Confidence behaviours you've been rehearsing.
- For each situation to which you apply this technique, write down (a) what you did or said that led to a higher level of confidence, and (b) the one or two positive feelings you had about yourself at the time.
- Refer to the above list just prior to important situations in which you would like to be more self-confident or assertive.

Reflection Tip:

- * What worked? What didn't? What would you do differently in the future?

Clearly, and firmly express your opinion.

- Rather than being indirect or backing off during conversation in which various views are discussed, communicate simply and clearly how you feel about the issue.
- If you feel some hesitancy regarding your opinion about a work-related issue, take some time to list the strengths and weaknesses of alternative points of views.
- Carefully review the list, and critically analyze your views in light of all of the pros and cons. After you have resolved and solidified your opinion, discuss your views with others.
- State your views in a manner that conveys your confidence but does not attack people with different ideas. Disagree tactfully and politely. Have confidence in your ideas and opinions, even though they may be unpopular.

Reflection Tip:

- * Be sure to let new information further inform you point of view.

Act on an issue you feel strongly about.

- Communicate your opinions strongly and with conviction to employees, peers or customers.
- Increase your credibility by describing the rationale behind your beliefs and decisions, citing the underlying logic and any supporting data when appropriate.

- Listen attentively and sincerely to feedback, whether it involves a mistake or some other opportunity for improvement.

Reflection Tip:

- * Explicitly state your confidence in your own judgment. At the same time, ensure that you listen to others so that your confidence does not “shut others down”.
- * Be careful that your self-confidence does not come across as arrogance. Be willing to recognize mistakes that you make.

Step into the “Expert” role in a task or situation you are familiar with.

- Choose an area where you have special experience or unique access to information.
- Promote yourself as a catalyst in the decision making process for this area.
- Use informal conversations, training sessions, or memos to keep others informed of developments in this area that could affect their jobs.

Reflection Tip:

- * Envision yourself as an expert and express your abilities confidently.

Level (4-5) Activities

Ask your leader for an opportunity to lead an important meeting or organization initiative.

- Prepare ahead of time so that you are not too nervous in front of the group.
- Assess your performance with your manager and brainstorm suggestions to improve for next time.

Reflection Tip:

- * Speak with peers prior to the event and ask them what they've done to prepare for similar situations.

Practice negotiating skills.

- Use mental imagery to help yourself become more comfortable with your ideas to then defend your ideas and convictions.
 - ⇒ Use role-playing to develop more tolerant approaches to differing viewpoints or for developing a “win-win” negotiating style.

- Before presenting your ideas or plans to a large group of individuals (i.e., a senior management committee meeting), seek input from others and try to develop useful alliances.
- Try out new ideas on others and play “devil’s advocate”.
- Compensate for a situation-specific lack of self-confidence by being well-prepared and having more than enough facts to defend your position.
- Visualize the outcome you want to achieve prior to important meetings with others. Picture what you will say and do to make the contact a success.

Reflection Tip:

- * Use role-playing to develop more tolerant approaches to differing viewpoints or for developing a “win-win” negotiating style.
- * Here’s a chance to apply your Impact and Influence skills, as well.

Develop a positive attitude to differing opinions.

- Recognize that over-confidence, rigidity and arrogance are common causes of derailment for projects.
- The key to avoiding these characteristics is to remain open to others and new information.
- Imagine how the other person would feel and react.
- Try to understand the other’s perspective before deciding not to accept their idea.

Reflection Tip:

- * Try to recognize situations, and specific people with whom you don’t always keep an open mind. Why do you think this happens? What could you do to prevent or circumvent it?

Identify your strengths at work and challenge yourself to improve on these.

- Map your current or potential work activities against the list of criteria for successful work performance.
- Note how closely other work activities “match” to your strength and identify those activities which are not as closely matched.
- Choose a project which is challenging but attainable.
- Outline a set of realistic goals and expectations for that project.

- Monitor your progress and your ability to reach those self-imposed goals and expectations.

Reflection Tip:

- * Share this approach with your manager, ask for input.
- * If you encounter difficulties and roadblocks, remind yourself of the ways in which you have overcome similar obstacles in the past.

Take time to learn from your actions and feelings.

