



The Confidence to Lead

Strategies For Becoming A Leader of Substance

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Confident Leadership is your acceptance of the abilities you have to lead others.

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This material is for educational purposes only.

01. Introduction

Having confidence impacts the decisions you make when you are creating professional leadership goals. But if you feel that there is a doubt inside, a sense of insecurity about who you are or the skills you have to offer, you may be struggling with confidence.

This lack of self-assurance can keep you from communicating the way you want to, finishing the projects you have started or building the kind of business success you long for.

Why is developing confident leadership so important? This question is a unique for everyone, but I believe there is one shared universal truth.

You want to make a difference in the world.

But, in order to do that, you need to cultivate your confidence so that you can have an impact you want.

In this guide, I have outlined certain steps that will help you develop your leadership abilities. I've shared both psychological insights and practical exercises. These are designed to help you discover what may be in your way, who can support you, and how to communicate with others more effectively.



02. Confidence Myths

Over the years I've had clients say to me, *"I don't have the confidence that other people seem to have",* or *"I can't express myself as confidently as others seem to do"*.

I get it. A lack of confidence can create feelings of vulnerability that can easily tip into negative thinking. That's when many of my clients start comparing themselves to others.

With this in mind, it's important I debunk two myths about confidence.

Myth Number 1. - Either you have confidence, or you don't.

While there are certainly people who appear to be confident from the day they were born, the reality is that the opportunity to build confidence is ongoing

And the real secret to cultivating confidence? Discovering and accepting the value of who you are.

Remember, connecting to confidence can happen at any point in your life.



02. Confidence Myths

Myth Number 2. - Confident people have big personalities.

Some clients think that confident people have to radiate a certain kind of energy that allows them to be the center of attention.

Not true.

Truly confident people don't change their personalities in order to be heard. They know what they have to offer and trust what they have to say. They then communicate in the way that reflects who they are and no one else.

Remember, there's room for all of us to express confidence in our unique way.



03. Why Is Confidence Important?

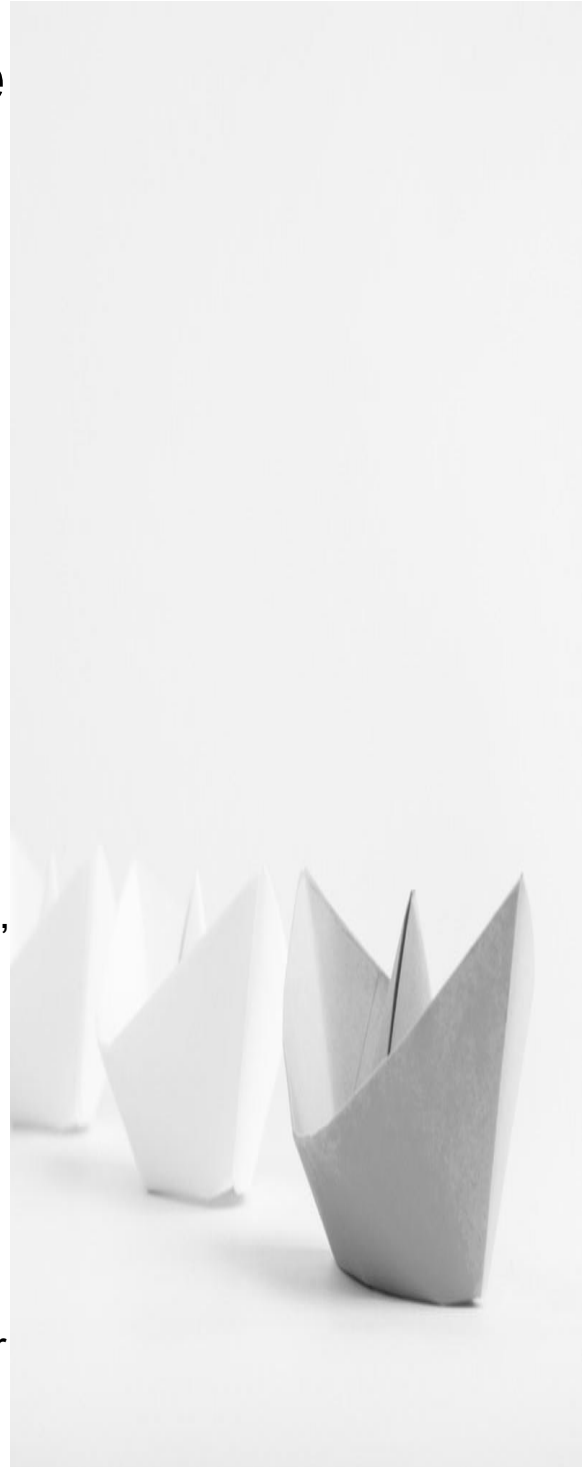
Confident leadership is important in three specific ways, which benefits you in your career.

Visibility: As you learn to express your confidence, your abilities will become more noticeable to others. Build on this momentum by having specific visibility goals that are specific and doable. Doing so keeps you from being overwhelmed, allowing self-confidence to grow with each step.

