



## [DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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# Leadership 2008

Some people believe leaders are born, some say they are "called," and others contend they are "made" by the times. However leaders come into being, they are in demand in the new millennium.

Contemporary leadership theorists are returning to the trait theory of leadership. They are finding that certain demonstrable qualities are shared by leaders. A number of those qualities are listed below. Determine which of these you associate with yourself:

- Do you communicate?
- Are you self-confident?
- Do you develop teams?
- Are you ethical?
- Do you share knowledge?
- Do you envision?
- Are you motivated?
- Do you follow through?
- Do you energize others?
- Do you welcome change?
- Do you do research?
- Do you help organize?

These are all essential qualities followers expect in a leader. How these expectations are met or are not met is what determines a leader's credibility factor. Credibility may well be one of the most difficult attributes for a leader to earn, as well as one of the easiest to lose.

According to Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of "The Leadership Challenge," there are six strategies leaders can take to build and maintain their credibility. I will summarize these strategies for you to consider. I also encourage you to assess yourself in relation to how you are currently leading those for whom you are accountable.

### Strategy No. 1: Clarify your values

It is important for leaders to communicate their values to those they lead, be-

cause those values are the foundation on which everything else is built. Conveying who you are, your goals and what you stand for can have a significant impact on your followers' performance and attitudes.

### Strategy No. 2: Identify what your followers want

Followers are unanimous in naming responsiveness to their needs and concerns as a key factor they look for in a leader. Leaders who act only in their own self-interest, ignoring the needs of their followers, eventually lose the trust of those they lead.

### Strategy No. 3: Build consensus

Followers want leaders who trust the experience and ideas of those they lead; they want leaders who seek and respect their input. While followers understand that it is the leader who must ultimately make the decision, they also know that credible leaders include and involve their followers in charting a course and setting standards. When a leader doesn't collaborate with his team, the message the team receives is that their ideas are not important or trustworthy. This is not a message that contributes to a leader's credibility.

### Strategy No. 4: Communicate shared values with enthusiasm

Enthusiasm emerges as a crucial characteristic of leadership. Followers want and need leaders who can communicate shared values with ardor and conviction. They want leaders who have energy, who become involved, and who express their genuine passion for what the organization is working to accomplish. Enthusiasm is contagious. Followers catch it from their leaders. As Posner

reminds us, "You can't light a fire with a wet match."

### Strategy No. 5: Stand up for your beliefs

Followers don't follow leaders who lack confidence in their own decisions. While leaders must be open to alternatives and listen to feedback, they must also take a stand. Leaders who do not

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stand by their beliefs create stress, indecision and conflict within their team.

### Strategy No. 6: Lead by example

Followers expect their leaders to do more than lead; they expect them to teach and develop leadership within their organization and to do this by setting an example. People believe actions over words every time. To be credible, a leader must be a role model. Leaders cannot hold others responsible for shared values when they don't live by those values themselves.

A final word: Leadership is not about doing it yourself. It is about building relationships with others as representatives build relationships with clients. At the heart of those relationships is credibility. A leader's credibility and believability are what enables others in any organization to achieve excellence and experience success.

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