

Workplace Success linked to good interpersonal skills with fellow employees. Increase Your Influence!

How do others respond to your ideas, suggestions? Are they implemented with excitement and passion, grudgingly followed, or dismissed on the spot? Whichever your answer, your ability to influence the future and your work environment has as much to do with your work relationships as it does the quality or vision of your ideas. If you are interested in greater influence, I suggest you look beyond your technical competence. What sets you apart from the pack are your actions, how you are perceived and, hence, received by others. This is where a reputation of personal *Credibility* comes into play.

Research shows that employees with keen interpersonal skills often have the edge in gaining the respect of peers and bosses. A focus on your own actions in relationships is clearly part of a long-term influencing strategy. Yes, I'm talking about what some refer to as the dreaded "soft skills." Personally, my dread is that these "soft skills" are usually the most difficult skills for employees to acquire and demonstrate. And more, the lack of these "soft skills" is a frequent cause for the company's "rising star" to fall. So, maybe these "soft skills" are really the "hard skills" that can make a difference for your own influence and overall success!

So, how do you increase personal *Credibility* systematically rather than merely wishing and hoping to improve your own influence? I believe the first step in that journey begins with some personal reflection and honest self-appraisal, starting with these questions:

Credibility Self-appraisal:

- Are my actions predictable or erratic?
- Do I communicate consciously or carelessly?
- Do I treat my commitments seriously or lightly?
- Am I forthright or do I withhold information?

First, *Credibility* requires a foundation of *Predictability*. A person who demonstrates *Predictability* is one who is consistent in terms of actions as well as reactions. This person is open about who he/she is and what can be expected in a work relationship. Next, there are three interpersonal characteristics that play a major role in *Credibility*: *Cooperation, Dependability and Honesty*. *Predictability* is a must in these three areas of your work life to raise your level of influence. So let me offer ways to raise your *Credibility*.

Cooperation is about effective two-way communication with others. First and foremost in communication is listening to hear and understand the other person's opinion or message. In *Authentic Listening*, you listen in three ways, with your heart, mind and body. These keep you focused on the other's view vs. your rebuttals and judgments. I've learned that listening to someone else does not mean I agree; it simply demonstrates that I respect their right to an opinion and give them time to express it. Trust me, if you can practice focusing on someone else's message, it actually helps you learn more from differing perspectives. While you still might not agree, you do have the benefit of understanding.

The talking side of communication, which I call *Speaking Consciously*, means that you speak carefully with clarity and directness vs. ambiguity and incoherence. This is about being very purposeful in what you say and sharing what is helpful and appropriate to creating trust and respect. *Speaking Consciously* helps makes it easier for others to hear and understand your message or opinion.

Cooperation is also about having the tough conversations when things aren't going well and *Resolving Conflict* as it arises. *Authentic Listening* and *Speaking Consciously* are key skills in preserving *Credibility* during these uncomfortable situations.

Dependability requires that others can believe in your word; that you will do what you say you will do, and, when you said you would do it. I've heard this called your *Say/Do Ratio* and it's something you definitely want to keep in balance! Since your handling of promises is something that others can observe, I suggest being specific in the crafting of your commitments and only making those commitments you intend to keep. Your *Credibility* is at stake and all can see!

Honesty is about letting people know, in a respectful way, your thoughts and feelings rather than keeping them guessing. *Asking for and Giving Feedback* is one method to create honesty. Another is by sharing information through appropriate *Self-disclosure* as to your strengths as well as your hopes for improvement. Yes, demonstrating some vulnerability, letting others know that we recognize our own areas for improvement can trigger support and helpfulness from others. I believe it is often the invulnerable IKE (I Know Everything), who lacks honest self-appraisal, may be left alone to falter.

So *Credibility* can be built systematically! You can enhance your influence with others as well as your future. It takes a willingness to be *Predictable, Cooperative, Dependable and Honest*. The choice is yours, the results will follow. Start your journey now.

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