

# Fake It Till You Make It

A two-step approach to boosting your confidence.

By Neal Whitten, PMP



**AS A LEADER**, are you unsure of yourself? Does a lack of confidence hold you back? All of us have felt this way at some point. But if you routinely think this way, you will undermine your effectiveness, potential and, ultimately, your career.

Here's a two-step approach that can help you get past this destructive thinking.

## Define Who You Want to Be

Imagine the person you would most like to be. How do you see this person handling various situations? What behaviors does this person demonstrate? For now, don't focus on how hard it might be to adopt these behaviors. Instead, define the vision—the behaviors—that you want to define you. Write them down and commit them to memory. Behaviors that many people desire to hone include: public speaking, conflict resolution, learning when it's okay to break rules, professionally challenging authority, controlling emotions, not taking things personally, not allowing what others think about you to be more important than what you think about yourself, and taking responsibility for your performance and career.

## Be a Good Actor

Now that you have a vision of your ideal self, become a good actor to transform that vision into reality. Act out—with passion and conviction—the behaviors you most want to mimic. This might sound insincere, but it's how you transform behaviors: You first think about a behavior to adopt,

then you act on that thought to replace an old undesirable behavior.

As you act out the behaviors you want to embrace, you will become more confident, deliberate and more likely to be respected by your co-workers. Studies show that exuding self-confidence on the job plays a role in advancing career opportunities.

It's okay to take small steps in the beginning and graduate to larger steps while becoming whom you choose to be. For example, if you have difficulty in speaking to groups or to higher-level management, look for opportunities to present to an individual or a small number of people. Over time, you will become more comfortable speaking to larger groups and authority figures.

As another aid to help you become more confident, imagine you're 100 years old and dying. A young person who admires you says, "What can you tell me that will help me be more successful, including becoming a better employee and leader, and have a more prosperous life?"

How would you respond? Write down the attributes and behaviors that you believe are most important to live a successful life. Then read what you wrote until you've memorized it. You have great advice—now follow it to become the person you wish to be. **PM**



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