

Communicating Credibly: More Than Lip Service

In 1988, pop group Milli Vanilli shot to superstardom with the release of their album *Girl You Know It's True*, which spawned three chart-topping singles. The following year, the group captured a Grammy Award for Best New Artist. However, Milli Vanilli fell from fame even faster than they had rocketed to celebrity status as a result of the greatest lip-syncing scandal in American music history.

Shortly after the Grammys, Milli Vanilli's two frontmen, Rob Pilatus and Fabrice Morvan, were seen lip-syncing by concertgoers. The duo's producer then admitted publicly that neither of the singer/dancers had actually performed on the award-winning record, which falsely listed them as having sung the vocals. The confession sparked public outrage, with former fans demanding refunds for concert tickets and album purchases. In short order Milli Vanilli was dropped from its record label and was forced to give back its Grammy Award, and the duo never regained its popularity.

In Communication, Trust Is a Must

As the rise and fall of Milli Vanilli illustrates, inauthentic leaders do not enjoy influence for long. It's only a matter of time before the spotlight reveals them as frauds. In order to gain a platform of lasting leadership, your team needs to be able to trust the genuineness of your words. How do you earn that trust?

1) Build Your Character

The effectiveness of communication relies more on the character of the messenger than on the content of the message. Leaders who consistently display integrity in their actions prove themselves trustworthy and gain respect. On the other hand, cracks in a leader's character drown out his words. As philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say." If you don't feel like you're connecting with teammates, examine your character. Concentrate on solidifying your inner makeup in order to magnify volume of your words.

2) Be Accountable

Establishing credibility in your communication takes time; you have to earn the right to be heard by proving your trustworthiness. You enter every relationship with a certain degree of trust, and every interaction either deposits more trust in your account or withdraws some from it. Pay careful attention to your relational account balances and do everything possible to keep the levels of trust high. Every promise you make creates hope, and by honoring your commitments, you demonstrate reliability.

3) Deliver Results

Theoreticians know the way, but they cannot show the way because they have never been on the front lines. They have knowledge but lack a credible track record of accomplishment. Nothing speaks louder than resounding success. If you hope to win the ear of your team, then deliver results prior to delivering speeches. Practice what you profess, and share the insights you've learned through experience.

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