



Keyword: Believable

Seven Ways to Build Believability

by Kevin Eikenberry

John wanted to be more effective within his organization and be seen as a leader. Since he always felt that a leader was someone that others followed he thought long and hard about the key factors that encouraged people to follow others.

Near the top of his list was “be believable.” After all he reasoned, if people don’t believe you, why would they follow you?

Since John was relatively new in the organization, without a long track record or long term relationships with others, he decided this concept of believability was especially important for him right now.

He went to see Toni, a former boss of his, and someone he thought was a great role model on believability. As they sat together at lunch he asked her for some ideas to help him in this area. What follows are the seven ideas that he gleaned from this wise mentor.

The Seven Ways

Tell the truth. First and foremost, if you want to be believed you must tell the truth. The fable of the little boy who cried wolf is a perfect example. Many times as he tended the sheep he got lonely, so he alerted the adults of wolves attacking the sheep. After several times of sending a false signal, people didn’t respond when he really did need their help. If you want to be believable, tell the truth.

Be consistent. To be more believable don’t just tell the truth with it is convenient or comfortable. When we are seen as consistent in our words and deeds, people take more stock in what we say and that builds believability.

Match your words and actions. There is a time for humor and perhaps even light sarcasm. Pick those spots carefully. If you are too often sarcastic, people may not be able to read the times when you are being honest and when you are being sarcastic. This subtle thing can have an impact on your believability.

Share more information. A strict “just the facts on a need to know basis” approach won’t always promote the greatest levels of believability. Tell people what is happening. Give them more context. Tell them *why* something is happening. When people know more, they



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won't feel you are hiding something or leaving something out. (And if they think you are omitting details they will make something up to fill in the gaps.)

Share sooner. Most everyone hates surprises and when we think information is being withheld. Tell people what is happening, even if there is nothing new. Tell people more, sooner.

Share mistakes. Do you know someone who never does anything wrong? (Or at least never admits it?) Does that behavior lead you to question all of his/her thoughts and comments? I'm sure it does on some level. When we admit mistakes, errors and misjudgments we become more real and people see us as more believable.

Say "I don't know." Go ahead; say it out loud right now. Three times. Get used to saying it. We, of course, don't always know, and there is nothing wrong with admitting it. My high school year book said of one of my classmates, "If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, divert them with B.S." If you think someone is "B.S. ing" you, and you are always running his/her words through that filter, believability is greatly diminished. Be willing to say, "I don't know."

Tell the truth. For good measure let me repeat the first item from this list again. It can't be overstated. If you want to be believable, you must start by telling the truth. The rest of the items on this list will help people see your honesty and not doubt you, but the underlying starting point must be the truth.

As he intentionally applied these ideas John was amazed at how much his productivity, success and happiness grew. He realized that believability was extremely important – not just when new in an organization – but always.

This whole list of suggestions comes down to being authentic and real. Be sincere and genuine. Share more than just the facts. Tell people how you feel and how you think. Put your cards on the table and let people see where you stand. When you do this consistently, people will believe you.

Believability is a key component of trust and relationship building. As you master believability you are building these important skills at the same time.



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