
Article: Demonstrating Credibility

It is a fact that you cannot **not** communicate. Whether communicating face to face, speaking on the telephone, or in writing, all these mediums will communicate a message about you.

The impact of any communication and how it can be interpreted struck home recently. I was delivering a workshop on facilitation skills, and the group were exploring neutrality. Volunteers acted out scenarios which included looking out of the window, writing notes in a pad, drumming fingers on the table. I asked the group what they were seeing. People didn't describe the behaviour, but instead said "they're bored", "they're not interested in the group", "they've switched off".

These behaviours were seen, then interpreted and judgments made. Ideally people should not make assumptions, but people do and the incident above shows how quickly they assume and judge.

One thing that is judged is the **credibility** of the communication or communicator.

The dictionary definition of Credibility is 'trustworthiness'. To be credible is to be 'worthy of trust' or 'believable.' *Webster's Dictionary*

Credibility matters because people believe and trust those who they think are credible. People tend to distrust and not believe people they don't think are credible. If you need to influence, convince, sell to, or persuade other people you need to be credible.

Credibility is what makes the other person or persons listen to you, believe you and trust you.

Credibility is in the Eye of the Beholder

In the example above, people interpreted the behaviours in different ways from their own perspective, from their reality, 'map of the world'. So even though **you** may believe you are credible, but it's the **beholder, our audience**, that you need to convince.

So how do you communicate your credibility, and demonstrate you are credible?

1. The Importance of Outcomes

In demonstrating credibility the starting point is identifying your outcomes.

Ask yourself

- What do I want to achieve in the situation?
- What do I want to communicate?
- Who is my audience and what outcome do I want with them?

2. Show you Know it

Just because you are speaking doesn't mean people listen. Why should people listen to you? What knowledge and skills do you have that are particularly relevant in the situation?

Your choice will be dependent on the audience – what is it that they will recognise and accept as appropriate and valid credentials?

- Specific industry/sector or issue experience?
- Length of experience?
- Specific qualifications?

Identify the '*difference that makes the difference*' – the evidence you know what you are talking about.

3. Build a Connection

People make connections with every person they make contact with. Think back to the people you had an interaction with in the last week. Consider the different strength of connections you made.

- Some will have been strong – talking with good friends or family members
- Some very weak, for example other drivers on the road, people in a supermarket, walking in the street

The strength of the connection depends on the situation and the people involved. It takes two to make a connection and we cannot make people connect with us. If you want to make a connection, consider how you can build it. What will motivate the other person to connect with you? Do you have any points of similarity, common ground to talk about? What will be of interest to them to talk about?

4. Demonstrate Conviction, Passion and Purpose

- When you communicate do you care what you are talking about?
- Do you show that you believe in what you are saying?

Recall speeches you heard in the past and ask yourself what it was that made them memorable. After words have been forgotten the speaker's passion and conviction is remembered. If you are not convinced of what you are saying this will be communicated to your audience.

Are you communicating conviction, passion and purpose in your words, tone and body language when you want to demonstrate credibility? If not, how can you do so?

5. Be Aligned and Congruent

Congruence in face to face communication is the consistency in words, voice tone, body language of the speaker, the consistency of voice tone and words when communicating on the telephone.

Incongruence is noticed. The more congruent you appear, the stronger the likelihood of being seen as credible. The three communication channels have different degrees of impact. The percentages below are the amount of trust we give a communication channel in a face to face interaction if there isn't congruence:-

- 55% non-verbal communication – body language
- 38% tone of voice
- 7% the words used

Given that your body language and voice tone impact so greatly on being perceived as congruent and thus as credible, it's useful to consider ways you can manage them.

Some suggestions to help develop congruence

- Notice when you feel congruent and when you don't. What is affecting and impacting? What can you do to feel more congruent, less incongruent?
- Practice and prepare. The more you know what you are doing, going to do, the more confident you will feel inside which will be communicated on the outside.



About the Author - Krista Powell Edwards

Krista is a very experienced and highly qualified consultant, coach, facilitator, trainer and author.

She uses her experience and expertise to support individuals and organisations to enhance their effectiveness and performance.

Krista is currently writing her first book on how to effectively communicate credibility.

Expertise and experience

Krista has developed her expertise through

- An extensive track record of supporting organisations in the UK and internationally since 1995.
- Masters level research in the factors that affect the achievement of workplace performance.
- Extensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD), (including regular attendance at conferences and development programmes).
- Research of 'best practice' consultancy, facilitation and learning and development
- Qualifying as a Master Trainer, Master Practitioner and Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).
- Designing and delivering 500+ training and development programmes.
- 20+ years as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) volunteer - branch chair, council representative - supporting the CPD and performance of 7500+ HR professionals.
- Lecturing at a university (International Human Resource Management).

Specialist areas

Krista specialises in three main areas:-

Credibility - How to communicate credibility for influence and positive impact in the workplace

Credible HR - Enabling HR to add value to the organisation

Personal Effectiveness Skills - Support in developing confidence, credibility, influence, time management and assertiveness and conflict management skills so that individuals and teams are able to perform effectively.

Services

Krista offers support in **workplace performance improvement**.

Tailored, cost effective

- Consultancy and Research
- Coaching
- Facilitation
- Training and Development

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