



11 STEPS TO BECOMING CONFIDENT IN THE WORKPLACE



WHERE LAW FIRMS COME
TO RECRUIT LEGAL TALENT

Intro

Self-confidence is one of the most important aspects of emotional intelligence.

And with an increased awareness of the importance of company culture today comes an increased requirement for individuals to develop this particular trait in the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence includes the ethos of your firm, its acceptance and encouragement of diversity and equality, and the two-way transparent communication between employer and employee and morale in the business as a whole.

Employees who feel respected in their workplace feel more satisfied with their job, more productive and more grateful – and loyal – to the company and most importantly, more confident in themselves. It is this that gives them the freedom to exhibit their true self, and all the desirable traits that come with it, such as authenticity, enthusiasm, passion, and high performance levels.

As confidence affects a multitude of areas in the work life of an employee, such as performance, work ethic, career satisfaction and relationships with colleagues and/or clients, having a work environment that fosters respect and acceptance amongst employees, and in particular, an actionable plan to improve your confidence levels is crucial today for both short and long-term career success.

In this guide, we identify 12 steps you can take right now to break out of the vicious cycle of negativity that feeds low self-esteem and catalyse your growth as a legal professional.



1) Identify Your Strengths & Weaknesses

A good starting point is to carry out a down-to-earth and honest assessment of your strengths and weaknesses. Confidence is often mistaken to be rooted in an inflated sense of one's capabilities but the most confident legal professionals that have seen a lot of success in their careers, all have their confidence grounded in the reality of who they are as an individual and what they bring to the table. As such, creating an action plan that can factor in and incorporate how to best utilise your strengths and work on your weaknesses is important.

Begin by listing your strengths and achievements, small and big, and ask for a colleague or friend if needed, especially if you have a tendency to be modest about them. These may include traits such as having a great work ethic, being dependable or having fantastic collaboration skills.

The point of this little exercise is not only to give yourself an immediate confidence boost but also to have a means with which to ground yourself in reality at times when you're lacking confidence. Once done, take note of any area that you feel less skilled or need development in and map out a possible means of improving on it.

Then, make a list of your usual daily routine tasks and work out how best to incorporate your strengths into them. If possible, carry out this step with your manager as they will more than likely offer guidance and pointers on how best to do this. Discuss your areas of development with them and what training or steps can be taken to work towards improving them.

By doing this, you are giving yourself a practical way of one, demonstrating your value to your firm and two, further increasing your value through a continual commitment to professional growth.



2) Acknowledge (Big & Small) Achievements

Another good way to keep your confidence levels up is to regularly acknowledge your goals - both the smaller (daily tasks, tasks that are out of your comfort zone) and bigger ones (securing a promotion, closing a deal with a big client).

Despite how often overlooked this little step is, it is an integral part of confidence building, as it has a twofold positive effect. Firstly, the act of ticking items off your to-do list releases dopamine that gives you the feel-good factor. Secondly, your confidence will improve, and the act of ticking off will help you form a productive habit that will continue to boost your self-esteem going forward.

Additionally, keeping a record of congratulatory emails from colleagues, and writing down three things that have gone well each day will also serve as self-directed learning to help you progress.

3) Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Coupled with this is learning the importance of breaking out of your comfort zone, and ensuring you do so on a regular basis (but at a steady pace) to maintain professional growth and avoid stagnation.

The fear that comes with a lack of confidence often leads us to stay firmly within our comfort zone and avoid failure, ridicule or mistakes whenever possible, preventing us from taking action to change how we feel about ourselves.

Confidence is built through the process of learning and failure is an inevitable part of it. Through that process, we not only improve our confidence directly by improving our skills, but also indirectly by learning to be more comfortable with making mistakes and forgiving ourselves after each temporary setback.

4) Develop Your Emotional Intelligence

When managing circumstances or tasks that are out of your comfort zone, having the skill to handle mounting pressure, navigate said task/situation successfully and avoid a crash of emotions during or after them is essential, and so a key skill that comes hand in hand with workplace confidence is the ability to recognize, understand and manage your own emotions, as well as those of your colleagues.

This is what is known as Emotional Intelligence and it is indispensable if you're working as part of a team. In fact, it was ranked as one of the top ten skills employees will need to have to thrive in the workplace of the future.

In practical terms, it means being self-aware - understanding how your emotions can drive behaviour and impact others (both positively and negatively) as well as learning how to manage those emotions when under pressure, to achieve positive outcomes.

When put in situations that might require you to think quickly or think outside the box for novel solutions, particularly if you're a manager, the ability to manage your emotional response to such situations in order to work collaboratively is crucial.

A good way to work towards improving this is to reflect on previous situations when you exhibited a lack of emotional intelligence and understand where you went wrong, as well as how to handle similar situations in the future more effectively.

In order to better understand your emotional tendencies, ask for feedback from your colleagues, as this can give you a better perspective of how you are as a communicator and reveal certain things about your behaviour that you would've been otherwise unaware of.

5) Practice Active Listening

An even better approach would be to take this a step further and apply what you've learned through active listening. This is a great skill to help you communicate more effectively with colleagues and boost your confidence in your social and collaboration skills.

Practise listening to colleagues' ideas without interruption, weighing logical pros and cons, and making decisions after listening to everyone's opinions. For example, if you find yourself prone to speaking before you've thought things through, learn to put the brakes on and engage your brain first.