Opportunity: As your visibility starts to grow, professional opportunities tend to increase. Weigh each opportunity against your professional goals. This prevents you from chasing everything offered, that may look good from the outside but doesn't match what you ultimately want.

Expertise: The more opportunities you have, the more you can showcase your expertise. Expertise establishes credibility whether it's your own business brand and to highlight you're the importance of your role within an organization. As your expertise becomes established, professional credibility is built, followed by the value you deliver to others.

These three areas continually flow into each other and as you cycle through in each one, your self-confidence as a leader will grow.





04. What Holds You Back?

One of the most common ways people get stuck around confidence is through limiting beliefs.

Limiting Beliefs: The negative thoughts and opinions you believe to be true about yourself

Limiting Beliefs tend to be:

Learned (from childhood or society)

Distorted

Negative

Paralytic - keep you from taking needed actions

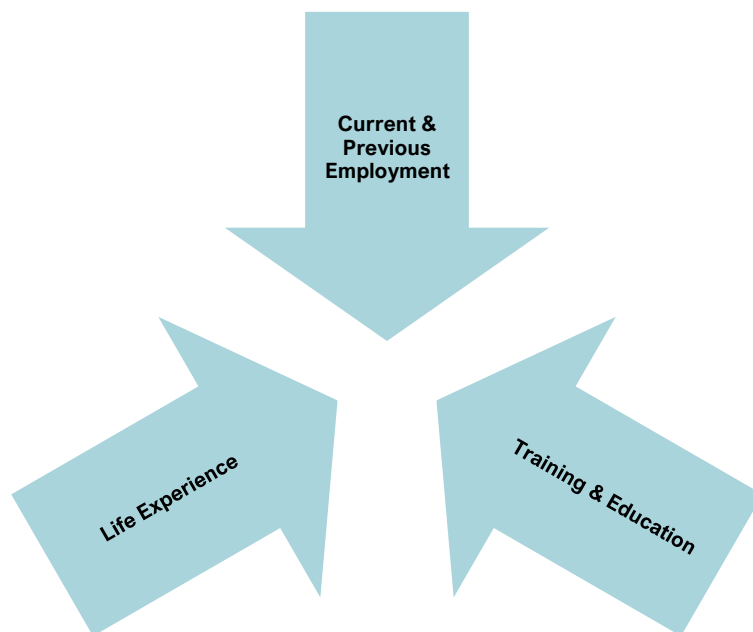
05. Everything Counts

Exploring limiting beliefs and changing the narrative is important for confident leadership.

One way to do that is to acknowledge the variety of ways your expertise has grown over the years and why.

Exercise: Taking Stock

Take a moment to think about your years of working, your education and training. How has being a parent, partner, employer, student, team member, friend, mentor or volunteer contributed to your growth as a professional?



When you give credit to the impact each of these areas has had upon your life, you begin to affirm your own professional value and the value you offer to others.

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*At times our own light goes out
and is rekindled by a spark from
another person. Each of us has
cause to think with deep
gratitude of those who have
lighted the flame within us.*

Albert Schweitzer

06. Creating Support

During our careers, there are people we meet who bolster our confidence through the information and guidance they provide.

I believe that these “confidence builders” are folks who walk their talk. They do so by living and working by the values they teach others.

These are the friends, colleagues and mentors who will contribute to your success.

Why?

Because having people in your life who support, challenge, and guide you, in ways that are respectful and nurturing, helps you grow professionally.



Choosing Your Leadership Allies

How do choose the best confidence allies?

Here are some questions that will help clarify the confidence builders you may need. Think of the people in your life who had an impact on you over the years.

Exercise: Confidence Builders

Who were those people? (teacher, coach, therapist, spiritual leader, relative)

- What qualities did that person have that made you remember them?
- Why were those qualities important to you?
- Do you feel you need those qualities in your life today?
- When you imagine receiving help from a confidence builder, how would it feel?



Evaluation

Now that you have a sense of who the people were that positively influenced you over the years, it's time to learn how to pinpoint what it is you need when you need support

A way to discover this is to use a five minute relaxation exercise to calm your breathing and your mind. By doing this exercise, you are giving yourself the space to think.

Exercise: Relaxation Response

Close your eyes and rest your hands lightly in your lap. Slowly breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Do this 4 or 5 times. Let your breathing return to normal.

Then, with your eyes close, ask yourself, *“what kind of support do I need for this issue or problem?”*

- Pep Talk?
- Strategy Session?
- Emotional Support?
- Accountability?
- Listening?

Open your eyes. Now that you have figured out what you need, the next step is to figure out where to get that support.



Your Exclusive Support Team

Who we surround ourselves with has a direct impact on our professional success

Think of three to five people in your life whom you consider to be part of your leadership support system or team. If there are more, that's great. (Remember, the most important criteria for making it on to your list is that the person is 100% in your corner).

As you picture each person, think of what that person's strengths are.

For example, good listener, empathetic, knows business, can make me laugh; can talk me down from the ceiling, etc.

Exercise: What Are Their Strengths?

Use this chart or create a list of the information you get.

