

Part One

From Chef to Chief Executive

The Difference Is a Little "I"

Part One focuses on four internal investments: the paradigms of confidence (self-esteem), class (attitude), course (direction), and commitment (dedication). Success begins within.

Chapter 1

Confidence

The Problem with Fake Eyelashes

Confidence (n) freedom from doubt; belief in yourself and your abilities.

Confidence. What a word. We hear it used often, tossed off like a pair of pantyhose with a run in it. It sounds good. We all know that it is important. But what does it really mean? This first chapter is the most extensive because it forms the foundation of everything else in the book. More importantly, confidence forms the foundation of everything in your life.

Hairpins

Confidence is like hairpins. Yes, hairpins. If you are from the South, like me, you might refer to these life-saving gems as bobby pins. Now, when you pick up a bobby pin, you can feel that it is pretty solid, although small. If you have ever used bobby pins, you know they pack a lot of potential! With just a little strategy and know-how, you can instantly obtain the look you want. But *only* if you position them in the right place.

I remember going to the hairdresser as a teenager to get ready for the prom. Of course, I wanted to look “mature,” so I asked the stylist to put my hair in an “up-do.” I have really thick hair! Whenever I tried to put up

my own hair, I would use too many bobby pins and you could see them sticking out. However, my hairdresser knew exactly where to position each pin to give my hair the right amount of support.

It was not about how many pins she used—it was about how she used them. She used her teeth to change the shape of the pin depending on the type of reinforcement necessary. She had the uncanny ability to place them so that they were virtually invisible. And you know how important that is!

When I left the salon, my football-playing brother, Corey, asked how I managed to get my hair to stay up. The finished product really amazed him! He could see it, but he couldn't explain it. I responded with my pat answer for Corey: "None of your business!" First, he really did not care. Second, because it really *wasn't* his business!

When you have the perfect hairstyle, no one else needs to know how it got that way. In the same way that women have their own beauty secrets, it is also okay to have a silent sense of confidence. No one has the time or patience to hear about how many bobby pins you used, or how many times you tried before getting it right. Instead, they only see and care about the end result.

In our professional lives, obtaining and demonstrating confidence is very similar. Like a hairpin, it need not be very big or even noticeably visible to be effective. It is really not very important that others know how you got "it"—what is important is that you have it. Though it's not visible, *you* must know that it is there. That it provides you with the proper amount of support and reinforcement to give you the look—a.k.a., the self-assurance—that you desire. Without it you will be out of place—especially in the business world.

Confidence drives business. To be in the driver's seat, you must believe in your ability to make things happen. Otherwise, you are just along for the ride. You must also know that you have the ability to shape your confidence. My hairdresser used her teeth. You must use what you have. Use your gifts, your wisdom, and your talent.

*Confidence is like hair. It grows stronger
with proper conditioning.*

—Marshawn Evans

A Cure for the Common Cold: *Insecurity*

Confidence is not optional—especially for women. We cannot succeed in a dog-eat-dog, cutthroat business world without it. The only way to climb the corporate ladder is to first have the confidence to take a step—then another step, and then another step.

The opposite of confidence, being secure, is insecurity. I know all about that. I have always been a fairly confident person—even as a kid. However, there were areas in which I was certainly less than confident. When I was in elementary school, I remember that every week a group of students would leave class to participate in a special program called REACH. Well, the REACH kids were known as the smart kids. At least, that's how I saw them.

They had taken a special aptitude test, one that I don't remember taking, which enabled them to go to this mysterious place—a place that I knew absolutely nothing about. (At the time I called it “Never, Never Land” because I *never* got to go there!) All I knew was that I was not a part of the school's designated “smart-kid” clique. Being excluded had a tremendous impact on my academic self-esteem. From that point onward, I did not see myself as smart—at least not as smart as the other kids. I did fine in school, but not great. I never challenged myself, and I did just enough to get by.

As I entered junior high and high school, my leadership qualities began to flourish, and I started my first real business as the host of several dance and modeling camps. I was a freshman cheerleader, the high school band's featured baton twirler, first runner-up in the Miss Teen Texas pageant, and an officer in over a dozen student groups. I was making straight A's, but year after year, my teachers would encourage me to take honors and advanced placement courses. I was sure they were mistaken.

I understand how they might be confused. After all, I was making really high grades, but they did not understand. My thinking was that I made good grades because I worked hard, not because I was smart. No matter how hard I worked, certain areas were still out of my reach. When asked to take the advanced courses, I reverted back to being the elementary school girl left at her desk while the smart kids went off to Never, Never Land.