By adopting a strategic approach about how and when you present your ideas, you will create the impression of being thoughtful and insightful, rather than impatient and indiscriminate. This will help you to confidently tackle projects and resolve conflict without acrimony and will gain you respect amongst your colleagues, which will, in turn, further increase your confidence in your abilities.



6) Help Others

One thing you can also make a conscious effort to do is to go out of your way to help colleagues in need at work whenever feasible. This isn't just an altruistic act – it also helps boost your self-esteem when you get the sense of accomplishment that comes from making the lives of those around you easier. It has a positive neurological effect on your brain by increasing oxytocin levels (which counteracts cortisol, the stress-producing hormone) and helps build trust. Additionally, it is a great way to practice empathy and further improve your emotional intelligence!

7) Look After Yourself

Much has been said about what you can do within the workplace to improve your confidence – however, some of the most impactful things you can do to boost confidence can only be done outside of it.

This is particularly pertinent in instances where self-confidence is mistaken to be the root cause instead of a symptom of what often turns out to be a lack of self-esteem. Self-esteem affects how we view, value and appreciate ourselves, and without having a means of distinguishing between the value we provide as a professional and the value we place on ourselves as a person, it can suffer significantly.

This is especially the case when an individual lacks a healthy [work-life balance](#) - and ties their inherent value as a person to the value they bring to the table. So when performances dip or they experience a setback, their self-esteem - and consequently their self-confidence - also take a hit.

This is why the long-discussed topic of self-care remains as relevant as ever. Taking time off to do things that help you unwind doesn't just recharge your mental and physical batteries – it helps to increase your self-awareness (a foundation of good confidence) by building habits that change how you see and treat yourself - such as taking time off to do something you enjoy, – and cut out ones that perpetuate the common cycle of negativity many legal professionals find themselves stuck in when struggling with work and a poor work-life balance – such as a toxic relationship, poor diet or lack of exercise.

8) Lose the Negativity

When we have a balanced view of our inherent value as a person, it becomes much easier to both know, appreciate and have the belief to improve the value we bring as a professional.

This is how self-care allows one to avoid dwelling on their shortcomings and mistakes and acknowledge their accomplishments, instead of playing them down. But you should also make a conscious effort to let those changes in thoughts translate into a positive change in behaviour.

For example, when someone compliments you on a piece of work or a presentation, accept it graciously and acknowledge that, yes, you did do a good job. Don't brush aside those little things that will build your self-esteem – take the credit where it's due!

9) Change Your Language

In addition to this, let your own words - and not just the words of others - reflect how you want to see yourself going forward. It's a fact that negative words and thoughts impact your psyche, and the more you use them to describe how you feel, the more difficult it becomes for you to see anything in a positive light.

It can also have a knock-on effect across your team, as it is contagious and once spread around will lead to a drop in morale and productivity levels among colleagues.

By consciously and consistently changing the language we use to describe ourselves, we further change our thought processes, making it a self-reinforcing and rewarding virtuous cycle.

10) Change Your Body Language & Smarten Up Your Appearance!

The phrase 'fake it till you make it' is so apt when it comes to body language and appearance. When we feel good about how we look, and dress, and make it a point to exhibit positive body language, we further reinforce that virtuous cycle we create through positive thinking and positive speech. Turning up to work, events or client visits looking our best self increases our confidence levels and that subconsciously carries over into how we communicate with others in our choice of words, tone of voice and body language.

Changing the latter in particular is especially beneficial, as even a conscious effort to do just that can increase confidence. A simple change of posture, such as sitting straight up or unfolding your arms can change how you feel, think and come across to others around you.

What's more – paying close attention to your appearance and body language will significantly influence how others see you, as they will tend to make sweeping judgements about you that, depending on the individual, can result in career-changing decisions. Imagine if the likelihood of being considered for a promotion simply came down to how you carry yourself in the workplace!

11) Consider A Social Media Detox

One harmful yet extremely common habit that proves difficult to shake for many though, is the amount of time spent on social media. Yes, it has huge benefits for an aspiring professional when used correctly but it can be as detrimental as it is beneficial.

It becomes particularly dangerous when one already has low self-esteem or self-confidence, as it can become a substitute for actual positive feedback when they get that dopamine release from getting a like or a repost. With no constraints, your mind soon starts to rely on these, interpreting them as positive affirmations. This inevitably leads to false positive feedback loops, making you dependent on the next 'like' or retweet for a feel-good factor. Before you know it, you're a social media addict, and start to feel down if you don't get acknowledgement on social media.

So, the best thing to do is keep social media to a minimum, recognise it for what it is, use it only when you have something productive in mind to do or post on it, and don't become dependent on it for your confidence levels!

Finally,

Confidence in the workplace is not a static trait; it's a dynamic quality that can be cultivated and improved over time in order to break free from the cycle of self-doubt and negativity and empower yourself to reach new heights in your career as a legal professional.

Remember, building confidence is not only about personal success but also contributes to a more inclusive, respectful, and productive work environment. By fostering these qualities in yourself, you contribute positively to the firm culture and inspire others to do the same.

In today's fast-paced and competitive world, having the confidence to bring out your best in the workplace is not just an option—it's a necessity for long-term career success and personal fulfilment.

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