

Sales Coach Series

First published in Infomatics

Developing confidence

First published on 01/02/2001

The Dilemma

Although I am competent at my job, I often feel lacking in confidence. I worry that the customer will ask me something I don't know and I'll appear stupid.

The Coaching

You are not alone!

Firstly, do you lack requisite knowledge? If you are new to a particular technology or product then this is likely. If not, have you fallen behind in maintaining your market or technical knowledge? Develop an action plan to fill the gaps. This may include formal training, seeking information from colleagues and prolific reading or web surfing. Ensure your plan supports ongoing learning, for instance by setting aside time each month for this purpose to avoid this problem again.

If your lack of confidence seems to be more general then you will need to identify and address the underlying causes. This takes time and commitment so in parallel think about how to behave in a confident manner, whatever your mental state.

Observe those around you who appear confident. Watch their body language and how they carry themselves. Listen to their tone of voice and the language they use. Focus on:

- Standing tall - don't slouch or hunch your shoulders
- Adopting an 'open' posture and expansive body language
- Making eye contact - don't examine the desk
- Breathing rhythmically - when nervous we often breathe too shallowly
- Using words that imply certainty - if you don't know something, say so confidently!
- Adopting a steady but animated tone of voice
- Smiling!

Don't confuse acting confidently with pretending you know more than you do! You rarely get away with the latter!