Thankfully, my high school teachers' persistence paid off. In my senior year, I made myself take all honors and advanced placement classes. What a way to spend senior year! However, I learned that stretching your confidence is not about how you feel. It's about how you focus. Stepping outside of your comfort zone will rarely *feel* good. It actually feels unnatural, which can be intimidating. That is when you defer to your head, and not your heart.

The "stretch" of the academic challenges changed my shape for the better. I ended up graduating with honors in the top 5 percent of my high school class and was accepted by almost every school to which I applied.

I wish I could say that was the end of the story. That fall I went off to college. During the middle of my first semester, I received a letter in the mail. It was a beautiful invitation on fancy paper from the Honor's Department at Texas Christian University. I read it, but had no intentions of responding. Again, they must have been mistaken, too.

High school honor courses were one thing, but college was a completely different story. Or so I thought. For some reason, I mentioned the letter to my father. Between the two of us, he was easily more enthusiastic. I was content with getting the invitation. I tried to explain to him why I was not fit for the program. In my view, I was not the type of person for this program. Only the really "smart" ones could keep up and do well in a collegiate honors curriculum. I mean, hey, the reality is that some people can shop at S, and others can only afford Sack 'n' Save. There's nothing wrong with either store. I just wasn't the type, and that's all there was to it. (Sigh!) While my father heard me, he would not listen.

Dad tried to encourage me, but nothing he said would change my mind. So, he upped the ante! He agreed to pay the expenses for me to have my own dorm room for the next semester. (I had a messy roommate—bless her heart—sweet, but messy.) And, that's all she wrote!

I enrolled in the honors program. The honors classes were challenging, but I was able to pull A's in those classes, too. I finished *magna cum laude* with honors and distinction. I became a Truman Scholar, one of *Glamour* magazine's Top Ten College Women, and a *USA Today* Academic First Team member. Plus, I received nearly \$200,000 in academic scholarships. Ha! Yes, me—the same girl who was not in the REACH classes.

I learned that another person's opinion about you is never as important as your opinion about you. I also learned that I could rise to any challenge *if* I had the right frame of mind. Beauty industry pioneer Mary Kay Ash once taught that whether you think you can or can't, you are right either way. Confidence is not just about how you feel about yourself. It is also about your focus—how you think. It's amazing what you can see when you choose what *not* to look at. As the saying goes, some can't see the forest for the trees.

Today, it is hard to believe that I once had a case of academic insecurity. Insecurity is a common ailment that many women deal with. It is a condition that can go undiagnosed for far too long if you are not careful. On my journey to the Miss America competition, I was constantly under the microscope. There was no shortage of people who were eager to be the movie critic for my personal life story. I was too tall, too thin, eyes too big, hair too thick, or my suit was the wrong color. The list goes on and on.

I learned that opinions are just that—opinions are based on one person's point of view. Nothing more, nothing less. Opinions are not facts. Just as people can be right, they can also be wrong. One of the keys to professional success is learning to place the opinions, doubts, and comments expressed by others in perspective.

During my first semester at Georgetown University Law Center, I considered enrolling in Georgetown's joint degree program. I wanted to obtain my law degree and my MBA at the same time. So, I went to an information meeting about the school's joint degree offerings. Before law school, I had a pretty extensive background in politics and youth development. I had been the national spokesperson for the Invest in Youth Campaign, named by the Texas governor to the state's Juvenile Justice Advisory Board, and co-founder of the National Youth Network under the U.S. Justice Department. I went to law school, in part, to diversify my experiences. I always wanted to be an attorney, but I still had a passion and a knack for business.

After the presentation, I was even more interested in the JD-MBA. I approached the law center's dean of admissions and told him about my interests. I was expecting him to match my enthusiasm with words of encouragement. Instead, he paused for a moment, wrinkled his face like

he had just eaten a piece of bad fruit, tilted his head, and said something that still sticks with me to this day: “Well, you might want to think about that. I mean, the business school is for people who have been in the business world operating at pretty high levels for quite some time. I’m not saying you *shouldn’t* do it, but the principles—especially the accounting—are extremely complex. These guys are some heavy hitters.” He went on to say that maybe I should enroll in the joint MPA—Masters in Public Administration. *Humph.*

Like that, with only a few short (and really discouraging!) words, this man caused me to doubt my ability. It was very clear from his body language and his statements that he didn’t think I was suited for a Georgetown MBA. Now, I don’t know whether he had any bad intentions or realized the impact of his words, but, because he was a part of the recruitment team, I valued his opinion. My mistake was in placing *too* much value in—overvaluing—his opinion. Looking back at it now, I now see that it was a dumb opinion. You see, before law school, I had already operated my own consulting company and had done more before the age of 21 than many in business school had done by the age of 30.

