

Skills 360 – How to Sound Credible (Part 1)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about someone when they are not open or honest about their goals or intentions?
2. Do you find it easy to admit when you are wrong or you've made a mistake? Why or why not?
3. When you have to talk about something important, how much research or preparation do you usually do?

Vocabulary

Candidate: a competitor in an election, or someone competing for a position; "I think of all the candidates I prefer James. He's got the right experience for the job."

Glaring problem: a problem that is easy to see; "I can't believe you haven't noticed the glaring problems with scheduling."

Credibility: the quality of being believable or trustworthy; "If you want to maintain credibility as a business leader, tell people the truth, no matter how difficult it is."

Competence: skill or ability; "I believe Nora has the competence to be a good salesperson, but I just find her really difficult to work with."

Principles: basic ideas or rules about how things should be done or how people should behave; "One of the core principles that my father taught me is the importance of hard work."

Values: beliefs about what is important, held by a person or group; "Our corporate values include a commitment to excellence in design and a good understanding of customer needs."

To reference: to mention; "I'm really surprised the CEO referenced the 1998 economic crisis in his speech. I thought he would show more optimism."

Transparent: clear and not trying to hide anything; "Yeah, sure, I like the security system, but I'm just not sure this sales guy is being completely transparent about how the contract works."

Upfront: totally honest; "Listen Jane, I'm going to be upfront with you: several people are concerned that you haven't been performing very well."

Rosy: happy or positive; "Well, looking at these rising sales numbers, the future sure looks rosy for our region."

"We're only human:" everyone makes mistakes or has problems sometimes; "Okay, so you had a bad month. We're only human. I'm sure you'll have another chance to prove what you can do."

Fallibility: imperfection or capability of being wrong; "I find it very hard to trust someone who can't even admit his own fallibility. I mean, nobody's perfect."

Incompetent: not able or lacking the skills to do something; "To be honest, I was pretty incompetent as a lawyer, so I'm glad I made a career move into finance."

Arrogant: overconfident and believing you are better than other people; "Darren's too arrogant to be team leader, in my opinion. I'd prefer someone who's more humble."

To make things right: to correct a mistake or solve a problem that you created; "Well, if you made the client angry, then you need to go over there and make it right immediately."

To tie back in with something: to be related to something said before; "You know Hal, what you're saying ties back in with what we were talking about earlier in the meeting."

To screw up: to make a mistake; "So, if you're using Word and you screw up, you can just press control-z to undo your mistake."

A recipe for disaster: likely to cause problems or trouble; "Brian is so new he doesn't really have good product knowledge. Letting him do this presentation is a recipe for disaster."

To rant and rave: to complain or become upset about something; "Even when a customer is ranting and raving at you over the phone, you need to try your best to stay calm."

To appeal to something: if you appeal to something, such as emotion or logic, you use it to try to convince people; "The best way to sell these things is to appeal to people's love of status and luxury."

To put your foot in your mouth: to say something embarrassing or that offends or upsets someone; "Gosh, I really put my foot in my mouth when I asked Jerry how his month has been. I had no idea he was fired."

Aftermath: the results or situation following something terrible; "In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the government introduced a lot of new regulations for large corporations."

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and today I want to look at how you can sound credible, or believable.

And believe me: this is going to be one really *great* lesson. Trust me. It's going to be great. Unbelievably great!

Okay, but really folks, does that kind of thing sound familiar? It's election year in the U.S., and you've probably been hearing some pretty big talk from the [candidates](#). One of the most [glaring problems](#) with so much of these candidates' statements is that of [credibility](#).

Sounding credible means that people can trust you, and trust what you say. And not just because you *tell* them to. Sounding credible also means people will respect you and believe you have the [competence](#) to get the job done. So, how do you make people believe that? What exactly should you say to sound credible? And what should you *not* say?

Well, one thing that credible people do is talk about [principles](#), or [values](#). These are the basic ideas behind how we act and make decisions. So if you're in a meeting and you're arguing against an idea, make sure you [reference](#) the principles that have led you to your opinion. For example, that might sound like "I'm concerned about *efficiency*." Or "this doesn't match our company's *commitment to excellence*." Efficiency and a commitment to excellence are values. And talking about them makes you sound more credible.

