



# CONFIDENCE IS KEY

An etiquette brief on *Communicating Confidence*  
by Civility Experts Worldwide

## Introduction

Most people achieve success in business and in life based on their ability to perform a skill, or to make some contribution, that somehow meets the needs of someone else. But, if we are unable to present ourselves in a confident way, it may be that we don't even get a chance to show others how skilled, or talented, how kind, or even how good a listener or conversationalist we are. It may also happen that a person less technically competent than other people are is given opportunities just because he/she sends an impression of competence through a range of confident behaviors.

This brief is an excerpt from an expanded lesson plan on the topic and includes general content on:

- ❑ Understanding what confidence is
- ❑ Reviewing behaviors that send an impression of confidence
- ❑ Self-assessing your confidence
- ❑ Best practices to boost your confidence
- ❑ Reference and resources for continuing your personal development and building your confidence.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at [www.etiquettrainingtoolkits.com](http://www.etiquettrainingtoolkits.com)

## **COMMUNICATING CONFIDENCE (Excerpt)**

Regardless of how smart they are or how much experience they have in their field, most professionals would admit that now and then their confidence wavers. Occasionally sweaty palms, worry about the “what ifs”, sleepless nights, a case of the jitters, or worse... gets the best of them. But leaders rise to the challenge. They are always learning, growing, stretching, and changing. Growth means new situations and new challenges. If you are interested in learning how to feel confident whatever comes your way, this practical and interesting session is for you.

Competition in modern business is fierce. The strong survive and in many circumstances strong means confident; Confident enough to speak up when you have an opinion, confident enough to walk away from situations that don't match your integrity, confident enough to walk into a room full of strangers... the potential scenarios where confidence might be necessary are endless.

Many people who are capable, well-spoken, credentialed, and sufficiently intelligent don't meet their full potential just because they lack the confidence to perform in certain settings or to do and say the things that more confident people do.

Also, workplace relationships are often based on credibility and you are not credible unless you are confident. If you don't trust yourself, why would anyone else trust you? These days, employers are looking for leaders who shine. They want professionals who are confident and independent. Confidence in business is portrayed through many qualities; image, body language, attitude, and behaviour. This brief discusses all of those qualities.

Many people don't understand that knowing what is expected and respected behavior for social and workplace settings can go a long way towards making people feel more confident. And exhibiting appropriate behavior, including following etiquette rules, having good manners can help you feel more confident when you are in new or uncomfortable situations.

### **Reference and Research:**

Below is an excerpt from an excellent book, "Unstoppable Confidence."

#### **"Unstoppable Confidence**

"Confident people come from a place of finding solutions. They look for options for how to solve problems and create solutions. They move through the world calmly, coolly, unperturbed by outside events."

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"If you were to listen to others and yourself, you will notice that those people who are confident use a certain vocabulary and those lacking confidence use an entirely different vocabulary."

"Words such as absolutely, positively, definitely, without a doubt - all reinforce positive, confident thinking."

"When you reach the state of unstoppable confidence, you will have ultimate belief in yourself. You will know you can do anything you choose to do."

Ken Sayre

### Quotes and Anecdotes:

*It often takes more courage to change one's opinion than to stick to it.*  
Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

*Keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage with others.*  
Robert Louis Stevenson

### What is confidence?

Confidence means different things to different people. Close your eyes and try to remember a situation when you were not confident. What comes to mind when you think about a lack of confidence- in terms of communication specifically?

For example, did you experience any of the following?

- Inability to speak, "cat got your tongue"
- Long silences
- Stalling, "ummmmm" etc.
- Shoulder shrugging
- Raised eyebrows as if to say, "What do I know?"
- Soft or squeaky voice, murmuring
- Physical sinking, head down, poor posture
- Saying something silly or inappropriate
- Uncontrollable giggling
- Nervous twitching or jittery body language, e.g., wringing hands, twirling hair
- Failure to make eye contact
- Repeating oneself

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- \_\_\_\_\_ Other? \_\_\_\_\_

When you've been in an uncomfortable situation or experienced a time of low confidence, what *exactly* did you feel at that time?

- Shy
- Embarrassed
- Stupid
- Tongue-tied
- Out of my body
- Verbally bullied
- Like I was 7 years old
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other? \_\_\_\_\_

Being sure that we are communicating confidently is something that most of us deal with in one way or another on a daily basis. Worry about how we present ourselves can be a very personal and very emotional experience. And, if the experience is consistently negative or nerve-racking, it can have long term impact on our ability to communicate effectively. The good news is that confidence is a skill that can be learned.

