

## Member's Quarterly

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### President's Message

### Be Your Own Advocate

*Practice makes perfect*

If you have a problem or an issue at work, it's likely that no one will address it or fix it until you raise it. You'll often have to do this more than once. Advocating for yourself is a skill that takes extensive practice. Many people lack the confidence to raise their concerns at work or they do not do it properly. That's why it's good to start slow with some lower risk situations and then work your way up as you build confidence in your self-advocacy role.

Along with practice, you will also need to brush up on other skills. Not surprisingly, better communication is the primary skill you need to refine. You need the capacity to be able to express your needs and opinions in as simple and straightforward a manner as possible. Long-winded speeches will get you nowhere. One great tool is active listening because you learn to speak and then to listen, both equally vital if you want to make sure that your message gets across.

Assertiveness is another skill you need to master to be a successful advocate for yourself at work. This is difficult because it means that you have to learn, if you haven't already, to set boundaries, say no when it's not right for you, and ask for what you need. Whether it's a raise or new equipment or more time off, you have to make the request in an assertive way without appearing pushy or aggressive. There is zero tolerance for workplace bullies. Find the right formula and use it carefully.

Do your homework before raising an issue or making a request. Is there an existing policy or procedure that you can point to? Do you have any data, research or statistics to back up your claims? You must be ready to provide this if you are challenged. It is also helpful to come with possible solutions and be prepared to negotiate. No one will give you anything you don't deserve or don't really need. Make your best case and if you don't get everything you want right now, you can always come back if the situation changes.

Finally, master the art of compromise. It will save you a lot of trouble as an advocate for your position. It will ultimately demonstrate that you are a reasonable and credible person. Even more importantly, it may open the door to a solution that you didn't even consider when you started this discussion. Stay focused on getting to a win-win scenario and your advocacy will always pay off.

*Nathaly Pascal is President of IPM [Institute of Professional Management].*



Nathaly Pascal  
RPR, CMP, RPT  
President