

Assert yourself in the office

Executive coach Elizabeth Kuhnke offers some simple tips that can make the difference between being perceived as powerful or merely part of the pack.

● **Consider your stance.** Place your hands facing each other and steeple your fingers. This forces your palms apart and, whether you are sitting or standing, your arms will take up more space. This is a highly effective negotiating posture; watch how CEOs, politicians and solicitors use it.

● **Delay your introduction.** When you first meet a person, engage them person in conversation for a few seconds before giving your name. By then he or she will have a reason to remember it.

● **Be aware of your body language.** If you nod to show empathy, it can be misinterpreted as agreement. If you disagree with something, say so verbally. This will avoid misunderstanding.



When talking, keep your head up-right, evenly balanced on your neck. Relax your shoulders, keeping your upper chest softly opened like a book. This position will give you a look of authority and influence.

● **Practise speaking with a lower, more even delivery.** A lower voice has more credibility, which is why most commercial voiceovers are done by men. If your voice rises at the end of sentences, force the intonation down.

● **Don't allow others to interrupt you.** If co-workers try to interrupt you, increase the volume of your voice and keep speaking. If they continue to speak over you, put up one finger to indicate that you have not yet finished. If that doesn't produce the desired result, hold up your hand as if to say, "Stop!" Or say, "Excuse me, I hadn't finished."

Assertiveness shows that you are confident and aware of your rights. The more you practise, the easier it will get. You'll feel good about yourself, too.