For Example:

<u>Person</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>When Do You Reach Out</u>
Pam	Savvy in business	When I need a business strategy.
Matt	Empathy	When I need a pep talk.

Once you have a clear understanding of who the people are in your life that support your vision for leadership, you will be able to reach out to the appropriate person when you need a specific kind of support.

07. Confidential Communication

Communicating With Ease

I've worked with a variety of people with different confidence struggles. However, many of them share a universal fear that often stops them from achieving what they want.

The fear of speaking up.

For these clients, the thought of doing so is worrisome and stressful. I remember one client saying, *"If I speak up, I'm afraid I'll be attacked for my opinion."* Another one stated, *"I get so overwhelmed when someone speaks over me that I just freeze"*. And one shared, *"I'm nervous about initiating conversations and asking for what I want"*.

The good news -- handling these conversations has more to do with preparation and practice than just knowing how and when to say the "right thing." When you learn how to approach these potentially turbulent interactions, they often reveal hidden rewards.



Communicate With Confidence

Speaking up and navigating important conversations empowers you as a leader to get what you really want in professional situations. Speaking up can clear the air, clarify, and motivate the people around you. In addition, it's an opportunity for you to share your intelligence, creativity, and talent.

Speaking up will ultimately give your confidence a real boost because you'll be able to impart the vision you have for your own business as well as apply it to leading others.

To help my clients speak up, I developed a series of "Breather Sentences®".

Breather Sentences allow you to literally catch your breath so that you can pause and think about how you want to respond to or initiate important conversations. They also embody the psychological power of neutral language.



Breather Sentences[©]

Example 1

1. AFFIRMATION

This powerful technique fulfills an important psychological need for most human beings. The need to be seen and heard. These sentences affirm the other person while giving you the space to state your opinion. Practice using affirmative language when someone says something with which you don't agree, or they interrupt you. For example:

“I appreciate your perspective, and I have some additional thoughts on the subject that I'd like to discuss”.

“I (get or appreciate) that you want to share your thoughts and I'm willing to hear them. However, I'm going to finish up first before we move on”.

2. SPECULATION

Sometimes your perceptions about a situation or person might be off the mark. Using language, and a tone of voice that expresses curiosity, is a great way to find out information. The technique of speculation allows you to explore issues in a calm way before they escalate. Some examples include:

“I'm curious, I see you made decisions on the project and didn't inform me. I'd like to understand why that happened”.

“I may be off in my perception, but it appears to me that you are (upset, avoiding, or not getting back to me) for some reason. Is that accurate?”

Breather Sentences[©]

Example 2

3. DE-ESCALATION

There will be times when people perceive what you said, or an action you took, as hurtful. You may know that your intention was coming from a good place, but they may not. Having the courage to find out why they are hurt is beneficial to both of you. Use the technique of de-escalation (pausing and affirmation) to help get a dialogue going. For example:

(Pause). "I'm surprised at your perspective, and I'd like to understand more of why you feel that way".

(Pause). "I (get or understand) that you feel (upset, angry, dismissed). Please know that it (isn't or wasn't) my intention but I get that you didn't feel that way".

4. EXPLORATION

Sometimes we run into resistance from another person but keep trying to convince them why they should agree or commit to something we want. To them it can feel like being stuck in traffic with someone honking the horn behind them. Using the technique of exploration combined with honesty, will get you to the real reason they are resistant. Examples include:

"I'm curious (or want to understand) why you seem resistant to committing to this project or collaboration?" (Once they explain). "I appreciate your sharing that with me and while I still would like you to participate, I understand why there is a conflict. Is there any way we can compromise?"

"I realize I haven't shared why this project or collaboration is important to me. Here's why..." (You still might not get what you want but at least the truth of why it matters, will be expressed). Follow that with, "I appreciate you hearing me out".

Revealing how you feel and what you want is a life-long practice. Regardless of what happens or how the other person responds, making your true self visible will only make you more confident about what you have to say to say as a leader.

08. Final Thoughts

You can do this.

I believe that building confidence in your leadership skills takes exploration and a commitment to yourself--but is something that is very achievable.

Remember:

- Truly confident leaders don't change their personalities in order to be heard.
- They discover what holds them back and then learn to trust the value of what they have to offer.
- They surround themselves with people who listen, challenge and support them.
- They communicate clearly and in a way that honors their leadership style while respecting others.

I know that there's room for all of us to express leadership in our unique way. I wish you the best in sharing your leadership talents and expertise with others.

Karol Ward, LCSW

09. About Karol Ward

Karol Ward, LCSW is a confidence-building coach for consultants, coaches, solopreneurs, and executives who struggle with confidence and helps them have more success in their careers.

She is a professional speaker, TEDx speaker and author who has appeared as psychological, confidence, and communication expert on CNN, The Wall Street Journal Live, NBC, Fox News and ABC along with numerous podcasts and radio programs.

She is regularly featured in the Wall Street Journal and has contributed to such media outlets as Oprah.com, The Independent, Bustle.com, The New York Daily News, Spirituality & Health, and Well + Good among others.

Karol provides individual coaching sessions and group presentations in the areas of confidence, leadership, interpersonal communication, presentation skills and media training.

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