

BODACIOUS

'Fake it 'til you make it': it's a good old adage and one that can help you move from 'bleh' to good fit in your business or career. My own forays into faking it have been largely confined to the board room: nodding sagely as weird construction terminology was bandied around. I had a great ability to lead the whole room to believe I was totally at home with 'furring' and 'Flemish bonds'. In reality I was always convinced they were talking about something quite unsavoury.

So why fake it?

It's that moment when you're going in to the pitch meeting, the networking group or presenting to the senior management team. Your insides are churning, you're slightly damp under the arms and absolutely know the minute you shake hands some sort of sliding action is going to occur due to your sweaty palms. Lovely. Or perhaps you're always tired, never quite having the energy to bounce around like you used to, feeling that an injection of Berocca is the only thing that's going to get you through the day. What about those weeks where it would take a hit squad of super PA's to get you organised or a team of celebrity stylists to make you feel groomed and professional?

Act 'as if'

It's at these times when you need to man or woman up and act 'as if'. It's about still being you, but better. And that's not to say that you're not great, because you are, but we all get the jitters sometimes or want to be more organised, tidy or glamorous, be fitter, eat healthier or stop procrastinating. By just acting 'as if' you'll be surprised how it can give you a mental shift. That I feel weary after a long day's consulting in London, with a commute in from the Midlands, is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that when I made a conscious decision to act 'as if' I wasn't tired, how much more I enjoyed my evenings after working in the City, even managing to get changed and go out for dinner. I started applying this tactic to other areas of my life. I don't do IT. Acting 'as if' and while not quite an IT ninja just yet, I managed to get things done on my website that previously I would have had to outsource. Faking it 'til you make it really does work.

Mixing your messages

Of course now you have to give it a try don't you?! Perfecting your 'as if' is important. Be careful you're not mixing your messages. When you're nodding furiously in the boardroom acting 'as if' you understand, be careful you're not giving the game away by having a look of abject bewilderment on your face. On the other hand not acting 'as if' when you actually 'are' can also be a thorny issue.

One client, 'Julia', couldn't understand why the team weren't taking her seriously since her promotion. "They don't take any notice of me. I end up having to be more aggressive to make them listen and that causes conflict." 'Julia' had tried not to let promotion go to her head. She was struggling to make the transition between being a liked member of the team and a respected leader of the team. In an attempt to stop any resentment at her promotion, she'd been rolling up her sleeves and mucking in. This meant the team was also struggling to make the transition to having 'Julia' as their leader - she wasn't acting 'as if' - giving them the message nothing had changed - and that's how they responded.

So whatever your reason for acting 'as if' is it time for you to give it a whirl?

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