

Creating a Failure Proof Intellect

The foundation of for success in any field.

By Arthur F. Carmazzi



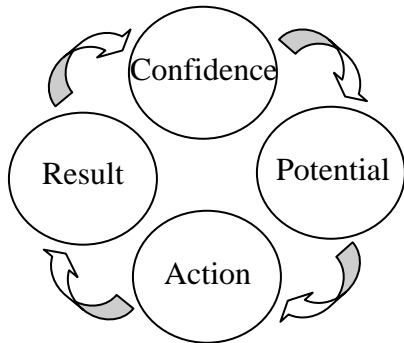
I once interviewed a gentleman from the most prestigious school in Korea (Seoul National University) for a consulting position. While his credentials were flawless, his answers were credible and his appearance was professional, he lacked something, he lacked the ability to convince me he was capable. After 3 interviews, I gave the job to an individual with fewer credentials than this seemingly-accomplished candidate. His downfall was as follows:

First, body language- the hunched over posture and hands between his knees, the facial innuendos when he answered the proposed questions and the way he seldom looked at me when speaking. The conflicting messages between what came from his mouth, and what his body showed were clearly beyond any cultural difference.

Second, the tone of his voice- the drawn-out pauses and the yielding softness of uncertainty, the lack of conviction or passion for his accomplishments or his future, and the deficit of assertiveness in his pitch. The signs all pointed in one direction. All his credentials and fancy cloths could not make up for the most fundamental quality a senior employee must have, confidence. How can anyone have confidence in a person who does not have confidence in himself?

It could be an isolated instance, perhaps this candidate had no confidence in interviews? Yet this one instance cost him a job. And how many instances are costing us success? The dread of public speaking, the fear of rejection, the panic of stepping into an uncertain future. How much more could we accomplish if we had the confidence to take any challenge? What differences would this make in our lives, in our careers?

There is a direct correlation between confidence and accomplishment. Personal and business success are directly linked to one's perception of ability. The cycle goes like this: our confidence (or lack of) determines our potential (or at least our perception of potential), the potential we perceive determines the action that we take, and how much conviction and certainty are carried with that action.



The result we get from that action will in turn affect our confidence (a good result will increase confidence and bad result may decrease confidence).

But the cycle can be skewed in our favor

Confidence is a state of mind; it can be cultivated just like any other talent and it is a conscious decision that we make to improve the quality of our life.

So how do we get confidence in the areas that we may be lacking? There are 4 methodical steps to unlimited confidence.

Step #1 The body

The first and most important technique is the use of our body. Everything that comes into our mind gets filtered through our body. Notice how we breathe when we are happy, where our shoulders are when we feel powerful, and how relaxed our muscles are when we are depressed. Each is distinctive to its own emotional state. For example, if we are happy, our breathing is usually fast and deep, yet if we are depressed, it's usually slow and shallow. These are human recipes called "Condition Formulas" and every emotional state has its own. Consider the last time you felt confident, how were you breathing, was your body tense or relaxed, was your head up or down, where were your eyes, were your movements fast or slow, were you standing or sitting? The answers to these questions depict your physical Condition Formula for confidence. So the first step toward confidence is the implementation of this formula.

A study was done at Florida State University with patients suffering from Mantic/Depression. When the patients were winding down from their manic state, in place of drugs (the usual treatment for this condition to balance emotions), they were asked to simply smile consistently. The results were astonishing; nearly 80% overcame the depressive state without drugs and were able to maintain emotional stability. And all they did was smile. The study proved the direct correlation between the body and the way we feel. So the first step, remember your Condition Formula for confidence, and implement the all the elements of the formula (i.e. breath, posture, movement, etc.) into your current body state.

