



CONVINCED

How to
PROVE YOUR COMPETENCE
& WIN PEOPLE OVER

JACK NASHER

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Praise for *Convinced!*

“To gain assent from others, it’s not enough to possess competence on the topic at hand. It’s also necessary to project that competence successfully. With *Convinced!*, at last there’s a book that shows us how. We needed this book.”

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“To land a job, enlist investors, close a deal, or lead an initiative, being the best person to play that role isn’t enough. What matters most is persuading other people that you’re the one they can count on to deliver what they need. Jack Nasher’s compelling new book lays out eight practical principles for positively shaping how others judge your competence. I’m convinced of the power of his advice. And you’ll be convinced, as well.”

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“Every second of every day, judgements and assessments of competence are being made. Whatever your role or expertise, *Convinced!* provides fascinating and practical insights into steps anyone can take to engender and promote that all-important sense of confidence and trust. Compelling, highly entertaining, and thoroughly convincing!”

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—**Rupert Younger, Director, Oxford University Centre for
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—**Bill Thomas, Global Chairman, KPMG International**

“As a river runs to the sea, power flows to those who can persuade. Jack Nasher gives you the tools you need to win others over and keep them moving in the right direction.”

—**G. Richard Shell, Wharton professor and coauthor of *The Art of Woo***

“Be it in business or diplomacy, convincing people of one’s expertise is key to successful negotiations. Radiating that competence also helps leaders gain the legitimacy to lead. Dr. Nasher’s book offers scientifically grounded, real-life techniques that should be required reading for public and private sector managers alike.”

—**Alexander Vinnikov, Head of the NATO Representation to Ukraine**

“At the heart of Professor Nasher’s book is a key central thesis: it is no longer enough to be extraordinarily competent. These days, it is necessary for all top managers—and anyone who aspires to be one—to embrace the responsibility for their own personal PR. The author introduces techniques that allow readers to display their expertise in ways that will earn them the recognition they deserve. *Convinced!* is educational (but never pedantic), engaging, and entertaining. Highly recommended!”

—**Georges Kern, CEO, Breitling SA**

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& Win People Over

Jack Nasher



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Convinced!

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*Dedicated to the dynamic duo I owe so much to:
my mother Diana & my sister Isabel.*

And to my beloved American family—
Շնորհակալություն ձեր անսահման սիրո
և աջակցության համար:

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INTRODUCTION

Every day your clients, superiors, and colleagues must decide to whom they will entrust certain tasks. We constantly and mutually judge others' respective capabilities, although we usually have no idea on what to base those judgments. Despite all this, "competence" continues to be regarded as the decisive factor for evaluating performance and making decisions regarding hiring, promotions, the entrusting of tasks, and, of course, compensation.

The good news is that even when the services and products your competitors and you are offering resemble one another, it is still possible to differentiate yourself and convince others of your abilities. That is what this book is all about: explaining how to achieve an inexplicable advantage over others who can deliver a similar quality.

You can control a large part of what others think about you, an opportunity you should seize. The idea is to become your own PR agent, showing your skills by utilizing effective impression management tools. Not only when giving a talk, writing your resume, or interviewing for a job—always! As groups are typically persuaded by the person who appears to be most competent, it is this *perceived competence* that gives you the power to convince, influence, and lead others.

With the advice in this book you will be able to exhibit your abilities in front of customers, colleagues, and superiors. Whether in meetings, presentations, or crucial conversations, you will be able to convince others of your expertise and be appreciated and respected like never before. At the same time,

your perception will be trained to accurately assess the competence of others.

When you understand and implement these techniques and tools, your company will profit just as much, whether you are an executive or a sales representative, because customers prefer to buy from people they consider to be competent. And, as real change only comes from within, your attitude will change accordingly and with it your actual ability.

By learning how to use the eight pillars of competence—the perception of brilliance, the anticipation effect, the power of association, the power of framing, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, the power of attractiveness and popularity, and the power of symbols—to your advantage, you will be poised to prove your competence and stand out in any crowd. Throughout the chapters of this book, decades of research on psychological phenomena pertaining to these aspects of communication are explored and exploited to help you showcase your expertise.

Chapter 1 begins with the fundamental observation that brilliance does not speak for itself: you can, in fact, be the best in the world and no one will notice. Some may even think you are a failure. You need to show your skills. But how can you do this? Since the world around you is unable to evaluate your abilities accurately, what counts, above all, is its assessment of your competence—the perceived level of competence. It is this that determines your success—and serves as the subject of this book. In chapter 1, I show you why competence is the most important single factor for your professional success. And as others are unable to evaluate your abilities accurately, what counts, above all, is its assessment of your competence—your perceived competence. Even success and failure have terrifyingly little influence on this perception of competence. Displaying your competence in such a way that the audience will

perceive you as highly competent will also increase your actual competence—through a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In order to display your expertise, your demonstrated level of expectation regarding your performance plays a key role. But what kind of outcome should you predict in order to be perceived as competent? This is the question addressed in chapter 2. Should you dampen the level of expectation from the start and show some sort of noble restraint? Modesty certainly is an honorable trait. And isn't it a nice surprise if people end up performing better than expected, along the lines of *underpromise and overdeliver*? Or should you demonstrate extraordinary self-confidence and predict outstanding results? With this strategy, of course, you run the risk of appearing boastful. So how can we achieve effective “expectation management” in terms of competence? Chapter 2 illustrates how you should shape peoples' expectations of your skills: how to demonstrate optimism when faced with new tasks and how to eliminate anything that could potentially bear negative witness against you. As it is you who must, first and foremost, be convinced of your abilities, a technique called priming will be explored to show you how to radiate competence from inside.

