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Confidence. It is an attribute we seek to have and look for in others, especially those in positions of leadership. Yet, time and time again, we meet executives who lack a confident presence. (We also encounter those who are overly confident — to the point that they are blinded by it — but that is a topic for another time). What many fail to realize is that confidence is dynamic and not a static emotion. Just like a physical muscle that needs exercise to grow stronger, a leader's confidence requires continuous attention.

Face the Facts: To strengthen your confidence, first face the facts. When you look to your past, you'll realize that successes often outweigh failures. And, more importantly, that you survived through the failures and [gleaned priceless lessons along the way](#). Your track record provides an inventory of what has happened over the long run, which you can then balance against what you fear may happen in the short term.

Take for example, an executive we coached in a global marketing service — we'll call him Dave. Having recently been promoted to a senior vice-president position (the third person to take the post in two years), Dave found himself facing new challenges: turning around a low-morale staff, driving new initiatives, and rebuilding the reputation of the department. He also had a whole new set of relationships to manage; he was now part of the executive team and frequently sought for advice by the CEO. "I often feel like I am going to get caught — that someone is going to realize that they made a mistake by promoting me into this position," said Dave at one of our coaching meetings.

When Dave stepped into the executive suite, his confidence stepped out the window. After taking inventory of the various promotions that he had received throughout his career, Dave realized that

he had successfully faced new, albeit different, challenges before. His track record served as a basis of truth against the uncertainty he currently felt. While a cliché of sorts, there is truth in the saying “confidence starts from within.” Ultimately, confidence is the counter to the fears we face — fear of failure, fear of change, fear of inadequacy.

Focus: With your track record as a foundation, it is helpful to focus on your strengths while managing your weaknesses. Most leaders are very strong in a few competencies, average in the majority of competencies, and weak in a few. Successful leaders focus on leveraging their strengths and managing their average/weak areas so that they do not become a deterrent to their effectiveness. Dave accepted that he was not going to be great at everything (nor did anyone expect him to be). With the help of a 360 assessment, he identified his strengths in “managing others” and “creating vision.” By focusing on what he knew he could contribute, Dave grew more confident in his ability to tackle the challenges ahead.

Faith: It is not by accident that the Latin root of the word “confidence” is *con fidere*, which translates to “with faith.” The ultimate faith is a belief in the unseen. Leaders are called to create vision and change for the future out of uncertainty — fundamentally, they operate on a level of faith that helps give purpose, strength, and trust to the path that they carve out for their organizations. Dave’s fear of failing obstructed his ability to succeed. By shifting his attention to the excitement of building, creating, and leading something new, he tapped into a deeper purpose, beyond his day-to-day successes and failures.

Confidence is a constant strengthening exercise. Like a well-conditioned muscle, it needs to be challenged and it also needs relaxation. Facts, focus, and faith each on their own may not get you there. But when you leverage all three in an integrated way, your confidence will absolutely grow.

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