



## **7 Practices for Building Credibility Among New, Emerging and Young Leaders.**



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A time may come when you are promoted into a leadership position – team lead, supervisor, manager, project director – and everyone you’re leading has more experience, more expertise, and more years under their belts than you. Some smile and accept your role and authority.

Others smile and dismiss your meeting agendas and comments, offering side glances and not-so-subtle smirks to colleagues as you look on. Other people roll their eyes when you speak or offer patronizing advice to you, or condescendingly remind you of their expertise, experience or tenure. All of these tactics are manipulative and meant to discount your leadership role and any credibility that you bring to the position.

If you’re a professional who engages in these types of behaviors, please stop. These behaviors may or may not diminish the new leader’s confidence for a short while. They do, however, diminish your reputation as a professional. They dim the view of you in the eyes of the leader and some colleagues. The view of you becomes that of someone who is petty, immature – regardless of your age or expertise, and unwise. You are hurting yourself because you may not be stepping into your own wisdom gathered by age or experience; the wisdom to realize that if someone newer or younger is in a position of leadership then they must know something or have some qualities that could benefit you or a unit.

## **7 Practices for Building Credibility among new, emerging and young leaders.**

**1. Leaders learn from those they lead** and build relationships before they rapidly change anything. Get to know the people who you will be leading in meaningful ways. Work alongside them. Learn from them. Demonstrate appreciation for what they do and know. Later, when you

make decisions, you will be able to transparently convey your awareness of how a decision affects the people because you will have learned from them.

**2. Leaders share their principles, practices and thought processes** to prove they think and act purposefully and rationally. During meetings, one-on-one interactions, in emails and when conveying decisions and changes, be transparent. Front-load and back-end your deliveries of information with your rationale: thinking (critical, strategic, tactical, non-reactionary, etc.), your principles or philosophy as it pertains to what you're sharing or doing, and the practices that are steady and purposeful, which lead to some end objective. Employees may disagree with decisions by a leader but confer credibility upon a leader if they think the leader is rationale and purposeful and principled.

**3. Leaders wear many hats so steadily educate and inform people about your varied roles and responsibilities.** Many people do not know what their bosses actually do, know, are responsible for, or are capable of. They look at their bosses through narrow lens: a lens of subject matter expertise, a lens of advocate for a team, a lens of project management, or a lens of evaluation. Very few professionals know the breadth, depth and scope of a leader's roles, responsibilities and capabilities. When they only look through a few lens, they judge. Expand their lens and you will gain credibility. Once they realize that you are managing multiple matters, proficiently, simultaneously and have skills in varied areas, they will confer more credibility upon you.

**4. Leaders have strengths.** It's important for a leader to share and show their strengths without ego. A new, emerging or young leader may not have the same strengths of expertise or experience in a particular field or project or agency that other tenured professionals have, but that doesn't matter. The new leader may have strengths in communication, partnerships, organizational skills, project management skills, supervision and coaching skills, or a myriad of other skills. They need to show and share their strengths. Show them first, then share them; transferring them to others who could benefit from them on their own projects. Showing and sharing gives the leader credibility.

**5. Leaders serve** the best interest of individuals, teams, divisions, customers and the business overall. Every employee can benefit from some form of service. The key is to find out how to be of service to the individual and group. Service comes in many forms. For some it is access to resources, information or development. For others it may be advocacy. For some it may be an open door with an empathic listening ear inside. For others it may be getting them to a level of rating they desire or saving them from performance correction or termination with some critical conversations. One way or another, everyone needs some form of service. The leader gains credibility when they serve in multiple ways.

**6. Leaders have lots of style and must utilize multiple styles each day.** A leader must learn about leadership styles (i.e., autocratic, democratic, organic), management styles (i.e., business-oriented, relationship oriented, crisis oriented, transformational, servant oriented),

communication styles (i.e., expressive, driver, analytic, amiable), conflict styles (i.e., competitive, accommodation, avoidant, cooperative), learning/teaching styles (i.e., experiential, didactic, observational). Knowing and being able to flex one's styles as a leader and being able to let people know when you're doing it, confers enormous credibility on a leader. People realize in every moment, 'this person knows exactly what they are doing. They are very purposeful in the practices and decisions.' It behooves a leader to learn about style management and be able to flex their styles in any give situation.

**7. Leaders have growth gaps but demonstrate strength** in courage, confidence and humility. Leaders do not shy away from acknowledging their growth gaps, nor are they shamed by them. They are wise enough to know that they are smart enough to grow through their gaps. Most have already extracted the lessons and wisdom from their growth gaps and mistakes so that they can easily acknowledge them while accentuating the lessons that they now want others to learn. Leaders don't hesitate to balance their growth gaps with their strengths in each discussion so that they can turn the mirror back on other professionals and ask, 'now, what are your strengths and growth gaps?' In doing so, leaders demonstrate courage, self-confidence and humility, and ask others to do the same. Whenever these transactions occur, a leader builds credibility.

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