

OFFICE POLITICS

ENTREPRENEURS

It doesn't have to be lonely at the top

Impostor syndrome is prevalent among chief executives – here's how to tackle it

Chris Roberts



of bosses feel fully prepared for their job.

The pressures on business leaders have never been greater. Today's business environment is evolving at a faster rate than ever before, and those who fail to innovate and collaborate are going to be left behind.

Being a leader is a continuous journey of personal transformation – something that even the best bosses struggle to manage.

Former Starbucks boss Howard Schultz has admitted to feelings of impostor syndrome. He publicly said that when he made it into the chief executive seat, he didn't feel worthy of the position. Instead, there was a period of self-doubt and insecurity.

Call me crazy, but I'd say that the willingness to admit what he was feeling is far from a trait of weakness.

Actually, it shows that Schultz is a grounded leader who was focused on the needs of the new role at hand, rather than distracted by a belief that he knew everything – which we see with many leaders at the other end of the spectrum.

Where intervention would be needed is if the feelings become an obstacle to vision and confidence. So here are ways to tackle impostor syndrome.



Being a leader is a continuous journey of personal transformation

THINK OUT-LOUD

Many leaders that struggle with impostor syndrome are the ones who bottle things up and take on the responsibility of all the stressful decisions – becoming overly controlling.

The best leaders are those who are openly transparent in the way they work; they think out-loud and share ideas among the team. That way they can get the support around them to improve business performance.

IDENTIFY YOUR VALUE

Sometimes we all need to step back



BITTERSWEET SYMPHONY

Forest: Stay focused
Free

There is an epidemic. An illness among us. You might be in denial that you are suffering. I'm talking about phone addiction. Let's be real: when was the last time you had a phone-free hour? For many of us, it's easier said than done. Why not test yourself with this app, which can help you stay motivated and achieve more.

from a situation to realise what we have achieved and where there are gaps to improve.

It takes courage to reflect and define what you bring to the table as a leader, recognising that an element of self-doubt is a positive mechanism helping to ensure decisions aren't made without validation and support.

CREATE A POSITIVE SCRIPT

The idea of scripting is a method where individuals define and implement scripts that act like an internal check and balance. This shapes the running commentary inside their head and will influence their attitudes and behaviours.

For leaders, their goal is to identify core strengths, values and passions – the pursuits that energise them to do more. The script becomes constant support for when they are questioning their role and ability to perform.

Feelings of self-doubt are never going to be resolved overnight, particularly if your confidence is down.

However, by concentrating on the things you naturally do well, polishing those skills, and building a strong team around you who can contribute to close the gaps, you will become unstoppable. And success won't be a matter of if – instead it becomes a matter of when.

© Chris Roberts is a practice director at consultancy firm Accelerating Experience.