



A magic trick to increase your credibility

Is there someone who doesn't believe you have much credibility, if any, no matter how brilliantly you make your case? According to Liane Davey, author of *You First: Inspire Your Team to Grow Up, Get Along, and Get Stuff Done* (2013), the secret to building credibility with others is to stop talking and start listening.

Unfortunately, when we feel like we need to strengthen our position, we usually do one of two things:

Attack: Are you the type who starts to talk faster and faster, lobbing any ammunition you can find at the person? Do you haul out more and better proof of why your ideas are solid? Whatever you sling at the person, it's only making the hole you're in deeper. When you lob things at people, their first reaction is to duck or to defend. In this case, defending means they start collecting more evidence of why they didn't trust you in the first place. Building credibility by going on the offense is not going to work.

Run: In contrast, maybe you're the kind of person who responds by avoiding the person who doesn't find you credible. That's great unless you ever need anything from them, in which case you're no longer just dealing with credibility issues but probably also with your new personal brand as conflict avoidant. Dealing with perceptions of poor credibility by avoiding the issue isn't going to work for you either.

So what should you do instead?

1. Stand still.
2. Ask a probing question, such as:
 - "I don't think I've been doing a good job understanding your perspective. What am I missing?"
 - "I get the sense that I don't have a good track record in your eyes. Tell me how things went on that project from your perspective."
 - "We haven't worked together before but I get the sense you haven't seen a lot of value from my department in the past. What would value look like for you?"
 - "What I'm hearing is that I didn't put enough effort into understanding implementation issues before I charged forward with my plan. Is that the heart of it?"
3. Listen for clues about what you've been missing.
4. Repeat.

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Other people are going to like you a lot more when they are doing the talking. If you want people to ascribe more credibility to you, let them talk. Drop your agenda, forget what *you* think will make you credible, and listen to what they're telling you.

There's some chance that your credibility issues can be addressed with more (or more valid) data, but it's much more likely that what you need is better understanding, better empathy, and better collaboration.

Think about one person with whom your credibility is lacking. Write three good questions to ask him or her, invest in a cup of coffee, and spend half an hour strengthening that relationship.

1.

2.

3.

Adapted from: **Davey, L. (2013, November)**. A magic trick to increase your credibility. Available at www.psychologytoday.com/blog/making-your-team-work/201311/magic-trick-increase-your-credibility.