

Analysing the credibility factor philosophy essay

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\n[/toc]\n \nA major reason why so many executives, managers, and supervisors fail in their leadership is they have lost their credibility. This loss of credibility can occur from a single damaging event, or from a series of blunders. In this paper, the reader will explore what leadership and management credibility is, why credibility is important in leadership and management, and how leaders and managers can gain credibility. The Credibility FactorTake a moment to think of the best boss you have ever worked for. What characteristics make you feel that boss is the ideal leader or manager? Would intelligence, charisma, competence, vision, honesty, inspiring, and trustworthy be the list? There is no doubt, all of these characteristics are certainly important. Now, take a moment to think of the worst boss you have ever worked for. Were any of these characteristics missing? Most likely, your answer to this question is yes. If there were a mathematical formula for defining an ideal leader or manager, it might look like this: Honesty+Vision+Competence+Inspiring = Credibility. Staying with the math analogy, if you remove any single characteristic in the equation, it will affect the sum, which is credibility. The critical factor to being an effective leader or manager is the credibility factor. So what is credibility? Is it simply the sum of a managerial mathematical equation, if there is such a

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thing? Is it important? In other words, can you lead or manage people without it? How do you gain credibility with those you lead or manage? As we delve deeper into this subject, keep both the ideal and worst boss you have had in mind. Was credibility the key factor one was missing?

What is Credibility?

Merriam-Webster (2010) defines credibility as " the quality or power of inspiring belief." If you take the word " belief" from the definition and break it down further in this context, it will most likely inspire two sub-characteristics in your thought: 1. The leader or manager's words are truthful; and 2. The leader or manager is competent in what they do (Riley, 2010). Think of that ideal boss for a moment. Were they honest and trustworthy? Did they have what it takes to get the job done? If the answer is yes, they most assuredly had the credibility factor. James Kouzes and his associates shed some light on the concept of credibility. In their experiment, they distributed seventy-five thousand questionnaires that asked for the seven qualities most admired in a leader or manager. For decades, the results have been consistent with four qualities earning more than fifty percent of the votes: honesty, forward-looking, competent, and inspiring (" Leadership credibility," 2005). Imagine in WWII when our troops were about to storm the beaches of Normandy under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. These troops knew they faced formidable German forces and many knew they would die the moment they stormed the beach. So why did they proceed with the operation? Why didn't they mutiny? The reason is they trusted their leader. General Eisenhower had credibility in the eyes of those he led. Although the troops were about to step onto foreign soil and an

uncertain situation, the trust they had in their leader propelled them forward. General Eisenhower once said, " In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence, the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of being phony, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose." (Mills, 1997). The words in General Eisenhower's quote could not have been more profound on D-Day. Consider for a moment if he did not have his troop's confidence and trust. If those troops he led had considered him a phony, could General Eisenhower have led them into such a dire situation? Chances are, the history of WWII would be written different today had General Eisenhower not had the credibility factor?

Why is Credibility Important?

" I covered two presidents, LBJ and Nixon, who could no longer convince, persuade, or govern, once people hand decided they had no credibility." (" Helen thomas quotes," 2010). If you don't think credibility is important, try leading without it. Humans are skeptical by their very nature. This is probably due to our ingrained survival needs. When a new manager takes over a group of employees, it is almost certain the employees are going to be skeptical as to whether or not this new manager has what it takes to lead them. This will be especially true if the manager follows another strong manager who had the credibility factor in the employee's eyes. Likewise, this new manager might find skeptical employees if he or she follows a non-

credible manager. In other words, the employees may be feeling they are about to get more of the same. Credibility can rest on the actual ability to lead, or the perceived ability to lead. Skeptical employees will wait for the new manager to prove they are credible, especially if he or she does not look the part. Employees need proof of performance, despite a resume, before willingly accepting a leader. Employees want to believe their leaders and want to see a match between their words and behaviors. You've most likely heard the phrase, "do as I say, not as I do." Consider a company policy that states all lunch periods are not to exceed 30 minutes and your department manager consistently breaks this policy, while at the same time, administers harsh discipline to his employees who violate the same policy. In another example, consider a manufacturing manager who stands before his department and preaches the virtues of using the proper safety equipment and following all working instructions step-by-step, but doesn't wear his safety glasses and never follows work instructions. How long does it take before the employees fail to see credibility in this leader? Employees expect their leaders and managers to have a vision for the future and to be able to make the right decisions and provide a sense of direction to get there. Leaders and managers who are content with keeping things just how they are lack vision, a critical component of credibility. Have you ever heard the phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"? Imagine that is your manager's way of running your particular department, but you know a better and more efficient way to run a process. However, each time you pose the new technique, you're faced with, "it ain't broke..." It will not take long before the manager loses credibility in your eyes and the eyes of others. This is not to say the manager has to have all of the solutions, but they should have

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enough foresight, i. e., vision, to recognize the new proposal will help the organization and at the very least, explore the idea. What if the manager did adopt the idea and then took credit for it as if it were his or her own idea?

