Demonstrating Confidence

Answer

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. Firstly I invited the meeting send an email briefly introducing myself to the team and authentically communicate my excitement about being involved in the project team. This will send a warm impression to your new project team members.
2. I 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.
3. I will analyse previous hackathons reports 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, etc.
5. Plan how you will introduce myself and build rapport with each project team member. Plan how you will add value and contribute your ideas respectfully and passionately.
6. 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,
7. 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

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. Aim to speak up in the first 5 minutes if the meeting - By getting your voice in the room early you show that you have the confidence to engage in the conversation and to get your ideas out while everyone is still fresh and paying attention.
3. Build on the ideas already being discussed on the table during the meeting - This will help steer the conversation toward the end goal, by getting colleagues to focus on areas of agreement rather than talking over each other.
4. Ask questions during the meeting to encourage creative thinking - Spend time listening to what others have to say rather than talking too much.
5. Convey ideas simply, but with enthusiasm. Be concise and clear to help everyone understand your idea, regardless of their area of expertise. Passion and enthusiasm will showcase your authenticity and help people buy-in to your idea.
6. Don’t be afraid to highlight issues or challenges. Approach these constructively by framing your point.
7. Stay on topic. Support the meeting agenda by staying on track. Focus on the next steps and be pro-active in taking accountability. 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. I will go through the questions and archive meeting documents for myself. Record any ideas the meeting triggered for me. This helps build your confidence and credibility with others.
2. I will send out notes during the meeting to my team for all the crucial agreements mad via email with key points. Also Send an email to my manager summarising the key points raised and actions during the meeting . Managing upwards is an important skill to master, particularly in relation to your workload. I manager needs to be aware of what you are working on, what the time estimates are and what exactly you are doing.
3. I will follow up to all the commitments made and also remain available and open to all my teammates. Complete all actions within the agreed timeframe.
4. 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.