

Your Confidence

When you've gained someone's trust, you've also gained her/his confidence—another key to lasting influence. Dwight D. Eisenhower once stated, “In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence.” I love the story about how John D. Rockefeller dealt with his creditors. Whenever a creditor came knocking on John's door hoping to have his bill paid, Rockefeller would reach for his checkbook with gusto and ask, “Which would you rather have: cash or Standard Oil Stock?” He made this offer with such confidence that people almost always chose to take stock in his company. Aristotle also had specific criteria he believed were necessary in gaining one's full confidence. They are as follows:

- Wisdom
- Reason
- Familiarity with truth in all forms
- Knowledge of specific facts and principles within a given case
- Experience
- Expertise
- Competence

People are constantly looking for someone to help direct them in their lives and to assist them in making the right choices. Demonstrating confidence in everything you do will spur others to put their trust in you. Sometimes we may have to pretend we're more confident than we really are, hence the saying, “Fake it 'til you make it.” I've seen plenty of people of only average to mediocre ability influence more effectively than others who were more naturally gifted than they were simply because they exuded higher confidence. The people we admire and look up to the most are usually the type of people who know what they want and how to get it.

People who doubt themselves and lack confidence in themselves will always struggle to effectively influence others. If you're perceived as doubtful or unconfident, your prospects will feel that way, too—about your product, about your idea or about anything else you might ever try to present to them. It is said that the most lasting impression is

made within about the first four minutes of an encounter. So, be sure you demonstrate confidence in those first four minutes because the cement dries fast! Realize that nothing can replace a bad first impression, even if you try to make up for it later. Fixing a first impression is like fixing a wrecked car. Even after exhaustive time, effort and expense have been exerted, you still know it was wrecked, and you're even more apt to detect anything else that might be wrong with it.

Avoiding Too Much Confidence

It is important to know that coming across as too confident will likely have the opposite effect on your audience than you intended. That is, rather than gaining people's confidence, you'll turn them off, quite possibly alienating them for good. In fact, if you make a mistake or do something inept, people are more likely to be won over by you if you can laugh at yourself and not take yourself too seriously. Coming across as self-absorbed or egotistical will make you appear incredibly unbecoming in the eyes of your prospects. Being more sincere and natural, on the other hand, will make you appear more approachable and likable. According to Jay Conrad Levinson of Guerilla Marketing fame, confidence is the number one reason why people are persuaded to buy. When the buyer has confidence in your selling strategy, your ability to influence him increases. Confidence can also be defined as a belief and assurance in yourself.