**Confidence can be gained by doing (Specifically, some combination of trying, failing, trying again, and finally accomplishing.)**

### **Why is Confidence Important to Communication?**

Confidence is essential to communications. Why? Because, if we do not speak (verbally, nonverbally or in print and electronically) in a positive, action-oriented confident way, we will not be perceived as credible by others. People will not believe that we mean what we say or that we can in fact do the things we might be talking about doing. It is important to note that what we say isn't always as important as how we say it. Confidence can be exhibited through words, how we present ourselves, and through our actions.

**Any time we choose "yes" we are also choosing "no" to something else.** And the emotional message resulting from this simple choice may have a fantastic, or devastating long-term result. Dan Ohler

### **How Does Confidence Relate to Social IQ?**

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From an etiquette perspective, **Civility Experts Worldwide** describes Social IQ as “social knowledge”, which includes awareness, an ability to interpret situations, knowledge of social expectations, and ability to apply/adapt those expectations in any situation. Social IQ serves to establish minimum standards of behaviour (including rules and etiquette) for interacting with others in a positive way. Social IQ is about identifying a quality in human beings that makes them capable of understanding what makes their lives worthwhile and makes their society better, during their lifetime and after. Courtesy and Social IQ overlap, because exercising either indicates a consideration for others, a deliberate choice to put the needs of others first, and an awareness of how one’s behaviour directly impacts others. Put simply, even if a person is moral and has character, having Social IQ helps that person determine when and how to apply integrity, respect, courtesy, and moral IQ.

*Social intelligence is in the tradition of wisdom,  
not the more current idea of “smartness.” ~ Norman D. Livergood.*

When a person is focused and more aware of what is going on around him/her, he/she is better able manage time, responsibilities and priorities. And, when a person gets into the habit of using his/her Social IQ, he/she usually makes better decisions. Those decisions are less likely to cause problems in the decision-makers work or home life or with relationships because when the decision was made, the person doing the deciding considered a range of factors; how his/her behaviour impacts others, what would be the outcome of a decision, what factors were influencing the decision etc.

Because a person with high Social IQ is generally more in tune with his/her own needs and wants (priorities) and because that person is also in the habit of considering others, he/she is able to make decisions more quickly, he/she is more productive, he/she is better able to communicate, and negotiate with others, and as a result of all that... he/she is more confident.

## **Ten Steps to Communicating Confidence**

### **1 Remember your Purpose and Priorities**

So often people say, “There’s just not enough time in the day” or “I am up all night and I still can’t get everything done”. Sometimes we may truly take on more than we can handle but many times, the reason we don’t get our work done is because we aren’t actually spending sufficient time working. It’s important to remember what your purpose is, for example when you are at work, you should focus on the business priority- that is, what ultimately are you paid to do- and focus on that.

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Adopting business as the priority means that every decision you make; what to wear, what to say, whether or not to eat a certain thing, whether to answer the phone, if you should have one drink or two.... and so on.... every decision revolves around accomplishing the business at hand, presumably a specific business goal but at least business in general.

At home and in personal settings, remembering your purpose may mean reminding yourself what your goals are, or why you are in a particular situation. For example, if you are attending a wedding- the purpose is to celebrate the happy occasion with the couple- it is not about ensuring all of your personal and emotional needs are met. This is why you don't cause a fuss if your meal isn't perfect, or draw attention to yourself. If you are attending a sporting event where your child is playing, the purpose is to encourage the child and show good sportsmanship. Reminding yourself of this purpose will help you make decisions about what behavior is appropriate in that setting and you will present yourself as confident (and courteous).

Often, when people are unclear of their purpose and priorities, they behave inappropriately and this can be perceived by others as low intelligence, low maturity, and low confidence.

## **2 Adopt a Four E's Philosophy**

A recent study suggested that one quality that differentiates leaders is consistency. Specifically, good leaders have an ability to be fair and reasonable, regardless of who they are interacting with and when making decisions. This idea relates to civility in the workplace, at home, at school, or anywhere you may be. Applying the Four E's philosophy will help you with many of the small and simple decisions you have to make daily, and although things are sometimes more complicated with big-money workplace decisions, a Four E's attitude might get you over some of the initial hurdles in making big decisions too.

*The Four E's Philosophy* (by Civility Experts Worldwide) is that everyone, in every situation, every time, gets exactly the same respect and consideration. For example, we don't make decisions about who is treated respectfully or courteously on the basis of gender, generation, rank, the day of the week, etc. When it becomes obvious to employees (because they see it everyday) that a manager or supervisor is consistent in treating people fairly, (no favoritism, no decisions based on age, or gender etc) and always focused on the business priority, respect grows. It doesn't take long until people stop playing games and trying to manipulate the boss or play the politics because they see it is fruitless to do so.