- When you feel yourself getting emotionally involved in an issue, take the time to step back and assess the reasons why you are getting “charged up.”
- Ask others for feedback on your composure and level of assertiveness, and how they can be improved.
- Identify any patterns in your behaviour that may detract from your credibility.
- Reflect on the particular situations that are most problematic for you. Brainstorm some solutions, or preventative actions that you could take.

Reflection Tip:

- * Lack of composure (i.e., “loss of cool”) during interpersonal communications tends to cause people to lose focus, and as a result detracts from the credibility of messages being communicated. Over-assertiveness can have a similar effect, since it can lead to an unwillingness to listen or to give fair consideration to others’ opinions, i.e., bullheadedness—or to the appearance of bullheadedness, which can be just as damaging to credibility.

Develop a strategy to face challenging situations with management, clients, or others in power.

- Develop a methodology for discussing controversial issues with management, clients or others in such a way that your point of view is clearly but appropriately communicated (in a way that is not construed as disrespectful, hot-headed or belligerent), and apply this methodology to all opinionated workplace discussions, regardless of the rank or status of the other participants.
- Your methodology should include:
 - ⇒ Reviewing items of agreement with the other party before dealing with the disagreements.
 - ⇒ Considering the reasons for opposing points of views.

⇒ Asking the other party for feedback and input about your point of view.

Reflection Tip:

- * Learn to debate issues without feeling personally attacked. A constructive debate (one in which all participants maintain a professional, rational attitude and show respect for their opponents) can be an extremely productive problem-solving method, as well as an efficient means for sharing information.

Look for challenges and set stretch goals.

- Identify a challenging task or assignment with potential to impact the organization.
 - ⇒ Volunteer to lead a task force or other special work group.
 - ⇒ Seek out an assignment that will help you to develop your personal presentation skills, such as conducting training sessions for peers or other employees, participating in meetings with external customers, or public speaking engagements on behalf of the company.
 - ⇒ Look for a special project outside your immediate area of expertise and expand to another field to enhance your competency base.
- Prepare to present your ideas with tact, respect and in a logical sequence.
- Address concerns that you have anticipated and show how your opinion addresses these concerns.
- Deal with conflicts, problems and barriers as they arise.
- Set realistic targets and objectives.

Reflection Tip:

- * Use your Information Seeking skills to search out a relevant task/assignment.

Find an appropriate opportunity to challenge the status quo.

- Identify a particular organizational approach, process or decision you believe should be changed.
- Do not be afraid to challenge the status quo, including challenging the efficiency of current approaches, current management of customer accounts, or quality of decisions made, which you think are ineffective.
- Back up your opinions by researching the issues thoroughly, talking to the parties involved and understanding the purpose behind the decisions.

- After assuring yourself that your perspective is valid, present your findings to the appropriate individuals in a well-thought-out manner.
- Offer suggestions for improvements.

Reflection Tip:

- * Do enough research to be certain that you can support your opinions with strengths and clarity.
- * If you don't know the individuals personally, do some research on them to help yourself prepare for the types of questions and concerns they might raise.

Use knowledge to empower yourself.

- When an issue is presented to you for your feedback or opinion, ask for background information so you will be able to formulate well-founded, practical responses.
⇒ If necessary, gather data that will help you develop your response.
- Strive to be efficient and focused in your response; avoid repetition and commentary about extraneous issues.
- When responding (whether verbally or in writing), communicate your opinions in a clear, understandable manner.
- If alternative viewpoints are presented, define their strengths and weaknesses before challenging.

Reflection Tip:

- * Organizing the information you gather in an effective manner will allow you to be more efficient in accessing that information when requires again.

Take an active part in discussing an important or controversial issue at a meeting.

- Before you attend the meeting, spend the time necessary to think through the issues and crystallize your ideas and positions.
- Make notes about these to refer to later as you participate in the meeting.
- During the meeting, place greater emphasis on communicating your ideas and positions clearly, especially when disagreement or conflict surfaces.
- If a debate occurs, make sure that your ideas are clearly represented.
- Push for reasonable concessions to your concerns.

Reflection Tip:

- * Voice your concerns assertively after making sure you understand all positions.
- * Do not be too quick to accommodate someone else's point of view in order to minimize friction when you believe that your idea or suggestion is important.