

A Monthly E-Newsletter By Alice Wheaton

# Bringing Out the best in others

SALES • COMMUNICATIONS • EMPLOYEE EFFECTIVENESS • PERSONAL GROWTH

## The Confidence Myth by Alice Wheaton

Too many people believe the popular philosophers who promote the idea that self-confidence and self-esteem are the answer to achieving success, health, and happiness in life. When people feel a knot in their stomach or trepidation in their heart, they assume that they alone feel this way. Countless people berate themselves because they fail to recognize and understand that *competence*, not confidence, is the answer and that everyone who is interested in moving forward have feelings of fear, doubt, and insecurity. They believe it is a sign that they lack self-confidence but it really means they lack experience.

No matter how strong is your desire for confidence, it is impossible to feel this elusive state before you are competent. Experience generates competence, which eventually leads to confidence.

Top performers strive for excellence but they do not strive for perfection. They know the extra energy required to go the last ten percent is part of the law of diminishing returns; the return on investment of time and money just will not be realized. Perfectionists chase that last ten percent! *Show me a perfectionist and I will show you a procrastinator.*

For most of us, the seeds of perfectionism were planted when we were children. Repeatedly, we were berated and admonished with: *If you are going to do a job do it right the first time.* Many children know they cannot do anything right the first time and so they avoid their parent or teacher's wrath by avoiding the task. Thus, the need to people-please is born.

In his hit song *On the Way to the Sky*, Neil Diamond sings about the futile search for perfection:

We pity the poor one  
The shy and unsure one  
Who wanted it perfect  
But waited too long

Successful people know they must be willing to:

- be imperfect and make mistakes
- ask for help
- risk rejection by offering new ideas and differing strategies to the team
- be consistent; not wait for perfect timing.

If we obsess over mistakes, we paralyze ourselves and halt our forward movement. People must be willing to face their imperfections, put plans in place to mitigate them, and be willing to feel uncomfortable in the process. The secret to excellence is a paradox: *Anything worth doing is worth doing imperfectly. To be more successful, we must be willing to make more mistakes.*