I don’t regret not enrolling in business school. I *do* regret listening to one man’s dumb opinion. (I’ll explain why I keep calling his opinion dumb.) I’ve now learned to place the opinions of others in perspective. No matter what phase you’re experiencing in your life, and no matter how much you’ve accomplished (I was already a Georgetown law student, for heaven’s sake!), people will still tell you that you cannot or should not attempt something—that you are striving or reaching too high. (Is that even possible?) Remember, no one knows your potential the way you do. They don’t know your visions, your passion, and your purpose. So they are making uninformed—a.k.a. “dumb”—statements.

The reality is that women are rarely encouraged to go into business. We have to make that choice for ourselves. Thankfully, I had enough drive to press onward and achieve some pretty neat things in spite of Dean Dumbo (I’ve changed the dean’s name to protect his identity; it’s just between us girls, anyway). In my world, I deal with professional athletes and sports agents. As an attorney, I represented Fortune 500

companies at my law firm. I deal with heavy hitters and the big boys every day.

There is an important lesson here: Another person's opinion of you cannot define you without your permission. Regardless of the type of insecurity you may be dealing with, or not dealing with, there is a cure. Confidence. In order for it to work, you have to be willing to write your own prescription.

*It took me a long time not to judge myself
through someone else's eyes.*

—Sally Field

Behind the Mascara

Empty confidence is like a pair of cheap pantyhose. You buy them expecting to wear them one or two times. If they snag right away, you are not surprised. The quality was poor in the first place. What is worse is if you are at a business meeting and you get a run. You know, a snag that starts small but by the end of the day grows as big as a convention hall. You cannot concentrate because all you can think about is your run.

If you are resourceful, you can use hairspray or clear nail polish to stop the run. Hopefully it will buy you some time, but not much. You have to watch every step you take and all your movements to make sure the run does not get any worse. After all, you do not want the whole world to see that unsightly tear.

The same is true for empty confidence. When we lack confidence, we become obsessed with what others think. We don't want others to see the "run" in our self-esteem, so we cover it up and try to distract people in hopes that they will not notice. More plainly, as women we tend to hide behind designer suits, false eyelashes, advanced degrees, a big check, and a nice car.

All can become disguises for true confidence—concealers that hide our imperfections. These things may bolster your self-esteem for a while, but they will never give you fulfillment or sustained self-assurance. You may even try to distract others with the way you talk or by being boastful. Confidence is not always spoken. The real deal is usually silent.

Most successful women have a magnetic quality about them. You do not *see* their confidence, you *sense* it. You cannot put your finger on it, but you know it is there. Think about a woman whom you admire, someone who epitomizes strength and assurance.

If I were a betting woman, I would bet that she never boasts about her accomplishments. There is a reason for that. She knows who she is and that's that. Others naturally see and are drawn to her confidence. Why? Confidence is a magnet. Insecurity, on the other hand, demagnetizes attraction. What energy are you giving?

From the Inside Out

To be the cream that rises to the top of the corporate ladder, you have to stand out. One of the things that we emphasize at the S.K.I.R.T.S. in the Boardroom: Set No Limits Summit is that there is too much competition for you to expect to excel if you always blend in. There has to be something different about you that enables you to get different opportunities. That something begins with confidence. Your confidence will attract new opportunities.

Did You Know?

More women than men earn master's degrees.

(Source: Voice of America radio broadcast)

Confidence and conceit are not one and the same. A conceited person is arrogant, which is offensive. It demagnetizes right away because conceit is a sign of low self-esteem. Conceited people have something to prove—or at least they think they do. They are actually trying to hide insecurity.

Remember, you have nothing to prove to anyone. When you lack confidence, you waste your time trying to get others to think you are secure, that you have it all together—that there is no RUN (Real-life Unpredictable Nonsense) in your pantyhose—I mean, in your life. The truth is you do not have it all together. Honey, no one does! And I am here to tell you it is perfectly okay.

We have all been there. *No one—not even a man—has it all together.* Everyone has problems. Everyone has insecurities. Everyone has made mistakes, including you and me. We don't have to announce it on the front page of the *New York Times* or air it on the daytime talk show *The View*, but we do have to be real with ourselves. We can keep it between us girls. That's not a problem. My point is that building confidence requires you to be honest with yourself about your insecurities and strengths.

