Demonstrating Confidence

Template

Please read the scenario and then respond to the three questions below:

Scenario

You have been invited to join ‘Project Albatross’ which consists of a multi-functional team developing Microsoft’s next hackathon on the topic of ‘Sustainability’. Your manager nominated you as they know you have an interest in the topic and feel it is a good opportunity for you to build your profile in the company. You have not been involved in a hackathon before and are excited, although a little daunted, about the prospect. The kick-off meeting for the project is three days away and will be held face-to-face. The meeting is being led by Fergus Smith the Project Sponsor. Also attending are Erica Wu (Program Manager), Anita Wang (Software Engineer), Eugene Feng (Cloud Solutions Architect) and Sharon Ying (Premier Field Engineer). You believe most of the project team were involved in managing last year’s hackathon. The purpose of the kick-off meeting is to meet everyone on the project team, review what worked well last year, identify what didn’t work well and what needs to change, brainstorm ideas and then allocate responsibilities.

What three things can you do BEFORE the meeting to build your confidence and credibility?

1. Following your invitation to the meeting, send an email briefly introducing yourself to the team and authentically (and briefly) communicate your excitement about being involved in the project team. This will send a warm impression to your new project team members.
2. Prepare for the kick-off meeting by being aware of who has been invited and is attending (and who has declined), what is in the agenda and the allocated time. And of course, ensure you know where the meeting room is, so you are not late trying to find it.
3. Undertake thorough research about hackathons so you are across critical information and appear knowledgeable. This would include building your knowledge about what a hackathon is, what contributes to their success, what feedback has been provided about previous Microsoft hackathons (source evaluation reports and seek out people who have attended), and what competitors in the marketplace are doing in relation to hackathons.
4. Learn about the project team members – their roles, experiences, reputation, personal brand, etc. Review their internal bios, their LinkedIn profiles, ask their colleagues about how they like to work and communicate, etc.
5. Identify how you can demonstrate confidence and competence in the meeting. Plan how you will introduce yourself and build rapport with each project team member. Plan how you will add value and contribute your ideas respectfully and passionately.

What three things can you do DURING the meeting to build your confidence and credibility?

1. Make a positive first impression by taking the initiative to smile and shake hands (if appropriate). Make sure you use people’s names and introduce yourself.
2. Use positive body language to acknowledge contributions. Nod, smile, take notes and engage in appropriate eye contact at all times.
3. Build on the ideas already being discussed around the table. Engage with the topic being discussed and look for common themes being discussed to help move the conversation forward. For example, “Yes we could do that and then we could…”.
4. Ask questions to encourage creative thinking. Spend time listening to others and asking questions to encourage others to open up and think expansively. Instead of asking ‘why’ questions, prompt creativity and brainstorming by asking ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions. Examples of questions could include: How did ‘that’ work last year? What could we do differently to achieve a greater impact? How can we differentiate this hackathon and make it memorable? What would the target audience really value?

What three things can you do AFTER the meeting to build your confidence and credibility?

1. Send an email to your manager summarising the key points raised and actions. Managing upwards is an important skill to master, particularly in relation to your workload. You manager needs to be aware of what you are working on, what the time estimates are and what exactly you are doing.
2. Record any ideas the meeting triggered for you. Determine an appropriate time to raise these and who would be the appropriate person to raise them with. This will build your reputation as someone who adds value and is proactive. This helps build your confidence and credibility with others.
3. Complete all actions within the agreed timeframe. Be dependable. If you have any questions whilst completing your actions, make sure you know who to contact and ask them early.
4. Take time to critically reflect on the meeting and what you learned. Evaluate how you contributed. Consider what worked well and what would you do differently next time to build confidence, credibility and competence.