

Inspirational Emails

Your Image, Your Choice

Let's face it: **most people are utterly invisible at work.** The only time they seem to get any attention is when they do something wrong or when they have too much to drink at the office Christmas party. These people see themselves as drones, as worker bees that only exist to service the Queen. Their lot in life is to be an anonymous slave working at the pleasure of their arbitrary Overlord. They are victims of *The System* and there's not a darn thing they can do about it. Oh, those poor invisible slaves. Let's all take a moment and weep for them. Boo-hoo-hoo.



Wake up. Get a hold of yourself! You are responsible for how you are perceived. If you are invisible it is because you made yourself this way.

Good news, eh?

"Good news?" you ask. "You sucker punched me!"

No, I just blew away the carbon monoxide of your feelings of being a victim. The good news is that, if you are responsible for how people perceive you then their perceptions are in your control!

- If you want to be visible, make yourself visible.
- If you want to stand out in the crowd, then stand up and be seen.
- If you wish to no longer be anonymous, then become someone.

It's really quite simple. It takes boldness, hard work and persistence, but it is simple. What do you do?

Add to your value on a daily basis. This requires that you constantly seek to learn, to add to your base of knowledge regarding your particular career. Seek out books, journals, and magazines in your field of expertise and devour them. If there are CDs or DVDs of people in your industry sharing their knowledge and wisdom, go buy them and memorize what these people have to say. Are there particular aspects of your day-to-day responsibilities that could use some fine-tuning? Then **do whatever it takes to hone these skills.**



Distinguish yourself. Become the expert, the go-to-person that everyone seeks out for answers and solutions. Find something within the context of your responsibilities that you can focus upon and, over time, become *The Authority* whom all within your realm rely upon for wisdom and knowledge.

Be aware of the power of symbols and learn to utilize them. Where you sit at the conference table and the postures you take are symbolic. Your not believing this is irrelevant: everyone else around you is interpreting your behavior. **How you dress is a symbol that communicates.** What would you like to communicate? Go

thou, and dress accordingly. **How you appoint your office, the art you hang on the walls or the absence of art says something about you as a person.** What is it saying? What would you like to say? The sacrifices you make, the hours you work and the quality of your work are all symbols that add or subtract or detract from how you wish to be perceived.

Have a point of view. Yes-men are invisible. Sycophants are useless. Parrots simply repeat what they have heard from others. Don't choose to allow others to think your thoughts for you or to speak through your vocal chords. **Develop your own thoughts and your own voice.** No one else thinks like you or talks like you. Simply being "you" will cause you to stand out.

Pursue the respect of others. If someone's "image" is all show with no substance, then, in this case, "image" becomes a four-letter word. Developing your unique image is all about developing a reputation. The image-the symbols, the style, etc.-should be supporting the person you are becoming. When your image attracts people to you, then you must, as a quality person, be prepared to give a quality performance.



Give more than what you are paid for. Come in early. Stay late. Help someone who is under a time crunch. Consistently go the extra mile. People should be in awe of your work ethic, amazed with the extra touches you give your work and wowed by your performance. They should walk away thinking to themselves that they received far more than what they paid you to do for them.

Get over yourself. Some poor souls are simply so "humble" that the thought of standing out, of asserting their presence or of consciously and systematically developing a particular reputation for themselves is anathema. (For you non-religious folk, this refers to beliefs or behaviors worthy of being cursed.) Yet, these same people are often frustrated with their lack of success and their inability to gain entrance to the Association of Movers and Shakers within their industry.

Jesus called on his followers to let their lights shine (via good works) and to not hide under bushels. Is anyone going to suggest that he was recommending they become arrogant and obnoxious? And what would have happened had one of his followers said, "O, lord, I don't want to stand out"?



Wouldn't that have been arrogant? I use this analogy because it is usually devoutly religious people (whatever their particular Faith) who want to continue hiding their light under a bushel while calling it humility. **I suggest that, rather than being humble, it is often more a case of lacking courage or even a desire to appear more humble than everyone else.** Such people (and certainly not

all religious people have this struggle) need to get over themselves and get into the game where the action is...or not. It depends upon how important your reputation is to you and what value you place upon making a difference in your world. If such things are of no consequence to you, then, by all means, maintain your anonymity.

For the rest of us...Let's blow our trumpets, rattle our "symbols," perfect our skills and earn the renown that will open doors to ever-increasing success and the opportunities to do good for others!

by Dr. Monte E. Wilson, III