Going back to my Georgetown experience, I began to realize that there was a pattern. At every major stage of life, something or someone popped up and tried to discourage me from moving to the next level. Each time I had a choice. Play it safe, or step out on faith. It's like coming to a fork in the road. You decide which way you will go. Allowing someone else's opinion to guide you is like letting someone else decide your direction, your path, and your journey. It's not their call. It's yours.

The bigger lesson is that these obstacles or fork-in-the-road moments *never* go away. Just as they've appeared at every major phase of my life in the past, those same roadblocks will continue to appear in the future. As I'll say several times, it's not the challenges you face, it's how you face them. You *can* approach these fork-in-the-road moments with boldness. Why? Because that is what you were designed to do. That is what next-level living is all about.

The reality is that we have all been down the wrong path. We've listened to wrong people, missed out on great opportunities, or played it just a little too safe. You know what? That doesn't make you a failure; it just makes you human.

The good news is that nothing can ever decrease your value. No matter what you've been through—if you been fired, downsized, demoted, divorced, or dumped—your value is the same. You were still created on purpose, with purpose, for a purpose. You are here for a reason. As humans, we can go through adversity and changes without losing our value.

Your car loses its value the moment you drive it off the lot. Its value decreases dramatically if you are in an accident. A stock portfolio can take a hit, and, even if it rises, the confidence of others in the stocks may never be the same.

So many things lose commercial value. (Can you say burst real-estate bubble?) But not you. Your value never decreases. In fact, it cannot decrease because you were already created with infinite value, worth, and possibility. You are worth the promotion. You are worth the new contract. You are worth more than you can imagine.

We Need You

I'll say it one more time: You are here for a reason. You are in the boardroom, at the table, in your office, or in your executive position for a reason. The specific reason will vary—you will have to listen to yourself. But, the ultimate reason is universal. You are here because your presence is necessary.

Think about that: *You are needed.* You are the answer to someone's question, and the solution to someone's problem. Your value is of immeasurable worth. You add to this world. You add to your corporate environment. Your presence simply adds—you are needed.

Insecurity only takes away from your effectiveness—your ability to perform and to add value. This happens when we doubt ourselves. The result is that we actually detract from ourselves and, in turn, from others.

Having confidence is absolutely necessary. It is fundamental that you understand who you are and embrace who you are. There is no one else with your DNA. No one else with your fingerprints. That means no one is carrying the same goods that you've got. And, sister, no one else in this universe can leave a mark the way that you can.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

—Marianne Williamson

The Four Spheres of Confidence

I mentioned that confidence is a word that is tossed about, much like a cliché. This book is not about show. It is about substance. So, now that

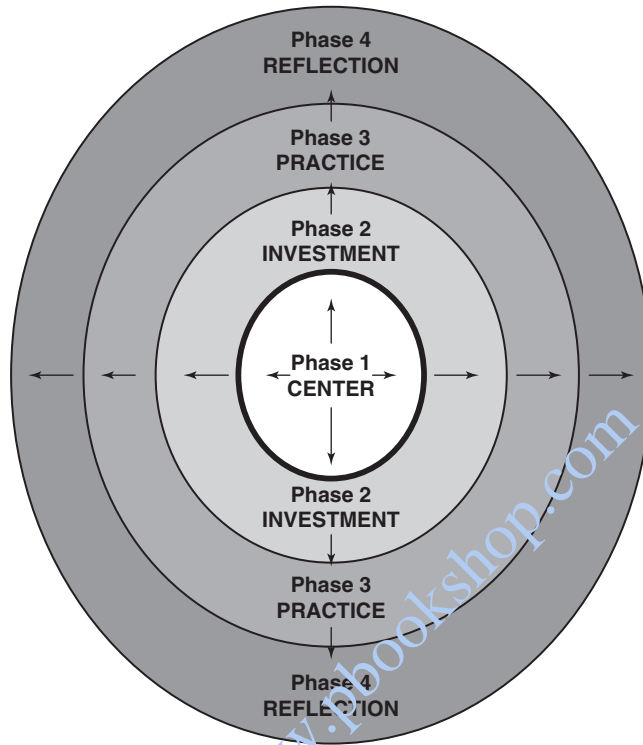


FIGURE 1.1 Confidence: A Four-Phase Process

I've set the stage by discussing the importance of having confidence, let me share with you how to get it and grow it.

Confidence is the by-product of four phases: phase one is CENTER; phase two is INVESTMENT; phase three is PRACTICE; and phase four is REFLECTION. See Figure 1.1, which demonstrates this concept visually.

True confidence is built and destroyed internally—by you! Not by others. Confidence is a series of investments. You can also look at confidence as a series of choices you choose to make about life. What you choose to believe about yourself impacts your confidence. In the chart, you will see that each sphere of confidence grows based upon choices that you make.

