

Building Confidence at Work

Should building confidence at work be your concern? Why should you invest in making people feel better about themselves? Surely it is up to the individual to deal with this in his or her own way?

Unfortunately, you cannot afford to ignore this any longer, as what we are now discovering is that an individual's lack of confidence and belief in themselves impacts on everyone around them, and ultimately the organisation as a whole. Lowered motivation, decreased productivity and fewer profit margins develop in direct proportion to lack of initiative taken by a Company in addressing this. Simply put **lack of confidence** is blocking motivation, attitude and ultimately performance in some workplaces here in NZ.

As always, there are effective ways to manage this, but first we need to know what signs to look for, and ultimately work with.

The following is a simple outline for recognising what is a seeming lack of confidence in some, as well as those who apparently 'exude' confidence, but simply aren't confident at all. There are several reasons why someone may be lacking in confidence, but for the sake of simplicity – let's keep it to three:

1. This has been a part of their personality since you have known them.
2. They have been knocked back by a Manager with no Emotional Intelligence.
3. They simply believe they are not good at their job.

When we consider the first type listed (1. above), what typifies these people is that they have always been reticent and appeared unwilling to be noticed in the crowd. Don't confuse this with shyness - as there is a difference between being shy and lacking in confidence. For the person lacking in confidence, they will be uncomfortable about being singled out for any attention whatsoever, and although they may be feeling many things, they will not show them outwardly. They have been conditioned from a young age that they are 'not good enough', 'useless', or have even been told they 'will never amount to anything'. Unfortunately this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy – they just cannot believe they are worthwhile or effective at anything they do. Their behaviour will be accommodating as opposed to challenging and you will have to work hard to gain their belief that you do value their performance at work.

For the second type listed, what is apparent is that although they have a huge skill base and knowledge of their role and subsequent expectations – they are not prepared to put themselves out there to shine. This has usually come about because they have been 'shut down' by a Manager or Team Leader, who does not display 'Emotional Intelligence' at work. Unfortunately, this has knocked their confidence to the extent that they don't wish to submit any new ideas or thoughts around project development or task completion. They no longer have the trust to do so. Interestingly enough, the Manager who did this to them has displayed the classic signs of insecurity or envy!

For the third type, the lack of confidence you note in these people may appear in a different form, in other words they seem positive, bright and fully competent – but when push comes to shove – they just can't deliver in a public forum. This will be particularly obvious when dealing with Senior Management and External Clients – basically anyone who they perceive holds a position of power or authority over them.

What you have here is a classic case of the 'no confidence, but will mask it at all costs' type of person.' What will become apparent in the workplace, is that they are well liked, hard working, and appear fully capable. What you are not aware of; is this person's complete lack of confidence/belief in themselves. They feel fraudulent and are waiting for you to discover that they can't do the job at all!

Whichever it is, there are some ways to manage all types, so that you get the best from them and they feel more able to achieve what they need to at work.

The following are some ideas that will bring about this twofold effect – You being able to get the best performance they can give - and them feeling more confident about giving their best performance.

- ❖ Always acknowledge work presented. Do this in a public forum - except for Type 1 above - or through a face-to-face interaction/phone call. Do not omit to do this. (Don't use email – it is a lesser form of communication).
- ❖ Begin to customise your recognition of them at work. This shows them you do think about them as an individual. Ways to do this (e.g.) may be in the form of movie tickets, rugby tickets or even a book voucher.
- ❖ Create an opening to start building their confidence by asking for their input on projects and then actually using this.
- ❖ Make time for this person to meet with you regularly, (with a loose agenda). This allows them to 'open up' to you if the possibility arises. Whatever you do, do not confront them about their lack of confidence, as they will have no choice but to withdraw from you.
- ❖ Act on anything they instigate – this is a natural confidence builder.

You will notice that by allowing them time to 'evolve' in the workplace they will naturally start to relax more, and if that happens, confidence will develop of its own accord.

Do not confuse a lack of confidence with a lack of ability. These will be some of your most focused and dedicated Team Members, and their contribution will be what can make or break a project succeeding. The only thing letting them down is their belief in themselves.

You have an opportunity to make a difference. You can begin to show your belief in them – through:

- Investing time in them
- Advocating for and promoting their ideas
- Following through on any promises made
- Recognising what is okay and what needs to be improved upon
- Keeping it real – do not be disingenuous, as this will become apparent

By adopting some of these ideas, you stand to gain not just their confidence in you, but also become an integral part in developing theirs.

For more on this topic and some further ideas to address this issue - see the Workshop Outlines and Resources we provide, listed below.

Recommendations

For the individuals exhibiting Confidence issues:

Workshops and/or Coaching sessions on;

Building Confidence at Work
Attitude at Work
Mindset in the Workplace
Motivation at Work

For the Managers leading Team Members with Confidence Issues:

Workshops

Building Confidence at Work
Emotional Intelligence
Motivating People with Confidence Issues

Consultations

Consulting Session (Groups of Managers/Leaders) dealing with specific individualised issues concerning Confidence in the Workplace
Consulting Session (one on one) with Managers/Leaders targeting specific concerns regarding Team Members with Confidence Issues

Please contact us if you would like information on any of the above.

By Gloria Masters
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