

HOW TO BE MORE ASSERTIVE IN THE WORKPLACE

1

Understand Assertiveness

- Assertiveness means expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs clearly and respectfully while considering others' perspectives.
- Differentiate it from **aggressiveness** (pushing others aside to get your way) and **passiveness** (avoiding conflict or neglecting your own needs).

2

Use Clear and Direct Communication

- Avoid vague language—be specific about your expectations or requests.
 - **Example:** Instead of saying, "I need this soon," say, "I need this by 3 PM today."
- Use "I" statements to take ownership of your feelings and avoid sounding accusatory.
 - **Example:** "I feel concerned when deadlines are missed because it affects the whole team."

3

Set Boundaries

- Politely say "no" when necessary. Overcommitting can lead to burnout.
 - **Example:** "I'd love to help, but I'm at capacity right now. Could we revisit this later?"
- Clearly define your work hours and communicate when you're available.

4

Practise Active Listening

- Show respect for others' perspectives by actively listening.
- Acknowledge their points before sharing your own.
 - **Example:** "I understand your concern about the timeline. Here's why I think we should proceed as planned."

5

Maintain Confident Body Language

- Stand tall, make eye contact, and maintain a calm tone of voice.
- Avoid defensive gestures like crossing your arms or looking away.

6

Prepare for Difficult Conversations

- Anticipate challenging situations and rehearse your responses.
- Plan what you want to say and stick to your main points.
 - **Example:** Before requesting a raise, outline your contributions and practise presenting them confidently.

7

Use Assertive Language

- Replace passive phrases like "I think" or "Maybe we could" with stronger ones like "I believe" or "I recommend."
- Avoid apologising unnecessarily.
 - Instead of "Sorry for bothering you," say, "I appreciate your time to discuss this."

8

Manage Emotional Reactions

- Stay calm and composed, even in stressful situations.
- Take deep breaths or pause briefly before responding to regain control of your emotions.

9

Focus on Solutions

- When addressing problems, propose constructive solutions rather than merely highlighting issues.
 - **Example:** "This timeline seems tight. Can we discuss reallocating resources to meet the deadline?"

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Seek Feedback and Practise

- Ask trusted colleagues for feedback on your communication style.
- Practise assertive responses in low-stakes situations to build confidence.

11

Build Self-Confidence

- Recognise your strengths and accomplishments to boost your self-worth.
- Remind yourself that your ideas and needs are just as important as anyone else's.

12

Advocate for Yourself

- Speak up about your contributions during team meetings or performance reviews.
- Request opportunities for professional growth, such as training or new responsibilities.

13

Handle Criticism Constructively

- Accept constructive feedback gracefully and use it to improve.
- Stand firm against unfair criticism or blame, calmly presenting facts.

14

Learn to De-escalate Conflicts

- Stay focused on resolving the issue, not assigning blame.
 - **Example:** "Let's focus on finding a way forward that works for everyone."

15

Take Small Steps

- Start with less intimidating situations and gradually build up to more challenging ones.
- Celebrate small successes as you become more comfortable asserting yourself.