You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through.

—Rosalynn Carter

Confidence Phase One: *Center*

At the core, your sense of confidence begins *in* you. What you *believe* about yourself matters. What you *say* about yourself matters. And how you *see* yourself matters. The way in which you characterize each of these three issues determines the core foundation of your confidence—what you believe, say, and see about yourself. A solid core leads naturally to solid growth.

Think about an apple. Before it becomes fruit, it begins as a seed. That seed first produces and strengthens the core of the apple before it expands. Our confidence grows in the same way. It grows outward from the center. As long as the core is healthy, the remaining layers have a foundation upon which to build, expand, and bear fruit.

A seed is also full of potential. What it looks like now is no indication of what it will be in the future. You might see a seed. I see a forest. That is how expansive your potential is, too. At the core of who you are lie several seeds of potential waiting to blossom.

We either cap, or uncap, our potential based on the expectations we set for ourselves. Your actions will inevitably reflect your expectations. Similarly, your actions are limited or expanded based on your expectations. If you always see yourself as an assistant and you expect to remain an assistant, it is almost certain that you will always be an assistant. Now, there is nothing wrong with that. It is, however, a choice based on the expectations you set for yourself.

Your expectations are a direct reflection of your confidence—the degree to which you have embraced your potential. It is imperative that you believe you are wonderfully made, and that you were born with greatness inside. You automatically expect to strive for the best. However, if you do not have that fundamental picture of yourself, it is as though you were ignoring your potential and allowing it to lie dormant. Everything else you do in life will be limited by low self-esteem and low expectations.

A Word about Excellence and Football

What words or synonyms come to mind when you think of excellence? When I think of the word excellence, I think of something or someone reflecting the finest in quality. Think about the greatest speech or the best performance you have ever experienced—something that truly moved, mesmerized, or motivated you. You might characterize that experience by saying something like, “Wow! That was *excellent!*” Or, you may say something else. Let’s see exactly what you would you say.

Take a moment, close your eyes and *really* think about that experience. I want you to describe the experience by filling in the blank and substituting a word of your choice for the word “excellent.” I will give you three tries (three is my favorite number!), so be creative.

Example 1: “Wow! That was _____.”

Example 2: “Wow! That was _____.”

Example 3: “Wow! That was _____.”

Keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers. When I filled in the blanks, I thought of three words: “exceptional,” “invaluable,” and “quality.” Now, I want you to take your three words, and insert them into these sentences.

“I am _____.”

“I am _____.”

“I am _____.”

“I am exceptional. I am invaluable. I am quality.” I *love* how that sounds. You see, I will admit that this is how I see myself. While I do not hold myself as the gold standard for success and excellence, I am not ashamed to say that I am an achiever . . . a winner . . . and a dominator. I was born to be excellent. And, I won’t apologize for being great!

If I were anything less, then I would owe you an apology for not living up to my value. I am exceptional. I am invaluable. I am quality. And, I don’t merely say these things. That’s what I believe, and that’s how

I live. My perception of myself influences how others see me at work and in the boardroom. It shapes my confidence, and it shows.

Most extraordinarily successful women already see themselves as excellent—not necessarily perfect, but great nonetheless. Defining excellence as a way of life begins with determining how you see yourself. Your picture of yourself determines your performance throughout the game of life.

Did You Know?

Secretary of State and former National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice lists her dream job as being commissioner of the NFL.

I think sports are a metaphor for life. Plus, as the owner of a marketing and sports management agency, sports pays my bills! So I will use football to illustrate how your self-image impacts your performance.

Chance is a quarterback for a Division 1 college football team. His teammates and coaches recognize his talent, quickness, and athleticism. However, they do not trust him in pressure situations, or when the game is on the line. Chance has a focusing problem. He constantly compares himself to his competition, and tends to focus on the abilities of others rather than his own. *He* thinks he is slow. *He* thinks his talent is just average. *He* thinks he is never quite ready. A new season is here, but Chance cannot get past last season.

During the last season, Chance's team had an opportunity to win the national championship. His team was fourth and inches. In football-friendly terms, that means they were *really* close to scoring and winning the whole game.

The center (the really big guy who allows the quarterback to put his hands—well, you know where) snapped the ball, but no receiver was open. Chance, the quarterback, decided to scramble and run the ball in for a touchdown. Out of nowhere, BOOM! He got the daylights knocked out of him, and he fumbled the ball. His team lost. Chance lost a lot more than just the game with that hit. To this day, he still sees himself as a fumbler. His perception or picture of himself continues to influence his performance.