Chapter 3 shows you how to present good and bad news in the way that is most beneficial to you. It asks the question, How can you use your success to the utmost advantage in regard to perceived competence while suffering the least damage to your reputation from your failures? With good news, you should maximize your presence and involvement; with bad news, you should stay in the background and communicate neutrally or, if you are a male and of high status, you can show anger. You should describe public mistakes clearly and concisely, and then move on to optimism as quickly as possible. Start with the positive aspect of an event, then mention the negative (primacy effect); the second-strongest positive aspect,

however, should be presented at the end (recency effect). By using certain techniques for delivering good and bad news, you will be able to spin even gigantic mistakes so that they have little or no negative effect on your perceived competence.

In chapter 4, I provide techniques for framing your competence by insulating your competence from the confusion of different influences surrounding it. To do that, you must emphasize, as much as possible, the challenges of the job at hand and point out any unfavourable circumstances that will make the job more difficult. You should not, however, awaken the impression that it was necessary for you to work very hard for your earlier successes. They were, of course, easy for you. Since you are a natural talent, you were born for your special field, and your path was, in a way, predestined. That is why you should also resemble, to some extent at least, the stereotype of your profession, and let people know that you live your profession with body and soul. In this chapter, I condense the research on the effects of a phenomenon called the fundamental attribution error—the fact that individuals will be held personally responsible for the results they produce—and identify methods that allow you to use this phenomenon to your advantage.

Chapter 5 synthesizes research on the role of speech in projecting an image of expertise and provides tips for speaking like an expert. There is possibly no other technique that will allow you to effectively raise your perceived level of competence and be more convincing than employing *power talking*. This chapter lists several hands-on tips for using this strong, self-confident language that you can easily employ in your daily interactions. I explain whether and how you should utilize your vocal range, repetitions, and interruptions. You will also learn a technique that I wish would not exist and that has to do with unnecessary complications in your expressions.

In chapter 6, I examine several studies on the importance of body language in attempts to be convincing. We often underestimate the role of nonverbal communication in terms of our own external impact and, as a rule, focus more on our words. However, if we deliberately use our nonverbal communication skills, we can strongly influence the specific impressions we make on people and present ourselves in a certain light. This chapter provides a guide for doing so, focusing on how to convey competence by fine-tuning your proximity to others, your location while standing, and your posture while sitting, as well as on how to use eye contact, smiling, gestures, and physical contact to increase your perceived competence and win over your audience. And you will learn about a certain Dr. Fox. . . .

Chapter 7 discusses the research regarding the impact of the halo effect, from which the great importance of a positive overall impression derives. Your popularity and attractiveness are crucial for the overall impression you make on others. Some people appear likable—others do not. Some are considered attractive, while others aren't. The main factors that lead to a particular judgment on your likability and attractiveness are not as obvious as they may first seem. However, you should not waste time making changes to your appearance or behavior that have little effect or attempting to fix things about them that cannot be changed; instead, this chapter presents findings—hardly known outside academia—that will help you zero in on what is truly important. By learning how to use these techniques, and by gaining a better understanding of what really matters to others, you can immediately increase your likeability and attractiveness and boost your perceived competence in the process.

In chapter 8, I examine the extraordinary impact that status has in our lives. The key to perceived status is *habitus*, de-

scribed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a person's behavior and appearance, including his or her clothing, language, and apparent lifestyle. Whether fair or not, by observing a person's habitus, we can assess his or her status within moments. However, your status is also related to the way you interact with the people around you and, as a "peace maker" for instance, and will directly affect your perceived competence. Thus, in this chapter, I show how certain little-known tactics, such as praise, nonconformity, and a technique that social psychologist Robert Cialdini refers to as "BIRGing," profoundly impact your perceived status. Combining all these factors directly leads to a higher perceived status and, thus, a higher perceived level of competence.

In the conclusion and epilogue, I show how the eight pillars of confidence work together to direct almost everyone's attention specifically to your competence, and I provide tips for detecting competence, and especially intelligence—which is closely related to competence—in others.

Most of the methods I describe in this book can be applied immediately, others need some practice, but none of them call for you to change your personality: authenticity is key in order to appear as a luminary. In order to be sustainable, change must come from within. By using the techniques I present, you will be able to display your expertise so that you receive the recognition you deserve.

CHAPTER 1

THE PERCEPTION OF BRILLIANCE

ACTUAL VERSUS PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

If a man today were to take one day away from his current engagement and spend that one day learning the professional approach he would be doing himself and the firm a much greater service than he would be to produce seventy-five, a hundred, or a hundred and fifty dollars a day of income for McKinsey & Company.

—MARVIN BOWER (1965)

The Experiment

What do you think would happen if one of the world's great violin virtuosos performed for over 1,000 people in a metro station, incognito, during rush hour?

This is the exact question *Washington Post* journalist Gene Weingarten posed to Leonard Slatkin, director of the National Symphony Orchestra, in an interview in 2007.¹

Slatkin replied, "Let's assume that he is not recognized and just taken for granted as a street musician. . . . Still, I don't think that if he's really good, he's going to go unnoticed . . . but, okay, out of 1,000 people, my guess is there might be 35 or 40 who will recognize the quality for what it is. Maybe 75 to 100 will stop and spend some time listening."

"So, a crowd would gather?" Weingarten asked.

"Oh, yes."

"And how much will he make?"

"About \$150."