BEING ASSERTIVE AND VOCAL

Somewhere between meekness and arrogance lies the sweet spot of assertiveness - a place where confidence and humility combine to create the most impactful of all work skills.

But how do we define such a quality? “Assertiveness is a communication style. It is the ability to honestly and appropriately express your feelings, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, attitudes and rights, in an open manner without undue anxiety, in a way that doesn’t infringe on the rights of others,” explains psychologist and Get the Gloss Expert Elaine Slater.

When it comes to developing better leadership, presentation, conflict resolution and teamwork skills, assertiveness could fast become a key ally in helping you make noticeable strides in all of these areas, ensuring you express your ideas in the most efficient way possible. We asked Elaine for her top 10 tips.

**1. “USE EMPOWERED VERBAL AND BODY LANGUAGE”**

Subtle changes to the way you communicate your ideas will give your thoughts, arguments and ideas more power and gravitas and a sense of understated authority when you’re feeling you’re most timid. Try replacing ‘but’ with ‘and,’ ‘I should’ with ‘I will’ and ‘I’ll try to’ for ‘I’ll aim to’ and show strength from top to toe from a physical standpoint to drive your point home. “Project confidence with good posture and eye contact,” recommends Elaine. We’ve already found the difference it’s made to our mindsets alone reason enough.

Unable to complete something due to your workload or other upcoming commitments? Always offer an alternative to show initiative and pro-activeness on your part and a talent to replace a negative with a positive.

2**. “GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE”**

Nothing changes if nothing changes, so in order to alter old habits, don’t be afraid to try new things, go to new places and meet new people. Practice makes perfect and like a muscle, assertiveness needs a bit of limbering up in order to make it work at its strongest.

**3. “FOCUS ON CLEAR AND CALM COMMUNICATION”**

No matter how frenzied and heated a meeting gets, stay calm, clear-headed and collected. Keep emotion out of it, keep it professional and don’t get anxious that your thoughts won’t be heard. In fact, a composed and rational stance could make your voice stand out all the more and don’t be tempted to over embellish to maintain an element of control of the situation. “Stick to the facts to support your opinions – don’t exaggerate,” advises Elaine.

**4. “BE TRUE TO YOURSELF”**

“Staying true to your values allows you to be more confident,” says Elaine. People can sniff a brown-noser from a mile away and sticking to your guns will assist in helping you come across more self-assured.

**5. “DON’T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS. BE DIRECT.”**

If you’ve truly struck the balance between assertiveness and arrogance, you needn’t worry about offending anyone by simply expressing your opinion, provided you’ve done your homework and can

back up your points. Cultivating a reputation for talking just for the sake of it is a fast track way to ensure people switch off whenever you speak.

**6. “ASSERTIVENESS AND ARROGANCE ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT ATTITUDES WITH VERY DIFFERENT RESULTANT BEHAVIOURS.”**

When does assertiveness make the ugly transformation into arrogance? “An individual with an assertive attitude is open to other opinions, listens to others, acts constructively and inclusively, and states their opinion decisively,” explains Elaine. “An individual with an arrogant attitude believes only their opinion matters, ignores everyone else, dictates, shouts and argues and tends to push people away.” Keep these reminders close to hand and you’re certain to keep your friends happy too.

**7. “OBSERVE ASSERTIVE ROLE MODELS”**

Is there someone in your life who exudes the type of self-confidence that you wish you could have? Whether they’re your boss or Beyoncé, study their body language and the way they express themselves and try to emulate them, (in the least stalker-like way possible).

**8. “TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND SPEND TIME SETTING GOALS AND THINKING ABOUT YOUR ASPIRATIONS”**

Assertiveness has its roots in good self-esteem. Therefore, setting aside a bit of 'me time' thinking about your life goals and drawing up plans for how you want to get there will give you a sense of direction and purpose which will filter down into your daily interactions. Just ensure that this time is seen as a positive way to assess where you’re going and what you’ve achieved, not a time to get down on yourself regarding what you have not achieved thus far - keep the Ben & Jerry’s firmly in its freezer and your Bridget Jones's Diary DVD firmly in its case.

**9. “BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER”**

Good communication is all about give and take and allowing everyone involved to make a valued contribution. Whether it be a brainstorming session, a meeting or something more informal, don’t shine the spotlight too firmly on your individual contributions - assertiveness is also about looking at the wider picture and being able to further and respond to other people’s ideas. They may well remember those small but meaningful instances where you afforded them that courtesy, which could come in handy further down the line when the tables are turned.

**10. “BE HUMBLE AND MODEST”**

This doesn’t mean talking down your good work or achievements, just balancing an air of confidence and good strength of self with the ability to recognize that you don’t know it all and have the desire to carry on learning. “It is important to be true to ourselves and our values at all times. Remain mindful that being assertive does not mean exerting your will onto others forcefully. Respect for others at all times and assertiveness go hand in hand,” says Elaine. “Self-awareness and self-confidence are the key components of assertive behavior. In order to be assertive in every aspect of our lives we must build healthy levels of self-esteem and self-confidence – knowing who we are and how we feel.”