The moral of the story is that Chance allows defeat to define him. This story *could* have gone another way. Chance could have looked back at the circumstances and said to himself, “Well, at least I’m a fighter—if I’m going down, I’m doing so with a bang!” Dare I imagine what Chance’s performance would look like now if he saw himself as a fighter as opposed to a fumbler? It is a matter of perspective and self-perception.

In business, your *perception* of yourself matters. It matters if you see yourself as tenacious versus timid, or assertive versus apprehensive. Image *is* everything. It is true. After all, image begins with the letter “I.”

Self-*perception* matters. What you *say* about yourself matters. Most importantly, what you *believe* about yourself matters. Do you see yourself as excellent? As exceptional, invaluable, quality, or any of the three words you chose to insert? Do your words and thoughts reflect the resilient buoyancy and faith of a fighter, or the regretful fear of a fumbler?

Confidence Phase Two: *Investment*

Confidence is the result of a series of internal investments. The most important investment a person can make is in themselves. In order to succeed, you need others to invest in you, too. Most failures occur because of a lack of planning and preparedness. If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.

Self-image and self-perception, how you see yourself, determines your confidence, which, in turn, determines your actions. And it determines the type of investments you are willing to make in your life. Our self-image is a direct reflection of our confidence.

Confidence increases as we increase our capacity to excel. We do this by making investments in self. When you go to school, you expand your capacity with additional knowledge. When you attend a corporate training or a seminar, you expand your capacity. When you develop stronger communication skills, you expand your capacity.

When you learn how to interact efficiently with your co-workers, you expand your capacity. When you develop a stronger sense of character, guess what? You expand your capacity. I could go on and on. We have the opportunity to expand (or retract) our capacity based on the investments in ourselves we choose to make, or choose not to make.

When you make investments in yourself, you instantaneously expand your capacity to excel.

Capacity is another word for *potential*—your ability to maximize your gifts. When you have great potential that grows greater because of quality investments that are made, you increase your confidence. A woman who looks at herself and is not only aware of her potential, but *consciously* and *consistently* develops, nurtures, and embraces that potential is fierce! She epitomizes confidence.

I think the key is for women not to set any limits.

—Martina Navratilova

Know Who You Are

Who you are is based on what's inside. A container is only as valuable as its contents. What is in your container? What are you investing? Our deposits make us confident of our ability to make a withdrawal.

When we go to the bank, we make a deposit. We put money in our account so that when we need to make a withdrawal we have sufficient funds. However, many times as women we do not make the proper investments in ourselves. Therefore, when it comes time for a promotion or a new opportunity, we have NSF—nonsufficient funds. We are not ready. We want promotion without preparation. You have to crawl before you can walk. You have to walk before you can strut—especially in stilettos.

As women, we sometimes fail to make the proper deposits. There are a few reasons for this. First, we may tend to see ourselves as bank tellers, not depositors. What in the world am I talking about?! Let me explain. The role of a bank teller is to facilitate monetary transactions. A bank teller can only do what he or she is told.

For instance, when you go to deposit your check you instruct the bank teller as to how much you want deposited. You specify the accounts, and what you say goes. They, by nature of their job, can only follow instructions, not give them.

If you ask a teller to do something they are not authorized to do, that person must go to his or her boss for direction on how to handle the

situation. A teller is surrounded by thousands, if not millions, of dollars every single day. But he or she has no control over where it goes. As women, we often see ourselves as tellers—as facilitators or intermediaries. We are content with following directions, not giving them.

My point is that we are often content with being near the action, not controlling it. Contentment extinguishes the need for continued action. You are happy where you are. You are happy being directed; therefore, you do not make investments in yourself to increase your net worth.

Stated more plainly, if you lack confidence and doubt your ability to get a promotion, to become a CEO, or to master the tasks before you, you stop trying. If you do not believe in your ability to obtain a desired end, you will rarely prepare properly. You will become content based on insecurity. Now, if you are content, make sure it is for the right reasons. If it is based on fear, you are selling yourself short.

Your confidence in your ability to reach the finish-line influences *how* you decide to run the race. When you see yourself as a depositor rather than a teller, your perspective is wholly different. You write the check; you decide the amount. You authorize the bank to make the payments. You are in control. Similarly, you are in control of *you*. You decide if and how you will grow professionally.

If you expect high returns, you make solid investments. You are not content with simply being a part of the transaction; you make steps to benefit from it. You are a depositor. Treat the development of your confidence like the development of your career—as a wise investment.

