

Recovering from Lost Credibility

Credibility is like a currency that never depreciates unless you do something that causes its degradation. If people think you're credible, they'll listen to you, they'll rely upon you, and they'll follow you. However, when your words and actions don't align, you have fallen into the "Credibility Gap." When you have a credibility gap, it is damaging to your reputation and possibly your career. To identify whether you have a credibility gap, ask yourself this key question: do my actions — not just words or intentions — reflect the values I stand for? Bridging the credibility gap takes time and effort, and it is much easier to lose credibility than to gain it back.

Steps to recovering from lost credibility:

- 1) **Own It.** Playing the blame game or dodging responsibility is only going to make it worse. Instead, admit your mistakes and face up to the consequences.
- 2) **Apologize.** If you've caused pain or headaches to the people around you, they're going to want a sincere apology. Be specific in your acknowledgement so that people know you really understand the problem.
- 3) **Plan for Improvements.** Once you've owned up to the mistake and apologized, try to figure out how it happened and how such errors can be avoided in the future. It is important to consult the people who were affected by the mistake and let them know that you are looking for ways to improve.
- 4) **Stop the Negative Self Talk.** Mistakes and missteps can be embarrassing and it's easy to get mired in beating yourself up. However, be kind to yourself and role model self-care to your family and team. This will likely help others build confidence within themselves and avoid a fear of failure environment from building.
- 5) **Learn from the Experience.** Remember the acronym: F. A. I. L. (First Attempt In Learning). If you made a mistake and lost credibility with someone, do what you can and learn from the experience. This will likely help you from repeating mistakes and will promote self-growth. Additionally, share your improvement plan with the whole team as a way to share what you have learned.

In all, the most effective way to bridge the credibility gap is to be more aware of what you say. Think through whether your words might be perceived as a promise. You may have to create a system to keep track of those promises and try to avoid making promises in the heat of the moment. If you find that you don't have the resources to follow through with your words, directly address the issue and explicitly seek forgiveness. By acknowledging that you made a promise that you couldn't keep, you may actually be seen by others as more credible.

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