

PUBLICATION

11 Ways to Strengthen Your Confidence Muscles

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Self-confidence is defined as a feeling of trust in your own abilities, qualities, and judgment. While it's an innate trait for some people, we absolutely believe confidence is a skill you can cultivate and strengthen. Whether you need a boost in confidence to ask for business, a place on a client team, an opportunity to lead, a raise, more help at home, better care for an aging parent, or fair treatment for your child, you can strengthen your confidence muscles with the right workouts.

As strategic partners to Baker Donelson for more than a decade, the Wicker Park Group (WPG) supports the Firm's client feedback program and serves as an extension of the Marketing and Business Development team. For the past five years, we have also worked with the attorneys in the Firm's BakerRain program. We develop close relationships with each class through the group meetings and a year of one-on-one business development coaching. While we each have more than 20 years of experience talking to law firm clients and training and coaching lawyers, we find that we always learn so much from the participants. It's been thrilling to see the Firm's future leaders develop new habits and skills, try new things, take risks, invest in their futures, change attitudes, collaborate with each other, and flex their confidence muscles. Most importantly, we celebrate how it all positively impacts their careers, job satisfaction, and lives.

Below are 11 ways we've seen attorneys strengthen their confidence and rise to the top:

1. **Be prepared and practice.** This skill is the one that comes most naturally to lawyers in most areas of their work. By approaching all areas of your career (and life) with the same intentional and deliberate focus you apply to your legal work, you will see your confidence escalate. Rehearse and role-play your conversations to uncover needs, priorities, and expectations of your clients with a colleague. World-class athletes and performers don't just show up and play or perform. They practice, refine, rework, tweak, and tinker with their skills for hundreds, if not thousands, of hours before we see them make it look effortless.
2. **Don't let fear and doubt stop you.** Many of us females spend quite a bit of time worrying or overthinking potential problems because we let fear get the best of us. It may be fear of the unknown or fear of something we think might happen but often never has or will. Building confidence is often about building rapport and having the right intentions. You don't have to say or do everything perfectly.
3. **Try new things.** One BakerRain alumnus says successful business development required a mindset shift of "getting comfortable being uncomfortable." Doing things as simple as trying new foods, driving a different route to routine locations, taking up a new hobby or making a new recipe gives you practice doing things outside of your comfort zone and can help you flex your confidence muscles. Challenge yourself to start small and build the confidence to be more courageous over time.
4. **Seek feedback.** Ask for feedback — often. Ask questions like "What went well during this assignment, project, meeting, training, etc.?" and "What should I or we do differently the next time?"

By asking for feedback, you better understand your clients' or colleagues' expectations and position yourself to be the preferred partner for whatever projects come next. Most importantly, act on any feedback you receive!

5. **Play to your strengths.** At Wicker Park Group, our mantra is always "One size fits one," so "You do you." Don't try to be or copy someone else. We all have distinct gifts, strengths, and preferences. Seek feedback to find out what your clients and colleagues see as your greatest strengths and build from there. While it's important to get out of our comfort zones, being genuine and focusing on things you do well will help you feel more confident.
6. **Be intellectually curious.** Ask great questions and focus more on being interested rather than interesting. Great business developers don't win business or influence opinions by talking about themselves, but by being curious.
7. **Be an encourager.** Focus on investing in the success of others. When you help others succeed, you feel great about yourself. And when you ask your clients, friends, and colleagues to help you, they will be flattered to know you hold them in such esteem that you trust their advice and guidance.
8. **Stop listening to argue and listen to understand.** It's human nature to listen briefly to what others say and then spend most of the time they are talking formulating a response. For lawyers, that is often making an argument or pointing out the faults in an opinion. By practicing active listening and focusing on listening to understand another person's point of view, we more quickly gain the confidence and trust of others. [Studies show](#) that feeling understood is even more important than feeling loved.
9. **Dress the part.** Body language and appearance matter, maybe even more so in our newly adopted virtual world. Particularly when you have a big meeting or presentation, wear something that makes you smile (for us, that's often a bright color like an orange, red, or coral). Balance something that makes you comfortable with the fact that polish and presentation matter when you are asking someone for thousands of dollars — and their trust. Social psychologist Amy Cuddy touts the [power pose](#): standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident as a quick and easy way to boost our self-confidence. As my very southern mother would say, "You'd feel better if you put on some lipstick."
10. **Take action.** Set small, actionable goals for yourself that advance your bigger goals. When you focus on the next step you need to take, you will feel much more capable and before too long you will have accomplished your goal. We often spend so much time analyzing and focusing on the obstacles, we lose sight of the small steps toward progress that we can make every day. Focus on the do, not the dread.
11. **Repeat.** Rome wasn't built in a day. Successful business executives have made mistakes and lost their focus. Rainmakers started as associates too. Don't beat yourself up if you have not flexed your confidence muscles to the best of your ability. Review this list and pick a few things you can do this week to get back on track. Encourage yourself as you would a friend and remind yourself that each day (week, month, year!) is a new opportunity.