Step #2 Focus

Our brain can only truly concentrate on one thing at any given time, we cannot read this article and watch the news at the same time. So as you continue to read, you process the information according to your own experience and values, then, YOU determine whether the information is true or false, good or bad, implementable or not. We do this with every occurrence, every situation and every action. Like a diamond, every circumstance has many sides, some are shiny, some are brilliant, some are dull some are flawed, and when we look at one, that's all we see. We often see situations that cross our paths, from the perspective of the dull or flawed and hence destructive sides and thus fail to see the brilliant or shiny constructive sides. But it is a choice, and we must make a conscious effort to decide which side to look at. A haunting testament to this summons the memory of the first time I gave a presentation; it was in front of a group of attorneys. Before the speech I kept reflecting on how much more experience these individuals had than I did, and thinking to myself "What can I tell these people that they already don't know?" I was focusing on the fact that they were older than I was and how their age equated to knowledge. I failed miserably at delivering the information I was to present. Why? Not because of a lack of knowledge, not because of lack of preparation, but because I focused on all the reasons needed to consume my confidence. The reasons that translated to loss of ideas, stuttering, and just plain poor delivery. In retrospect, if I would have thought about the reality of the situation in the first place, my confidence level, as well as the outcome of the presentation, would have been drastically improved. They were attending the presentation because they believed they could learn from me, and the fact was, that I was speaking on a specialized topic that the average lawyer was only generally familiar with, and I had more experience on this topic than any of the people in the room regardless of age. But at the time it was easier to focus on the why not, giving me an excuse to fail, I set myself up and I did a disservice to the people that came to see me. It would have only taken a few moments to ponder the other side, to focus on the reasons why I was qualified, why I could speak well, and why I had a great deal to offer my audience. Confidence in any situation is a product of our body and then our focus, both require a conscious decision to alter, and both make a huge difference in the outcome of our efforts.

Step #3 Ask the right questions

When we evaluate any situation, we will ask ourselves a question. The feelings we create, and the actions we take (or don't) are determined by the answers we come up with. The more control we exercise over these questions we ask, the more control we have over our state, and thus our potential. Why is this true? Because our brain will focus on where we direct it. For example evaluating an interview or presentation, we might ask "Why do I get nervous?" or "Why can't I consolidate my thoughts properly?". In this case, our brain in all its grandeur will find all the reasons you get nervous or can't consolidate your thoughts, even if there are no legitimate reasons, our brain is so magnificent it will make something up. This can be quite disempowering, alternatively, if we purposefully direct our questions to empower, we will find ourselves asking "Why was I so confident when I

...” or “How can I organize my thinking to better communicate?”, and our brain will once again give us the answers.

Fellow speaker and finance expert David Rogers gave me an example of how he developed the confidence to speak in front of large audiences. He stated, “The first workshop I delivered, I did not perform up to my expectations. Yet instead of asking myself “Why did you mess up?” or “Why don’t you just quit?”, I asked myself “What should I improve on?, How can I perform even better?”. By asking the right questions, my subconscious delivered some healthy, constructive advice, and have used this technique ever since. The power of questions has defiantly been one of the most important tools in gaining confidence and realizing my success.” David is now one of the most sought after speakers on the subject of how to deliver impactful financial presentations.

Key#4 Frame the concept

Changing the meaning of what we associate to any situation can dramatically change the results we get. Fashioning new associations into habits helps to set the foundation for a spontaneous confidence. A confidence that develops unconsciously as we continue to implement our tactics, until one day it is part of us. One example from the personal archives of my past was an episode in High School, were I was in the eyes of my peers, a nerd. And the first girl I ever asked on a date, laughed at me. Needless to say, I was devastated, rejection was synonymous with humiliation and any trace of confidence was crushed by this unforgettable mental image of laughter. A few years later however, I realized that the lack of confidence I had about women was not a healthy one, and it would rob me of future romance and connection that I believed would enrich my life. So I decided to change. First, I asked myself what rejection really meant in this case. I decided it signified that if I was rejected, the relationship was never meant to be. And if it wasn’t meant to be, I would be saving time and money by circumventing an unnecessary date. Second, I thought about what success was in this instance, and decided that it was not in getting the date (that became a benefit of the process), but in assertively and confidently asking for the date. Soon, every time I was rejected, I was empowered with my success in asking, and in saving time and money. In each case I gained more confidence, and as time went on, I was rejected less and less (roughly guessing, from about 5% success to over 60% success). I had overcome my obstacle by repositioning the meanings of what I was taught by society, and the actions that offered me this empowerment and confidence quickly became second nature. I couldn’t lose.



So How?

While the implementation of these techniques will defiantly make a great difference in our levels of confidence and our lives in general, it's not easy. It requires us to make conscious decisions in order to develop our unconscious competency. It requires us to take consistent action until it becomes our nature. It requires an uncompromising commitment to improve. And the final question is "Is your success worth the commitment?"