

## Are you afraid of success?

When it comes to football my team is Preston North End. Last week they lost to Sheffield United in the Championship play-off, ending their dreams of promotion to the Premier League.

I had mixed feelings about the defeat. On the one hand I want them to play in the top flight. On the other, I was secretly relieved that they wouldn't have to face a season struggling at the bottom of the table.

I find similar attitudes are carried by many of the executives I work with.

Although they are highly driven, some have a fear that they simply aren't good enough and will soon be found out. As they go higher in the organisation these feelings can intensify.

Their problem is not a lack of competence but a lack of self-confidence.

The Peter Principle suggests that managers get promoted to their own level of incompetence. I propose an alternative view: that managers are promoted to their own level of insecurity.

We need more managers and business leaders who believe, deep down, that they are good enough, and who do not get carried away with success or become obsessed with setbacks.

Here are five tactics you can use to develop and enhance your self-confidence:

1. **Recognise your successes.** Many of us are only too aware of our failures, and will put them down to our own inadequacies. Yet, we commonly attribute our successes to luck or others' efforts. We must recognise our successes as strongly as our failures. Some people, for example, write a daily list of their victories.
2. **Focus on what you can control.** When Adrian Morehouse won an Olympic swimming gold he didn't set himself the goal of winning, because he couldn't control that outcome. Instead, he focused on achieving a certain time, which was in his control, and which he believed would enable him to win the race.
3. **Reward yourself.** We shouldn't wait for a company bonus, or for others' feedback, before we feel we are rewarded and recognised. Instead, we should learn to reward ourselves. This not only includes big rewards, but also mini-rewards for the smaller, daily successes we all have.
4. **Play to your strengths.** The best way I have found to improve my self-esteem is to focus on my strengths and find other people to take the load where I am weaker. For example, I outsource the management of my accounts – I just don't enjoy administrative stuff. Yes, it costs me more, but it allows me to focus on those areas where I am stronger and happier.
5. **Continually renew your skills and capabilities.** A continuous desire to develop and apply new skills is the engine that drives personal success and self-confidence. Stephen Covey calls this 'sharpening the saw' and it can cover intellectual, physical, social and spiritual motivations.

What other ways have you found to give you the confidence that you are good enough to take the lead?