

12 Ways to Tell if You're Confident – or Arrogant

Perception is reality. No matter how good your intentions are, what matters is how you are perceived. To start, avoid these 12 don'ts so your team doesn't think you're too arrogant to work for.

There's a fine line between confidence and arrogance. This is especially true given both entail a strong belief in one's own abilities. When it comes to the results they provoke, however, that's where the similarities end.

Confidence is inspiring; arrogance is a turn-off.

Confidence gets hired; arrogance is shown the door.

Building confidence takes work; arrogance is simple. In fact, it's easy to come off as arrogant. Avoid these 10 behaviors so you don't leave the impression of being a Class-A jerk people would rather avoid instead of the confident leader they want to follow.

1. Drop names out of context. The name-dropper is a character who frequents many local Chamber of Commerce mixers. Name-droppers are a dime a dozen. Completely unsolicited, they will jabber endlessly about who they know, who they met and who they pal around with. As a journalist, I interview many great business leaders, one of whom was Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz. Bringing up his name in a presentation about leadership is appropriate; talking about Schultz with a barista at my local Starbucks is arrogant.

2. Avoid eye contact. Arrogant people could care less about others. They're only interested in themselves. The arrogant person will constantly be looking past you for someone else to talk to — someone they think will benefit them more than you. Confident leaders look you in the eye and make you feel as though you're the most important person in the room.

3. Arrive consistently late to meetings ... and don't apologize. Arrogant people think their time is more important than anybody else's. Being late means nothing to them. Confident leaders are timely and quick to apologize when they're off schedule.

4. Use condescending phrases and put-downs. Some well-known business leaders have been known to put down others with phrases like "that's stupid" or "you're a bozo." These particular leaders are supremely confident, of course, but they've crossed the line into arrogance. I worked for one famous broadcast executive who routinely demeaned his employees and colleagues. Before long there was a massive brain drain from his department. He was bright ; ambitious; and yes, confident. But his arrogance turned so many people off that he lost the loyalty of his team (and ultimately his position).

5. Strut or swagger when you walk into a room. The best way to describe arrogant body language is "dominating." Examples include pointing a finger at someone's chest, hands on hips or waving someone off with a flick of the finger. Confidence is open and less intimidating.

6. Interrupt conversations ... frequently. Since arrogant people are only concerned about themselves, they're not really listening to you. Not only are they always on the lookout for someone else to talk to, they interrupt the conversation frequently

7. Have an answer for everything. Psychologists say that arrogance is a compensation for insecurities and weaknesses. An arrogant person will rarely say, "I don't know the answer, but I'll find out." Confident people admit mistakes and learn something from those experiences.

10. Always one-up the other person. The other day I was speaking to someone who has a reputation for arrogance, and I noticed a common theme in his conversation with me — he always tried to one-up everything I said. For example, when the conversation turned to a documentary that I had recently seen on sharks, this man said, “That’s nothing, I swim with sharks.” This trait in arrogant people is so common that the famous Dilbert cartoon strip has a recurring character named “Topper.” Confident people don’t feel the need to brag. Their accomplishments do it for them.

11. Blast competitors. Arrogant people can’t see the strengths in their competitors, and if they do, they seek to minimize those competitors by bad-mouthing them. This simply makes the arrogant person look even smaller. I recently overheard a woman talking to a recruiter and saying vicious things about her former company as well as other companies in the industry. The recruiter listened patiently. When the woman left, I leaned over and asked the recruiter what he thought. He simply rolled his eyes. Take the high road so you don’t get the eye roll.

12. Blame someone else. Arrogant people can’t ’fess up to their own mistakes. Watch *America’s Top Model* with Tyra Banks. The most arrogant young wannabes are the ones who blame others for not taking a good photograph — it’s either the fault of the photographer or the makeup artist. Needless to say, they don’t last long, even in an industry that has more than its share of divas.

Some famous business leaders are unquestionably arrogant — people about whom you may have heard or for whom you work. But the vast majority of inspiring leaders are confident, not arrogant. Be a leader people want to follow and not one people would rather avoid.

About the Author:

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