

Great Leadership

Opinions and information on leadership and leadership development by Dan McCarthy

Awards and Rankings



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Transforming Perceptions: 10 Steps to Managing the Way You Are Perceived at Work

Here's a guest post from executive coach Joel Garfinkle, from his new book, [Getting Ahead](#):



Success at work starts with positive perceptions. If your boss and co-workers have a negative image of you, it's a pretty good bet you won't be getting a promotion anytime soon. That's why it is so important to take charge of the way you are perceived in your organization. This 10-step perception transformation plan will show you how. I recommend trying to focus on one step each week for ten weeks.

Step 1: Pay attention to how your behavior affects others

As you interact with others, take note of the way they react to you. Pay attention to their behavior, speech and body language. Do they seem to react positively or negatively to you? Are they interested in what you have to say? Following each interaction, record your observations in a notebook. Review them later and try to pin point what behaviors you may be exhibiting to cause any negative reactions.

In addition, select two or three co-workers and ask them for feedback about the way they perceive you. Explain that you are concerned you may not be projecting the right image and ask if there is anything you can do to improve the way you are viewed by others in the organization. One of my clients, an executive at Cisco Systems, told me about a colleague who talked so much that he annoyed everyone around him. No one would speak up to tell him, so he was unaware of the problem. You may never know if you don't have the courage to ask.

Step 2: Avoid behaviors that provoke a negative response

Now that you know which behaviors are making negative impression on others at work, you can make a conscious effort to avoid them. From the notes in your observation log and the feedback you received from your colleagues, identify three specific behaviors to work on changing this week.

Step 3: Associate with people who are respected by others

If you hang out with people who gossip, you will be perceived as someone who likes to gossip. Make an effort to spend more time with those who are respected by their co-workers and managers and avoid spending too much time with colleagues who are perceived negatively by others.

Step 4: Take the lead on a team project

In this step, you'll raise the stakes by taking the initiative to step into a leadership role on a team project. Talk to your boss to find out what you need to do to make this happen.

Step 5: Ask your boss to acknowledge your successes to others

It is much more effective to have other people speaking about your accomplishments than to talk about them yourself. That doesn't mean you shouldn't mention the ways you have contributed to the company's success—you should—but you should try to get others people talking about you too. Your boss is the most logical person to ask to tout your successes because your boss looks good when you do.

Step 6: Make sure management knows how much effort goes into your work

Upper management often has a distorted view of the work done by those further down the ladder. If you make your work seem too easy, they may think you are expendable. Make sure those in leadership positions understand how important your job is and how hard you work to ensure it is done right. Find opportunities to engage those in upper management in conversations about tasks you've completed that show the value you provide to them and the organization. You can do this in person or via e-mail.

Step 7: See if your boss will tell his or her boss how valuable you are

Your boss knows how valuable you are, but what about his or her boss? Try to get your immediate supervisor to talk about your successes with those in higher management. This is an extremely effective way for you to get more visibility in the organization, and it benefits your boss as well by showcasing his or her skills in managing important projects.

Step 8: Find a way to get involved in a visible project

Be on the lookout for opportunities to participate in projects that will get you more visibility within the organization. Find out which projects are considered important by upper management and try to get involved in them. Talk to your boss about how you can be included in some of the most visible projects.

Step 9: Interact with influential corporate leaders

Talk to your boss about helping you identify opportunities that will give you exposure to your company's senior management. Sit next to them at meetings whenever you get the chance, and engage them in conversation. Find subtle ways to tell them about the contributions you have made to your company's success.

Step 10: Identify advocates who will promote you to others

Having your boss speak highly of you is great, but if you can get half a dozen advocates singing your praises, you'll really be able to improve the way you are perceived among your co-workers, managers and upper management. When you have advocates working to promote you, it won't be necessary to be as aggressive about promoting yourself, which is good, because being too aggressive about self-promotion can make you seem pretentious and boastful.

If you follow the ten steps above, I can almost guarantee you'll see a significant improvement in the way people respond to you by the time you finish. As a visual reminder to keep you on track, print this article out and tape it to the wall above your desk. If you complete one step each week, you'll be able to complete them all in just a few months. When you see the results you achieve, you'll undoubtedly want to keep going. Just think what you can accomplish in a year!



JOEL A. GARFINKLE is recognized as one of the top 50 coaches in the U.S., having worked with many of the world's leading companies, including Oracle, Google, Amazon, Deloitte, Ritz-Carlton, Gap, Bank of America and Starbucks. He is the author of seven books and 300+ articles on leadership, executive presence and getting ahead at work. View his books and FREE articles at <http://www.garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/> He is regularly featured in the national media, including *ABC News*, *NPR*, *the New York Times*, *Forbes*, *the Wall Street Journal* and *BusinessWeek*. You can also subscribe to his [Fulfillment@Work E-mail newsletter](mailto:Fulfillment@Work) and receive the FREE e-book, *40 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!*"