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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. If you are shy or not overtly confident, perhaps plan and practice what you are

going to say – practice in front of a mirror what you want to say (but don’t

memorise or script it).

1. Allow quiet focused time before the meeting to remind yourself of the agenda,

your key points, how you want to show up in the meeting, etc. Avoid rushing

from another meeting or piece of work.

1. Put yourself in a calm state if you are feeling anxious. Use strategies that work for

you to lower your anxiety about speaking up (e.g. focus on your breathing, avoid

negative self-talk, re-frame how you are feeling and use this ‘stress response’ as a

sign you are ready for action and prepared to bring your best to the meeting.).

1. Arrive at the meeting early to introduce yourself to others as they arrive and build

rapport with each person before the meeting. This will put them in a more

receptive state for receiving your ideas during the meeting if they feel they have

made a connection with you first. It also shows you are well prepared which

contributes to a positive impression.

1. Ensure you are dressed appropriately for the meeting.

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.

1. Aim to speak in the first five minutes of the meeting – by getting your voice

heard in the room early, you show that you have the confidence to engage in the

conversation and you can put your ideas forward whilst everyone is fresh and

paying attention.

1. Use positive body language to acknowledge contributions. Nod, smile, take notes

and engage in appropriate eye contact at all times.

1. 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...”.

1. 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?

1. Find ways to add your positive voice by commenting on other people’s ideas

such as, ‘Great idea, I can see that working really well’. This illustrates your

passion and builds connections.

1. Buy yourself time to think. If you get caught off guard with a question, using a

phrase like ‘that’s a great question’ can buy you time to think. Or simply tell them

that you would like some time to think about it. Allow yourself time to formulate

an appropriate response that contributes to building your confidence and

credibility.

1. Convey ideas simply, but with enthusiasm. Be concise and clear to help everyone

understand your idea, regardless of their area of expertise. Remove jargon where

possible. Explain any technical terms where necessary. Passion and enthusiasm

will showcase your authenticity and help people buy-in to your idea.

9. Stay on topic. Support the meeting agenda by staying on track and on time.

10. Don’t be afraid to highlight issues or challenges. Approach these constructively

by framing your point. For example, avoid phrases such as ‘that won’t work’ and

re-frame it so it is more constructive, For example, “I can see why that might work

in x situation, however in this situation where x is at play, I am wondering whether

that may pose a challenge?” Where possible, be solution focused. Identify

possible alternatives or contingencies. This will demonstrate that you are positive,

thinking strategically and focused on the end result.

1. Focus on the next steps and be pro-active in taking accountability. Be the person

who asks about the next steps, so that everyone is clear what actions are being

taken after the meeting. Volunteer to be assigned certain tasks rather than

waiting to be asked.

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

1. Create a lasting impression with Fergus Smith the Project Sponsor, by sending a

follow up email to thank them for the meeting and expressing the value you

received from the meeting and how excited you are to be part of the project

team. They may not always respond to your email but your proactivity and

enthusiasm will be noted.

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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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.

1. Within 24 hours, follow up with each member of the project team to build the

relationship. Send a short email or message with a positive comment about

meeting them (e.g. you like their idea or you valued their experience). Focus on

building your network. This will also help to build your confidence when you

meet with them again. You could also connect with them on LinkedIn to build

your online network.