When you adopt the Four E's Philosophy, your attitude of respect and consideration will show in everything you do. You won't hesitate in your interactions and because decision-making will come easier to you, you will appear (and after a short time actually be) more self-confident.

### **3 Ensure a Positive First Impression**

First impressions carry a lot of weight so why not work hard to control what you can to ensure a good impression? For example, dress appropriately, practice your posture, bring business cards, engage in 2-way conversation, extend a firm handshake, and make eye contact when appropriate.

Physiognomy is any judgment about a person's character based on external appearance. Examples of physiognomy are: reflexology (your feet know), iridology (your eyes know). Physiognomy dates back to [Aristotle](#).  
<http://home.ubalt.edu>

### **4 Accentuate the Positive – Play up on your strengths**

Everyone is good at something, find what you are good at and use it to your advantage. Certainly you should work at improving the things you are not good at, but don't talk about them, and don't dwell on them. If you are not confident in your appearance, do the best you can but then really play up on your superior communication skills and/or your consistent positive attitude.

### **5 Master Nonverbal Communication**

a) Be deliberate about standing up straight, control your expressions and gestures, shake hands, make eye contact, and do all of those things consistently.

### **6 Avoid Words that Undermine Credibility and Confidence**

Think before you speak. Try to talk less and choose positive words.

How we talk, our tone of voice, speech style and the vocabulary we use says a lot about who we are. Whoever is listening can often pick up clues about how much we really know, how strongly we feel about something and how much self-confidence we have just by listening to the words we use and how we use them. It's important to learn how our body language along with can the words we use can help us to communicate to others that we are positive and happy. The only challenge can be those words and phrases that show the opposite. Here are some examples:



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The following words say, “I’m not entirely sure” or “I’m not too confident” or “I’m not feeling very optimistic”....

maybe	sorry	no!	that’s not possible
Huh!	sometimes	but....	hmmm...
I can’t....	#\$@(*&^.....	never	always

These words say “I’m confident”, “I’m positive”, “I’m confident”....

yes!	thank you	I’ll find out	let’s see
I can	If...then....	What about...Please	
I will	I want to		

When we speak to others, especially someone who is angry or upset, we want to use language that shows concern and a willingness to help, however, we do not want to take personal responsibility for things beyond our control and we do not want to appear incompetent or wimpy in our communications with them.

### **7 Learn to say “No” Politely**

There is no law that says you must say yes or no within 20 seconds of receiving a request, however, if you say “no” it is best not to just say “NO” soften the blow by adding “thank you” or put “I appreciate the offer..” in front of the word no. In addition, most people expect a short explanation, particularly if you are declining a gesture or personal nicely that stemmed from kindness.

Louise Fox of [www.etiquetteladies.com](http://www.etiquetteladies.com) suggests that saying no nicely is as vital a part of your personality as doing the things that you are sure please people. When you express choices, you are giving others information that helps them get to know the real you; what you like, what you value and what you want in your life.

### **8 Increase your Social IQ**

One of the main reasons people behave inappropriately is because they are unsure what behavior is expected of them. Brush up on your social IQ. Social Intelligence is the extent to which you successfully use your social radar (instinct), social style, and social knowledge to interact with others. The easiest way to boost your Social IQ is to increase your social knowledge For example, if you are going to a formal dinner and are nervous about what fork to use, take ten minutes and snoop around online, read a book, or ask for help. Knowledge is power and even though social skills seem “soft” or “add-on” the truth is knowledge about how to behave in any situation will help you feel confident and then rather than worry about silly things, you can focus on the people or priorities at hand.

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**9 Set a high personal standard and maintain it.**

A common problem with interpersonal relationships generally, but especially at work where rank is sometimes an issue, is that people who are making the rules sometimes don't bother to follow the rules. If leaders/managers want those who look to them for leadership to respect them, those same leaders/managers need to set high personal standards and work hard to maintain them. Expect as much of yourself (or more) than you expect of others. Don't make the mistake of thinking a double-standard will build credibility.

**10 Be Polite to Yourself.**

If you want other people to treat you well, you have to show them that you respect yourself and treat yourself well. Pay attention to how you look, how you feel, what boundaries you set for yourself, etc. If you can control your image, your reactions, your time (to an extent anyway) you will feel more confident and other people will notice.

If you wouldn't say something out loud to a friend, you shouldn't say it (or think it) to yourself, says Kevin Thompson, Ph.D., psychologist and author of *Exacting Beauty: Theory, Assessment and Treatment of Body Image Disturbance*.

**If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit [www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com](http://www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com) where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.**

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