

# **Confidence, Competence, and Awareness**

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I suggest you do a simple self-analysis. Of these three traits (confidence, competence, and awareness), which is the strongest contributor to your leadership effectiveness?

If you and I were together in person and having this conversation, you'd likely ask me to define one or more of these terms. Okay, let's do that. "Confidence" is having a feeling of assurance, a belief in your capacity to handle situations. Think about how confidently you execute your leader responsibilities!

"Competence" is having sufficient capability to influence those you lead in doing the work of the organization. There are many different attributes (such as listening, patience, priority setting, conflict management, and creativity) that contribute to the skills that we call "leadership." If your organization provides periodic performance reviews, the feedback topics usually address your competence.

"Awareness" comes from observing and interpreting what you see, hear, and feel. We all make meaning of circumstances we witness and experience. How open are you to considering new information when it presents itself to you? How aggressively do you seek (or reject) new insights?

Of these three, which do you think is most important in contributing to the effectiveness of a leader? Frankly, I don't know that I can generalize. I've not found any research that shows that one of the factors is more important than the other two. (If you know of such research, please let me know!)

However, I can say that it's likely one of these three is more important to your personal effectiveness as a leader than the other two. Further, you probably sense (and may have received feedback) that one of the other two qualities may routinely hold you back from even greater contribution as a leader.

If you could improve one or more of these characteristics, where would you put your efforts? Would you put your time and energy against your strongest asset, believing that the other two would also be enhanced as you improved? Or would you put your efforts against the one of these elements which you judge constrains your greater effectiveness?

Even if you know which of these characteristics you prefer to target, how would you find out what you can do to improve? Who would you seek as an ally in helping you enhance any of these contributors to your leadership capability? Who would you trust to help you? And who would be willing to help?

The unfortunate reality is that many leaders never even consider these questions. Many individuals just blindly go through the motions of their routine work, believing (or at least hoping) that their contributions are good enough. If they consider improvement at all, it's usually in response to some particular piece of feedback they've received from someone brave enough to offer it.

Would you go to your boss and ask for help? Your boss may be capable of providing some very beneficial guidance relevant to your current and future responsibilities. But can you imagine initiating a conversation with your boss in which you confess that you need support in building your confidence? And what if you don't respect the competence or awareness that you observe in your boss?

Would you ask a friend, a coworker, or your spouse? You may feel more comfortable expressing your need to one of these, but they may be of very limited help to you. Perhaps this is an area where a competent, caring coach could help you significantly, maybe in all three areas.

Let me suggest one particular technique that will certainly suggest to you potential improvement. Adopt the habit of asking two questions after every project or activity. "What did I do well in handling this situation?" "What could I do more effectively next time I face this situation?" Ask the questions separately about your confidence, your competence, and your awareness. You'll likely have some very huge insights initially, and you're almost guaranteed to keep improving as you continue your inquiries.

Perhaps just by reading this article and considering the questions, you've raised your awareness! I encourage you to also look for ways to enhance your competence and confidence as a leader.

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