

HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR STATURE

PRETEND YOU HAVE AN ASSISTANT



Alter your outgoing voicemail message.

Ask a spouse or friend, preferably with an intriguing foreign accent, to record your outgoing message. It should be a version of the following: “You have reached the office of [*your name here*]. S/he is not available to take your call. Please leave a message and s/he will return your call as soon as possible.”



Receive calls on your mobile phone.

While you are with someone you want to impress, either in an office conference room or at a restaurant, have a friend call you at a pre-arranged time. Answer the phone and say to the person with whom you are meeting, “Sorry, but I have to take this call. No one but my assistant has this number and I told him to call me only in emergencies.”



Use a pager.

Subscribe to a paging service that alerts you with a beep for headlines or sports scores. Pretend the pages are from your assistant. In an exasperated voice, say, “It’s my new assistant. He can’t seem to do anything without my approval!”



Tip the host at a restaurant.

Tell the host to come to your table during the meal and say that you have an urgent phone call from your assistant.

ATTEND MEETINGS TO WHICH YOU ARE NOT INVITED



Ask the receptionist for a conference room reservation schedule.

Determine which meetings are worth crashing.



Choose meetings carefully.

Do not attend any meeting at which your direct supervisor is present. If your supervisor is out of the office, definitely attend the meeting and people will think you have been designated as a replacement. If your supervisor is in town, go to other departments’ meetings.



Invent a reason for attending.

Approach the person running the meeting in advance and explain that you are attending for “professional development.” The chairperson will most likely assume that there is some new Human Resources department program. Others attending the meeting will assume you are supposed to be there.



Bring snacks.

People will never question your attendance if you bring food.

MOVE INTO AN UNOCCUPIED OFFICE

- 1 Take note of offices that have been vacant for a significant length of time.**
- 2 Slowly take possession of an office.**
Begin by working on a project in the office. If questioned, explain that you “needed a little peace and quiet in order to get [*project name*] done.”
- 3 Occupy the office regularly.**
For two weeks, spend at least an hour a day in the space, working on your project.
- 4 Expand your hours of occupancy.**
After two weeks, begin leaving personal items and other files in the office.
- 5 Log onto the computer in the new office with your password.**
- 6 Forward your phone calls.**
Program your phone to send your calls to the extension in the new office.
- 7 Complain to the IT department.**
Tell the Information Technologies department that your old extension still hasn’t been transferred to your new phone.

8 Move your nameplate.

Place your nameplate on the new desk or in the slot outside the door, depending on company practice.

9 Close the door when working.

Look annoyed when anyone knocks or tries to come in. After approximately eight weeks of squatting, the office will be perceived as yours.

ALTER YOUR BUSINESS CARDS

Count the number of characters in your title.

The new title you select needs to occupy roughly the same space on the card so that it doesn’t float or appear obviously doctored. For example, “Editorial Assistant” can become “Editorial Director,” but not simply “Editor” or “Senior Editor.” Suggested replacements:

- “Marketing Manager” with “Marketing Director”
- “Assistant to the President” with “Assistant Vice-President”
- “Executive Secretary” with “Chief Exec. Officer.”
- “Customer Service Rep.” with “Customer Service Mgr.”

Use correction fluid, tape, a razor blade, and modified printer labels to add or subtract words and letters from your business card.

USE PROPS



Carry a briefcase.

Invest in a good-quality leather briefcase or attaché case and carry it at all times. When someone asks you for something, say, “Oh, I have it here in my briefcase.” Consider a locking model for added stature.



Carry a fountain pen.

Fountain pens denote wealth and good breeding. Do not carry the pen in a pocket protector.

LOOK BUSIER THAN YOU ARE



Purchase a headset and attach it to your phone.

It doesn’t matter whether it’s actually connected or not—tape it to the bottom of the phone if it won’t hook in. Wear it constantly, and talk loudly whenever someone passes by.



Keep large piles of paper on your desk at all times.

Re-arrange the stacks occasionally.



Type furiously from time to time.

Position your monitor so the screen is not visible to anyone passing by or entering your space. Periodically, look intently at the monitor and type as fast as you can. Type nonsense, if you must—but do it at a speed of at least 70 words per minute.



Show up early and stay late.

You can maintain the same eight-hour day—just run your errands in the middle of the day. Few people will think twice about your absence from your desk in the middle of the day, but everyone will notice how early you get there and how late you leave. Long midday absences, if noticed, will be interpreted as business lunches, a sign of importance.



Muss your hair and look stressed whenever you pass your supervisor’s office.

START A HELPFUL RUMOR



Receive messages from headhunters.

Have a friend, posing as a headhunter, make repeated calls to the receptionist. The friend should say, “I’m with [official sounding name] Headhunting Agency—may I speak with [your name]?” Word will likely get back to your supervisor.



Plant a reference check with the Human Resources department.

When the office is sure to be closed—late at night, on a weekend, or when you are certain everyone in the Human Resources department has left for the day—have a friend leave a voice-mail message saying he or she is checking references on [your name] and will call back later. The caller should not leave a return phone number nor a company name, but can leave their own name. The caller should sound casual but busy, as if

he or she is checking a list of names with a variety of employers.

★ **Take the receptionist or your direct supervisor's assistant into your "confidence."**

Explain that you are "entertaining" a position at another company, but that you "really want to stay." Ask for advice, knowing that word will get back to the boss.

★ **Talk with people in other departments about forthcoming changes in your department.**

Say you are not at liberty to reveal the whole story, but major changes will be coming. Ask if they know anything about future plans for your supervisor's parking place/office.

★ **Conduct rumor-inducing conversations in public areas.**

Spend time conversing at the water cooler, the lunchroom, bathroom, lobby, stairwells, elevators, and hallways. A loud whisper is most effective in getting people's attention. What you are talking about is not important: The fact that you are engaging in so many hushed conversations is the important factor.

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