



# Are you credible?

By Lori Silverman

In Lynn's first job out of college, she joined a small, well-respected community hospital as a staff education instructor. Her close friends envied her. Because she had been a volunteer in high school, several employees knew her. They quickly accepted her suggestions and requested her services. This was key since the person she replaced had created the position 18 months earlier and had not met management's expectations.

People who did not know Lynn questioned if her position was really needed. They also were skeptical about her department's ability to add value. Even though Lynn had done similar work as an intern and was a familiar face to some staff, she wondered how to overcome these challenges.

### Types of credibility

Credibility comes in many forms. Your own credibility depends on whether people trust and believe in you. As Lynn discovered, there are other types of credibility that affect how you are perceived: the credibility of your ideas, the credibility of your position or role in the community, and the credibility of the department and organization in which you work. They can bias how others treat you no matter how much effort you put into relationships and how much expertise you have. They also affect the brand called "you."

Outside the workplace, these factors may not seem important. Yet, because we often talk about our work when we first meet someone, they can influence first impressions. Think about it. Do you make judgments about people based on what they do? Or where they work? Or the ideas they mention?

### Trust or expertise?

There are two parts to credibility: trust and

expertise. Which do you value at work? In your personal life? In both cases, trust usually wins. Many people prefer to partner with someone they trust and help build the person's skills rather than spend time with a know-it-all who cannot be trusted. With friends or family, expertise may not be an issue, unless it is important that the person possess certain abilities (for example: scuba diving) or knowledge (for example: expertise about wines).

### Enhancing expertise

Does this mean you should ignore developing your expertise? Absolutely not. Spend time:

- Engaging in continual learning—read, volunteer for projects, work with community organizations, and go to training.
- Publishing articles and/or speaking at meetings of professional groups.
- Getting quoted as a topic expert in newsletters, newspapers or magazines.
- Other people can also help increase your expertise.
- Get written testimonials from people who are considered to be credible.
- Have someone with greater expertise endorse you or your ideas.
- Partner with people others consider to be experts.

### What about trust?

A few years ago I worked on several projects with an industry expert whose clients really liked her. She worked hard to get them what they needed. We quickly became friends. She was an easy person to get to know. During our first project, she missed a deadline by a few days and apologized profusely. Since I knew what it was like to juggle many demands, I accepted her apology

and moved on. On the next project, she set her own deadlines and then started missing them. When I e-mailed or called, she apologized and promised to send the material right away. She missed those deadlines too. Eventually, she made good on her promises. By the third project, I seriously doubted that I could trust her. And my doubts came true. Not only did she miss deadlines, the work she turned in was full of errors that someone else had to correct. This brought about the end of our relationship.

We can lose someone's trust by not delivering on our promises. Or we can compromise it by being dishonest, misleading or unethical. So how can you get people to trust you?

- Be dependable and consistent in your words and actions.
- Be accountable for your behaviors.
- Support others instead of trying to control what they do.
- Avoid being judgmental or hypocritical.
- Cooperate instead of compete.

### Your credibility

Take stock of your situation. How do your ideas, your job or role in the community, and where you work affect your personal credibility? Is your expertise a factor in your relationships with colleagues and friends? More importantly, are you someone others can trust?

© Copyright 2005 Lori Silverman. All rights reserved.



Lori Silverman owns Partners for Progress and is a management consultant, author and professional speaker. She can be reached at [lori@partnersforprogress.com](mailto:lori@partnersforprogress.com).



## Keep Life Simple

Call Russ and Jeff at 661-2805 for a free estimate

Residential and Commercial

Offering a broad range of interior and exterior services—carpentry, plumbing, electrical, drywall, painting, appliance/electronics installation—and much more.

Fully insured.

**HORIZON**  
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

Anyone can swing a hammer but we understand that customer service is a priority.