

CREDIBLE LEADERSHIP

“A good leader gets people to respect her. A great leader gets people to respect themselves.” –
Unknown

Having the title of “President” or “Chairperson” is not always linked with “respect” and “credibility” – the former come with the position, the latter must be earned. If you are in a position of leadership (or wish to be in the future), do not mistakenly associate being a leader with having power. Without credibility, power is virtually worthless. To gain and maintain credibility while building your effectiveness as a leader, remember these guidelines:

- Leadership is responsibility, not prestige.
- Work with what you have, not with what you wish you had.
- Be patient.
- Admit your mistakes.
- Remain calm at all times – even if someone else has lost his temper with you.
- Start and end meetings on time.
- Develop leaders by your example. “Character is formed not by laws, commands, and decrees, but by quiet influence, unconscious suggestion, and personal guidance.” – Marion L. Burton.
- Be specific.
- Use people’s names when speaking to them.
- Never delegate a job that you would not be willing to do yourself.
- Always be open-minded.
- Do not permit members to offer only negative criticism. Teach them to offer possible solutions when pointing out problems.
- Maintain eye contact with whomever is speaking.
- Ask the quiet member for his opinion or idea.
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Relax. Most of the things we worry about are things we can't control anyway.

- Summarize throughout your meetings to stress important points.
- Be prepared.
- Never say never. "Start viewing the possible as the probable – you'll be surprised at what you can accomplish." – Unknown.
- Allow members to learn from their mistakes.
- Do not focus all your energy on temporary ups and downs – keep track of the long-term goal.
- Convince your group with logic or sincere conviction, not by authority.
- Do not allow verbal attacks on yourself or others.
- Use comparisons and examples to clarify a point.
- Be yourself. "No one ever became great by imitation." – Samuel Johnson.
- Keep your meetings focused.
- Allow each member to speak without interruption.
- Do not discredit ideas simply because you do not agree with them.
- Tell the truth. Do not make excuses, be sarcastic or exaggerate.
- Have fun. Encourage your group to have fun.
- Make sure your nonverbals match what you say.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Reward folks for a job well done.
- Be honest.
- Treat others with kindness. "One kind word can warm three winter months." – Japanese Proverb.
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Exercise supportive leadership, not coercive.

- Encourage your group members.
- Be confident. Avoid suffixes like “I may be wrong” or “don’t you?”
- Ask for clarification if a point has not been understood.
- Keep your answers short and direct.
- And remember: the spirit of a group reflects the spirit of its leadership. If you are positive and enthusiastic, chances are your group will be too.

References:

Anderson, K. (1993). *The Busy Managers’ Guide to Successful Meetings*. NJ: National Press Publications.

Walters, J.D. (1987). *The Art of Supportive Leadership*. Nevada City, CA:Crystal Clarity.

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