This reverts back to the integrity issue mentioned earlier. In football, there's a common saying, "those who can, play; those who can't, coach." This is not the most complimentary comment to a football coach, and it may not even be applicable to coaches as a rule. However, consider that coach, who had a hall of fame career as a player, and then takes over as a coach after retiring as a player. Do they not have some instant credibility? Rue, Byars (2010) list technical skills as one of the three types of management skills needed for a leader or manager to be successful. Let's look at this in a precision optics manufacturing company setting. Does this imply the Production Manager must also be a highly skilled CNC machine operator? Not necessarily; however, the Production Manager should understand the demands of being a CNC operator, be able to set attainable production output, and help the operator solve production issues. What if this was not the case and the Production Manager was only focused on number and spreadsheets? It would not take long for this manager to lose credibility with his work force. Let's take it a step higher in the organization. Should the President of the company be a skilled CNC operator? Probably not unless he worked his way from the bottom to the top to the company. He should, as a minimum, know his company employees CNC operators and the stresses of their job. Imagine the President of the company holds a monthly meeting and never mentions the CNC operators who are making the optics. What if all he mentions is the financial reports and bottom line dollar figures? Chances are, the CNC operators would feel disconnected from the senior leadership and feel the

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President has no idea how the dollars he is quoting are being made. In the United States Air Force, each base has a Command Chief Master Sergeant assigned. This person holds the highest enlisted position on the base and is responsible for leading the enlisted force. This is a highly-selective position and a position of honor and admiration to the junior enlisted force.

Essentially, at face value, the position of Command Chief Master Sergeant says, "I've been there and done that." But what if that's not the case? In today's Air Force, Airmen are expected to deploy to combat zones. What if the Chief has never deployed, but more than half of his base has? Airmen are expected to pursue education beyond high school. What if the Chief only has a high school diploma but stands before his Airmen and preaches education? Airmen are expected to serve remote tours overseas away from their family and loved ones. What if the Chief has never left his family and has only served at stateside bases with a beach? The point is, what happens to the Command Chief Master Sergeant's credibility once his or her bio has been read by the Airmen and they discover he or she does not practice what they preach, or they can't do, so they coach? The credibility factor is lost."

Leadership is based on a spiritual quality; the power to inspire, the power to inspire others to follow." ("Vince Lombardi quotes," 2010). What makes an inspirational leader? The inspirational leader feels passionately about the vision and mission of the organization. He or she is also able to share that passion in a way that enables others to feel the passion. The nature of the vision and mission is critical for enabling others to feel as if their work has purpose and meaning beyond the tasks they perform each day. Sometimes leaders have to help their employees connect the dots by explaining this big picture. Let's go back to the CNC operators at the precision optics

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manufacturing company. Their normal workday consists of operating CNC machines to produce optics at a rate set by the Production Manager. Essentially, they have a job number, specifications for the optic to be manufactured, and number of parts to be produced. If you asked the CNC operators what they do, they reply, "I make glass." So, how inspiring would it be for the President of the company to only quote bottom line production figures and dollars made at the company meeting? Would the CNC operators really feel connected to that? Rather, the President could inspire by linking the CNC operators to the bottom line results. The President should change the CNC operator's mindset of "I make glass" by telling them exactly what the optics they have produced are used for. Many of the operators may not have known the optics are being manufactured for the Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle surveying the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. They most likely do not know what the satisfaction rate is of the customer who ordered the parts and that the high quality and fast production led to increased orders and profits for the company. That small amount of additional information can inspire the operators to want to do more because now they know how they connect to the bigger picture. In a short meeting, they went from glass makers to being able to brag to their friends and family about how their work is helping our service members in harm's way. At the same time, the President gains a huge boost to his credibility factor.

How Does A Leader or Manager Gain Credibility?

A manager or leader establishes credibility by demonstrating they are the best person for the job. Sounds simple enough, but how exactly does he or she do that? First and foremost, the leader needs to practice what they

preach and lead by example. The "do as I say and not as I do" approach simply doesn't work. The leader's actions must be consistent with their words. Followers will only judge their leaders as credible when their actions match their behaviors. Effective leaders are not accepting the status quo or "if it ain't broken, don't fix it" attitude. Instead they want to move the organization forward. In doing so, they are open to new ideas, new concepts, and will make decisions quickly. Simply put, a leader who will challenge the status quo and lead the followers in a new direction will be seen as highly credible. Employees expect the leader to have a full arsenal of knowledge and skills. The Command Chief Master Sergeant who has deployed to a combat zone, has education beyond high school, has served a remote tour, has served a special duty tour, and has served at all levels of the Air Force will be viewed as having the credibility the position warrants. Employees want leaders who have "been there and done that." This holds true at all levels. The American voters appreciate members of congress, or even a President, who have served in the military. It gives them a solace to know the leaders making the decisions affecting our military have once served themselves. Finally, leaders can gain credibility by inspiring those they lead. Inspiring is not giving orders. Giving orders is simply a privilege of serving in an office. In other words, anyone serving in that office can give orders and the employees are expected to follow the orders or directions without question. However, employees want to feel they are part of the organization's success and not just cogs in a wheel and simply taking orders. When employees understand the holistic goal of the organization and can quickly see how their work is connected to the ultimate outcome, their level of commitment and production far exceeds that of employees just given

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orders to do this or that. Leaders who can establish this type of emotional connection to goals most definitely possess the credibility factor.

Conclusion

Having a credible leader promotes positive work attitudes, strong teamwork, increased ownership, personal responsibility, and alignment between personal and organizational goals and values. Time Magazine lists Mohandas Gandhi, Vince Lombardi, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Steve Jobs, Nelson Mandela, Gloria Steinem, Golda Meir, Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill, Douglas MacArthur, Eleanor Roosevelt, James T. Kirk (Star Trek), Oprah Winfrey, Pope John Paul II, and Count Basie as the 15 greatest leaders in history ("15 great leaders," 2010). If one reads further into the history and lives of these leaders, several common threads are revealed. All were perceived as honest, trustworthy, and leaders who led by example; all were visionaries, some leading entire countries or a race of people to a new way of life; all were competent in their chosen professions; and finally, all were inspirational. Each and every one of these great leaders and the best boss you ever worked for shared one more thing in common: The Credibility Factor.