

# Confidence at Work

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It's time to work on YOU. So sit back and listen to practical, actionable advice to accelerate your progress.

*Sheryl Sandberg, Leonardo Da Vinci, Sonia Sotomayor, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, and Oprah Winfrey* - some of the many names scribbled on sticky notes pasted on Michelle's bedroom wall. Stay with me. There is a story to it.

Michelle is a brilliant product design specialist at a top PR firm with five years of experience. Michelle loves her job, but when she got promoted to a mid-level management position where she had to supervise a department, she wanted to resign.

*Why?*

Michelle was unsure of her ability to tackle the new challenge. She was overcome with feelings of insecurity. Michelle felt that others were far better than her. Michelle was suffering from a self-confidence crisis.

According to [Albert Bandura, a Canadian-American psychologist, 'self-confidence is a general view of how likely you are to accomplish a goal, especially based on your experience.'](#) Michelle had seen her former manager fail at his job and was scared that the same fate awaited her.

Many of us experience insecurity at work, even when others think we are good at our job. A [2019 HBR research](#) shows that many people, especially women, struggle with confidence early in their careers.

By the end of this track, you'll have improved your understanding of why confidence is an important attribute to have at work and become aware of clear actions that will help you build your self-confidence. Let us together go on a journey of discovery and self-empowerment.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines [confidence](#) as “the quality of being certain of your abilities or of having trust in people, plans, or the future”.

Confidence at work is important not only for your personal development but is also essential to your performance at work and, consequently, your career growth and development.

[Lidija Globokar, in a Forbes article](#), establishes that ‘the more we interact with people, the more we expose ourselves, the more we will be judged. We can choose with whom we are going to spend our free time and stay within our comfort zone where confidence doesn’t play a major role. However, as soon as we enter our workplace, how self-confident we appear becomes very important.’

We suffer from a lack of self-confidence when like Michelle, we are uncertain of our abilities. We can get away with it in our day-to-day activities, but when it comes to work and career, there is no hiding place.

[Amy Gallo, in a 2011 HBR article](#), notes that ‘very few people succeed in business without a degree of confidence. Yet everyone, from young people in their first real jobs to seasoned leaders in the upper ranks of organizations, have moments — or days, months, or even years — when they are unsure of their ability to tackle challenges.’

‘No one is immune to these bouts of insecurity at work’, she says ‘, but they don’t have to hold you back.’

*First, beam the spotlight on yourself.*

You must be very honest with yourself. What exactly are you afraid of, and what is the connection between your fear and the task or work objective? Michelle discovered that she harboured the fear of taking over from her boss because she believed that she did not have the trust of those she would be managing. In this case, building trust and bonding with those she would be managing is essential. So it helps to begin with a genuine self-assessment and then go ahead to solve the problems identified practically and with the right attitude.

*And speaking of attitude: a positive attitude is always a confidence booster.*

An important way to shore up your confidence at work is to be intentional about your attitude to work and your co-workers. Do the work with enthusiasm and with a smile on your face, encourage and help those who are having it difficult at work, seek help when you need it, and always be grateful for the help rendered to you. Be the one who says yes to difficult tasks and encourages others.

[Dr. Katharine Brooks, director of Liberal Arts Career Services at The University of Texas at Austin](#), says ‘Positive doesn’t always mean “happy”— it can also mean

resilient. Focus on how you can provide solutions rather than spend a lot of time discussing the problem.'

Be that person who gets people to smile at work, but this doesn't mean you have to become the office jester. You could be that person who people are happy to see every day by being approachable and optimistic.

[Lynn Taylor, a national workplace expert and author of Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant](#): says, "Workers are drawn to those with an upbeat attitude, especially when challenges emerge, and it can start with you. It's contagious, even with your boss, and it will project confidence as you make this part of your 'personal brand'."

*Challenge yourself.*

Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone and be ready to take risks.

['Stepping outside your comfort zone is, as you might expect, uncomfortable'](#) says Charlie Houpert, the author of "Charisma on Command" and the founder of a 2.7-million-subscriber YouTube channel of the same name. 'But it is a risk you have to take to raise your self-confidence.'

'Face your fear' may be a common saying but it holds an important truth. Facing your fear takes you out of your comfort zone- and there is where the magic happens.

"Confidence' says Mr. Houpert, 'is ultimately about being comfortable in a wide variety of situations that would make most people feel uncomfortable. So if you stretch your comfort zone every day, very quickly you'll have a large comfort zone and be able to feel more comfortable even when outside of it."

*Next, you need to identify your strengths and capitalise on them*

There are things you know you are good at. Do not take them for granted. Now is the time to use them to your advantage.

["One of the best ways to build confidence is to get clear on your strengths and find ways to integrate those strengths into what you do every day,"](#) says William Arruda, a personal branding expert. 'When you lead from your strengths, you're engaged and energized. You're self-assured'.

Michelle knew she was good at striking up a one-on-one conversation and she was also a good listener. With this, she built a personal relationship with most of the workers in her new department.

*Mastering your work is crucial to self-confidence.*

Learn and master all you need to know about your work. Invest time and energy in getting the right training and find a mentor you can learn from. It is crucial that you know your job and become a master at it.

“The best way to build confidence in a given area is to invest energy in it and work hard at it,” says [Tony Schwartz](#), the president and CEO of The Energy Project and the author of *Be Excellent at Anything: The Four Keys to Transforming the Way We Work and Live*. ‘Many people give up when they think they’re not good at a particular job or task, assuming the exertion is fruitless. But deliberate practice will almost always trump natural aptitude.’

*You have to believe in yourself.*

People, tasks, and situations at work will challenge your confidence. It is a reality you have to come to terms with. You could get a low appraisal rating, a rude and disheartening email, or a challenging task. These will always happen, but how you respond is critical. The first response is not always the best because, many times, it comes unfiltered and bundled with emotions. Give yourself some time to respond; take a walk, close your laptop, and tap into your emotional intelligence before responding or taking action.

Arruda suggests saying three affirmations to yourself each night before going to bed—telling yourself three things that you like about yourself or three things that went well that day.

Writing down and reflecting on things that you’ve done well also helps. It’s easier to be confident in your abilities when you remember them.

‘Confidence is not a fixed attribute,’ says [Dr. Margie Warrell](#), ‘it’s the outcome of the thoughts we think and the actions we take. No more, no less. It is not based on your *actual* ability to succeed at a task but your *belief* in your ability to succeed.’

Now let us take a quick look at all the key points we have discussed so far. To grow your self-confidence at work:

Identify the cause of your insecurity or fear at work and tackle it, challenge yourself to take risks and go out of your comfort zone, recognise your strengths and capitalise on them, develop a positive attitude at work, mastering your work is crucial to self-confidence, and last, you have to believe in yourself.

Michelle had all these written on sticky notes, which she pasted on her bedroom wall. She also had one more thing— a list of names that fuelled her determination to grow her self-confidence. Famous names who also suffered disappointment

and self-doubt at certain stages of their career- *Sheryl Sandberg, Leonardo Da Vinci, Sonia Sotomayor, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, and Oprah Winfrey*, to name but a few.

Michelle did not resign; she dug in and built her confidence. She has been promoted twice since then.

If Michelle can do it, you can too.