Confidence Phase Three: *Practice*

After researching, observing, and learning from “great” people over the years, I have discovered that “greatness” develops one choice at a time. It is not an overnight phenomenon. As for those who achieve overnight success, they often lose it shortly thereafter. It is true that anything worth having is worth working for. It is the process that produces a powerful skills set—skills that will sustain success. The process also serves to refine our sense of confidence.

I look at personal and professional development the same way that I look at diamonds. When found in nature, diamonds are rough and uneven. To maximize and reveal their true value, the diamond must be cut and polished.

All of us start as diamonds in the rough—unrefined, uncut, unpolished, but full of valuable potential. We, too, have to be sanded and polished to reveal our true potential. Although it is a necessary part of life, that does not mean we like the way development feels. It means you will have to go through some challenging experiences; but that is the only way to win.

The refinement phases of practice and preparation give us confidence to excel. We prepare by becoming good at what we do. It enables us to step onto the playing field. Practice may not make perfect, but it increases our odds of coming close.

I travel the country giving seminars and speeches. A few years ago, I founded a company called Communication Counts! and conducted presentations on public speaking, interviewing, and communication. Why? Simple: Many people are terrified at the idea of speaking in public.

Believe it or not, some rank it above the fear of dying! I enjoy sharing thoughts and ideas with audiences; however, I was not always comfortable speaking in public. I used to walk up to the podium with my microphone shaking in one hand, and my written speech shaking in the other. It was not about my *ability* to be a good speaker. It was about my perception of myself. I labeled myself as a novice and that was reflected in my performance.

There were two other reasons for my nervousness. First, I had never been in a position to deliver speeches before, so I did not know what I was doing. Second, I hated to practice. With little or no practice, I was not prepared. When it came time to perform, the lack of preparation showed. Practice and preparation always enhances your self-perception. Your picture of yourself is tied directly to your performance.

Now, I prepare for my speeches in advance. I also get lots of practice by being on the road. That practice combined with proper preparation for each engagement produces a strong sense of confidence. Feel free to book my company for a speaking engagement if you want to see for yourself!

More Practice

The first time I stepped into a courtroom as a lawyer, I was in new territory. I was somewhat anxious, but I knew how to handle it. I researched the law and investigated the case. I formulated my questions and drafted my opening and closing statements.

I did my best to anticipate any potential curveballs that the other side or the judge might throw. And, I practiced, practiced, practiced. I performed a series of mental rehearsals by seeing myself in the courtroom and visualizing a successful delivery with confidence and authority. I also practiced out loud.

I practiced entering evidence and making objections. To me this was like preparing for a speech, only this time it would be more interactive—and there was a lot more on the line. The formula for success was the same: practice and preparation. It always boosts your confidence. And I won the case!

Let me digress for a moment to point out that I never gave much attention to mistakes. I did not see myself stumbling. Focusing on that would only increase my likelihood of stumbling. I learned this lesson the hard way, while at the Miss America competition. For the talent portion, I performed a rhythmic dance twirl for my talent. It was a baton-twirling routine.

Being a twirler was one of the most mentally challenging skills of my life. If I messed up by dropping the baton, there was no hiding it—everyone would know it. And no one would let me live it down. Trust me! I became very good over the years, competing at international events. I would have excellent practices, but when it was time to perform, when it really mattered, my mind could not focus properly. I kept thinking about how I did not want to make mistakes. By doing so, oddly enough, my mind was actually focusing on mistakes. That thought process impacted my performance.

That is, until I learned the power of mental rehearsal. By focusing on positive outcomes, you increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. You build your confidence with thoughts of succeeding. Think about it. Have you ever walked down the street in a new pair of heels and thought about not tripping? What happened? Naturally, you tripped!

Our actions, consciously or subconsciously, follow our thoughts. We spend a lot of time dealing with confidence during our S.K.I.R.T.S. in the Boardroom: Set No Limits Summit, where you can learn about experimental techniques to apply these principles, which will increase your confidence. We help you rewire your subconscious to trust your instincts. Finally, for those of you who may have smiled or chuckled at my Miss America talent (baton-twirling), that is okay! I will have you know that I won the talent competition at Miss America, and ended up with over \$50,000 in scholarship money. I was smiling, too, but for a different reason!

Business Boosters

I have found over the years that practice (mental rehearsal and actual repetition) combined with preparation boosts your confidence in business as well. I go to gazillions of conferences every year. I always research who is going to be at the conference, and I even practice what I might say.

Practicing my pitch to potential clients in advance helps me come across with confidence and authority. Being able to sell my idea is just as important as being able to sell myself. People do business with people they like and trust. I do not sound rehearsed, but I do sound as if I know what I am talking about.