Now, because credibility is related to trust, it's important to be [transparent](#), or open and [upfront](#) about a situation or your intentions. If you've got some bad news to deliver, don't pretend everything's [rosy](#). Or, say you're trying to recruit someone for your team and you fail to mention all the challenges they might face. That's not transparent. And your credibility will suffer if you're not open and honest.

Another essential habit of credible people is that they admit when they're wrong, or when they've made a mistake. After all, [we're only human](#). It's completely unreasonable to think that anyone is perfect. Nevertheless, a lot of leaders have a really tough time admitting their own [fallibility](#). They're afraid of being seen as [incompetent](#). And some are simply [arrogant](#) enough to think they don't make mistakes. But there's a ton of research to show that a leader who admits to mistakes enjoys greater respect than one who doesn't.

Of course, it's not just enough to admit a mistake. The next step is accepting responsibility for that mistake. That means correcting yourself. Or working to [make things right](#) again. And that whole idea of "making things right" [ties back in with](#) values and principles. People who *don't* try to right their wrongs, on the other hand, lack credibility.

Now you might be thinking: but if a person makes too many mistakes, even if they admit it, will people still believe in him? In other words, isn't there a limit to how many mistakes people will accept?

Sure there is. You can't just [screw up](#) everything you touch and expect people to still believe in you. And that's why credible people know the importance of research and preparation. Talking about what you don't know, or don't understand [is a recipe for disaster](#). You need to make sure you know what you're talking about, because the more you know or understand, the fewer mistakes you'll make.

The same is true about good preparation in general. People who don't have credibility are often terribly unprepared. And they make up for that [by ranting and raving](#) and [appealing to](#) emotion over logic. Sure, this might work for some leaders, or politicians. But usually it means [putting your foot in your mouth](#) and then dealing with the [aftermath](#).

All right, so let's just run through some of the things credible people say. First off, they talk about the values and principles behind their ideas. They're also open and transparent about their aims. They admit when they're wrong or they've made a mistake, and they work to correct those mistakes. And finally, they make fewer mistakes in the first place because they're prepared. In our next lesson, we'll look at some things *not* to say if you want to sound more credible.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the [BusinessEnglishPod.com](#) website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. Sounding credible includes which of the following? [choose all that apply]
 - A People believe you are competent.
 - B People think what you say is familiar.
 - C People respect you.
 - D People believe you have a good position.
 - E People trust you.
 - F People think you are funny.

2. Which of the following is a good example of referencing values or principles?
 - A "I'm sorry, but I really can't support this plan."
 - B "You know, this is just way too expensive."
 - C "I think the most important thing here is that we all agree."
 - D "What I like about this is that it fits with our dedication to customer service."

3. Telling people honestly about some of the difficult things they might face in a new position is an example of:
 - A Commitment to excellence
 - B Transparency
 - C Potential damage to credibility
 - D Fallibility

4. Why do some people refuse to admit when they make mistakes? [choose 2]
 - A Because they understand that doing so will undermine their authority
 - B Because they are so overconfident that they don't think they make mistakes
 - C Because they are concerned people will think they are not capable
 - D Because they do not know how to correct the mistake

5. After admitting a mistake, the next step is...
 - A ...convincing people that it doesn't happen very often.
 - B ...talking about your principles.
 - C ...explaining why you made the mistake.
 - D ...working to correct the mistake.

6. Which of the following are habits of people who are *not* credible? [choose all that apply]
 - A They lack preparation.
 - B They pursue leadership positions.
 - C They make a lot of mistakes.
 - D They appeal to people's emotions.
 - E They rant and rave.
 - F They do too much research.

Review Answers

1. Sounding credible includes which of the following? [choose all that apply]
A People believe you are competent.
C People respect you.
E People trust you.
2. Which of the following is a good example of referencing values or principles?
D "What I like about this is that it fits with our dedication to customer service."
3. Telling people honestly about some of the difficult things they might face in a new position is an example of:
B Transparency
4. Why do some people refuse to admit when they make mistakes? [choose 2]
B Because they are so overconfident that they don't think they make mistakes
C Because they are concerned people will think they are not capable
5. After admitting a mistake, the next step is...
D ...working to correct the mistake.
6. Which of the following are habits of people who are *not* credible? [choose all that apply]
A They lack preparation.
D They appeal to people's emotions.
E They rant and rave.