



Leadership Matters



5 Steps to Greater Confidence

September, 2010

By Donna Zajonc

Last month's article on forgiveness and innovation sparked a lot of conversation. I heard from more readers than any article I can remember ([read it](#)). The story of Rae Cheney's forgiveness and her upcoming trip to Vietnam just days after her 90th birthday touched many people.

Through Rae and Jerilyn's desire to forgive and reach out to the Vietnamese people, I have observed their strong sense of confidence. Always filled with humility, it is their confidence in the vision of PeaceTrees Vietnam that keeps them moving forward. In Vietnam they will meet with leaders from the highest level of government.

When we think of a confident person, we usually say they are self-assured or have no doubts about their abilities. Bold, secure and sure-footed are other adjectives.

There are two sides to this coin, however and confidence is a delicate balance. If we are overly confident, we may be labeled brash or cocky. If we are under confident, we are called underachievers or wimps.

[My clients](#) often resist my urging to step-up their outward appearance of confidence in order to avoid the egotistical label. This resistance can lead to a weak approach to their work and leadership.

Where does one start to improve their confidence without looking overly brash? I work with my clients on five key steps or qualities to improve their confidence. Certainly these are not the only qualities of a confident leader. They are many. However, these action steps will help you imbue the qualities of a confident leader. The result will be strong relationships where others see you as confident and self-assured leader.

1. **Confident leaders lift others up rather than put others down.** When you think of confident leaders in your life, I would bet that they are people who appreciate and encourage others to grow and develop as they readily dish out praise. In contrast, cocky leaders look for self-praise and the lime light.
2. **Confident leaders strive for continuous learning.** In our complex world, knowledge is doubling every eighteen months. Confident leaders strive for continuous learning and are humbled by the body of knowledge they have yet to learn. If you believe you "know everything," chances are you are annoying just about everyone around you.

3. **Confident leaders use humor to connect with others.** Confident leaders are the first to joke about their own insufficiencies and they can also take a joke made by others. Brash leaders may get defensive when others are joking about their qualities in an effort to hide their insecurities.
4. **Confident leaders have excellent listening skills.** Confident leaders often want to hear from others before they exert influence with their ideas. They genuinely want to hear diverse perspective and discover what they may not see. Smug leaders are the first to talk and put their opinion on the table.
5. **Confident leaders are guided by their own values and expectations.** Confident leaders measure themselves by their inner compass and less by how they are viewed by others. For the boastful leader, winning and pushing their ideas ahead of others is the point of comparison. Cocky leaders judge themselves superior if they receive approval from outside sources.

If we try hard to act confident, we'll probably end up looking like we are trying to hard. Developing the qualities of confidence is a day by day process. Relax and focus on practicing one or two qualities each day. Maybe listening is where you start. Or, finding strengths in others and giving compliments maybe your first step.

Incorporating these five qualities will guide you toward a higher level of assurance. In turn, this confidence may open doors and experiences both personally and professionally. Guided by compassion and confidence, Rae and Jerilyn are taking PeaceTrees Vietnam on a path that will touch and remember many lives. Let confidence guide your actions, improve your communications and build your vision for your journey.

I am excited to share that my husband and I are traveling to India the first half of September. David has business in Delhi (read more about his work at www.powerofted.com). Neither of us has been to India so we are taking this opportunity to tour Northern India including cities Agra, Jaipur and Samode over nine days. We will spend our wedding anniversary at the Taj Mahal! [Read more about our itinerary.](#)