

7 Habits for Projecting Confidence Instead of Arrogance

We all want to be more confident, but be careful that your confidence doesn't become something much darker.



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We all want to be more confident--it's a personal quality that helps us build strong relationships with others, get things done, and move forward in our work and life. However, sometimes we can go overboard, and our confidence can become something much darker: arrogance.



[In their book, *Why Leaders Fail*, authors Peter Stark and Mary Kelly explain how leaders sabotage themselves](#) -- and their organizations -- when they project arrogance instead of confidence. According to the authors, the defining factor of a strong leader is rooted in the relationships he or she builds with followers, and how effectively he or she propels the organization toward great achievement.

Here, then, are 7 habits for projecting confidence instead of arrogance:

1. Admit and accept that you make mistakes, and apologize for them

Arrogant people never admit they make mistakes, and they try to deflect attention to others when they do. Humble leaders readily admit when they make mistakes, and they learn from them--modeling that behavior to others in their organization.

2. Demonstrate accountability and take responsibility for the actions of your team

Leaders set the example for the people in their organization, and it's important that they demonstrate accountability at all times. According to authors Stark and Kelly, "When the team makes a mistake, a strong leader accepts accountability for the mistake and takes responsibility for ensuring the problem never happens again. An arrogant leader would deny any wrongdoing and say, 'I was not responsible for this mistake.' In fact, he or she would probably tell you exactly who was responsible for the mistake."

3. Communicate and act in a respectful manner at all times

Though it's a very rare occurrence, a work colleague recently attacked me in a series of vitriolic email messages. Although I was able to quickly defuse the situation, his arrogance was surprising to me, and the respect I previously had for him and his work was lost in a matter of minutes.

4. Be open-minded and willing to learn something new

The height of arrogance is when a leader--or anyone else, for that matter--believes that he or she knows all the answers, and doesn't want or accept the input of others. This is a mistake. As Stark and Kelly point out, "If arrogant leaders are defined by the belief they no longer need to learn anything new, then humble leaders are defined as lifelong learners. Great leaders are continuously trying to figure out how they can improve in all areas of their lives."

5. Show gratitude and give praise and recognition where it is due

Stark and Kelly say, "Humble leaders habitually recognize great contributions that make a difference. At home, at work, and in their daily routines, great leaders find it easy to say 'thank you' and recognize someone for how they make a difference in this world." So should you.

6. Practice forgiveness

We all make mistakes. When your people make mistakes--and they will--first forgive them, and then work with them to ensure they learn lessons from their mistakes. They will perform better in the future, and your organization will be better for it.

7. Ask for honest feedback, and act on it

Someone long ago once said that feedback is the breakfast of champions. To do a better job (and we can all improve in some way, whether it's small or large), we need feedback from others around us--our boss, coworkers, customers, and anyone else we work with. Make a habit of asking for honest feedback--frank, direct, and to the point. And when you get feedback, then don't just sit there--do something about it.