

Self Confidence Vital Element in Business.

By A BUSINESS MAN.

Some time ago, when I received a query from a man reading "How can I develop self-confidence in business and ease in social life?" I felt the temptation to answer with another personal question: "Why haven't you this self-confidence already to the degree that you possibly could need it?" But there, is food for a discursive treatment of the man's question, for however responsible he may be for his condition, he is deserving of sympathy and the possible suggestions which may be pointed out.

There is one possibility that the man lacking this confidence and ease never may have had it under any conditions. This is a certain neurotic type of person who sees nothing but his own imperfections, and decries them systematically. Just as the ego mania type sees only his own imperfections, this depressed type sees and feels his unfitness and shortcomings. Only some diagnosis of his nervous disease, with a possible treatment and cure, can help this type.

But in the great majority of the timorous ones in business and in society this feeling of painful self-consciousness in work or in recreation comes from the inward confessions of the person that he is incompetent in business and underbred for society. Why should this be so? How can the feeling be eliminated?

As a common sense proposition, no person is entitled to a place in the business or social world if for any length of time he shall be in such a state of mind. In business his whole atmosphere is that of uncertainty, and therefore is disconcerting and destructive to business method. In society the same lack of ease in the person himself becomes a painful ordeal for a whole company.

There are young and old men and women in these positions in both these worlds, however, and to treat the topic from a remedial point of view the individual must be asked to ask himself why within himself these things are so. One can imagine a business office where the atmosphere is such that the best and most conscientious worker possible to the field could be ill at ease. In the same way there are social "sets" where any one who has conscience—no matter what his mental and conventional equipment may be—could be nothing else than uneasy and under painful stress.

What is the cause of your lack of self-confidence in business? Why have you been pained and strained when in some social milling process? There are business houses in which the development of any degree of self-confidence would be impossible. There are types of men in business as proprietors whose innate vanity and self-worship make it impossible that they should ever delegate enough of the routine of business to another to make that other person sensible to the real necessity of a self-confidence. This old, jealous type of business man is dying out in the building of the great corporations, but there are enough of him left to disturb the equanimity of some of the young adventurers into his business field.

With this type of business man, who stands in under the most trifling details of his big business, a testy temper is a natural accompaniment. He cannot handle all details as he would like. He is irritated at the results of his failure. But when an employee, seeing an opportunity to practice a little self-confidence by taking an initiative, comes to the rescue of a business move, he promptly is choked into submission, or as promptly he rises in protest in defence of his position and act—and is discharged. But in all emphasis I would like to say for the benefit of the young man who is in such a position:

That discharge from such a firm for such a cause never can be more than a first step upward for such a man as has the qualifications for a successful future!

That there are two kinds of employers, one of them the absolute antithesis of the one I have described, can be shown in a little anecdote that came to me the other day from a big business house in Winnipeg. The manager of the company had been away for several weeks. His advertising manager in that absence had overlooked a chance that just before the manager's return proved to have been a great opportunity. The manager called his deputy in and made inquiry and comment upon the opportunity.

"But if I had taken that chance and it hadn't proved a good venture I would have got —," was the defence of the advertising manager.

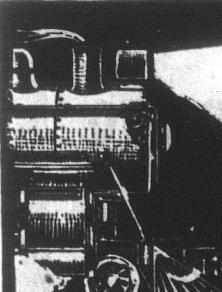
"But don't you think it would have been better to risk — for doing something than to be getting — for doing nothing?" was the retort of the company manager.

Concerning self-confidence in business, it may be said without chance of contradiction that the man who has the material in him for the making of a self-reliant business man scarcely need worry about "developing that necessary self-confidence. Just as he advances in the natural course of his business evolution, the necessary self-confidence will accompany the advancement. It cannot be otherwise if the man has undertaken only so much as he can handle. If an abnormal vanity and egotism have brought about the person's overweight of business, probably he never will discover the need for examining into the causes of his resultant failure.

No business ever has succeeded without the full complement of self-confidence in its management. Many people have an idea that all great businesses are mathematically exact in all their relations that have led to success. As a matter of fact, the most successful business in the world would be unable to keep track of its success without the ledger account of "profit and loss." Loss is one of the inevitables of business activities. How to turn a real loss into a potential gain commands admiration, but the man who makes the transformation will have his losses later, as already he has suffered them before.

Is a man justified by all the business circumstances and by all the judgments of a competent brain in taking a certain business risk? This is the only question asked to-day in many lines of business. Mere loss in the deal does not figure as essential to undoing self-confidence, if that confidence has been based in real qualification and judgment. Without the acceptance of the gauge of Risk, there would be no such thing as business activity; there could be no requirement for self-confidence in the business man. Conducting his own business, the man who is young or old must measure himself and find his self-confidence or fail. Where that man is an employee in some one else's business, my warning would be: Don't stay where you must be a self-conscious figurehead, devoid of all initiative and all responsibility.

John D. Rockefeller:—None can gainsay the power of the press, but the press should be truthful and fair to both sides in any controversy. You newspaper men should always bear in mind that one part of your mission, of inestimable value, is to make some of us in this great world better acquainted with some of the others. Your duty to do this is plain, and that duty well carried out is more than likely to smooth out many of the rough spots which all must encounter.



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