Many people are very talented, but lose deals because they fail to properly prepare. When you practice, you not only build internal confidence, but the practice manifests externally as well, so that others have confidence in you, too.

Successful business developers—or *rainmakers*, as we call them in the legal profession—are those who can generate new clients and opportunities. Every deal is a new deal, and every client is a new client. Preparing yourself by practicing your approach and becoming good at what do boosts your confidence, which boosts business.

The biggest room is the room for improvement.

—Mary Evans (Mom)

Confidence Phase Four: *Reflection*

The key to continued growth is learning from your experiences. Once you know who you are (step one), consistently make investments in yourself (step two), and practice to perfect your technique and skill (step three), then you have to take the time to reflect upon what you have learned (step four). Knowledge is power, right? When you take the time to learn about yourself, you equip for yourself for the next test.

As a first-year law student, I was fortunate to receive two offers from large law firms to work as a summer associate. Most law firms only hire second-year law students, so I was on cloud nine with two offers in my pocket. What most people do not realize is that I got over 100 rejection letters! That's a lot of rejection! Interestingly, all of those rejections opened the door for a lot of reflection.

With every "no," I learned what it took to get a "yes." Most people would have given up after the first 50 rejections. Giving up was not an option. I wanted the experience and the paycheck. I made a lot of money that summer. I made even more the following summer.

The next year, I had 20 offers from firms all over the country, all paying six figures. I reflected upon every rejection; I learned from my mistakes. I learned what the recruiters were looking for, and what information to include in a cover letter and during an interview.

In most instances, the timing was not right the first time around. By round two, I was way ahead of my competition and my colleagues because I had been through the process before. Most of my fellow law students had not.

Reflection builds confidence. Sometimes mistakes and rejection can be the best thing that can ever happen to you, if your perspective is properly aligned. When you make a mistake, make sure to learn from it. If you learn from your mistakes, you will know what not to do. In business, that is half of the battle.

A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong she is until she gets into hot water.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Confidence is more than a word. It is a way of life. When confidence truly becomes a way of life, it determines your lifestyle. However, when it is simply a word, it is disposable, replaceable, and shakable.

In order to survive in the business world, a confident style *must* be a part of your lifestyle. It will not reflect around you until it first begins inside you. So, get your bobby pins ready. . . only the ones you need. And, throw those torn pantyhose out for good. No more quick fixes with hairspray or clear nail polish. Let's start with a brand new designer pack.

Lessons for ME (Motivation & Empowerment)

A confident style is a lifestyle developed in four phases:

- 1. Phase one is your CENTER:* Your confidence is SOLID because you have a strong self-image. You know who you are, what you are made of, and what you have to offer. Others' opinions about you do not influence your perception of yourself.
- 2. Phase two is based on your INVESTMENT:* Your confidence is SECURE because you build it upon a firm foundation of sound investments and internal deposits. Every investment is another brick laid.
- 3. Phase three comes from PRACTICE:* Your confidence is SEASONED because you have gained the experience necessary to develop expertise. You have become good at what you do. With knowledge comes boldness.
- 4. Phase four springs from REFLECTION:* Your confidence is SAVVY. Now you have the know-how and the knowledge, to play the game. You learn from all of your experiences, good and bad.

Set No Limits Reflection

I think it's important to reflect on any lesson before moving on, and particularly on the subject of this first chapter—confidence). That is why I've designed this last section of each chapter as a specific time for both reflection and action, as you are asked to not only answer each question

but also to actively write your answer down. You can explore more reflective insights on this topic at www.skirtsintheboardroom.com. I hope you find the process as beneficial as I do.

PHASE ONE: CENTER

What five words describe you, and why?

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

What makes you unique?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are your best personal qualities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are your best qualities professionally?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why do you deserve to be successful in business?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What situations make you insecure? What causes the insecurity?

Insecure Situations

Insecurity Causes

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |

What situations make you confident? What contributes to your confidence?

Confident Situations

Confident Causes

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |

PHASE TWO: INVESTMENT

What investments have you already made in yourself? What benefits do you hope to gain?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What investments do you need to make *personally*? When will you begin?

- | <i>Personal Investments</i> | <i>Timeline</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 7. _____ |

What investments do you need to make *professionally*? When will you begin?

Professional Investments**Timeline**

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 7. _____ |

PHASE THREE: PRACTICE

What areas in my professional life can become stronger with more practice and better preparation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

PHASE FOUR: REFLECTION

What lessons can I learn from my past experiences and mistakes? How can I use these lessons to my advantage?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

<http://www.pbookshop.com>