

Personal Credibility Busters

Whether you're an employee, a leader, or an entrepreneur, personal credibility is truly a 'magic bullet' for success, says Sandy Algeier, author of *The Personal Credibility Factor: How to Get It, Keep It, and Get It Back (If You've Lost It)*. It forms other people's opinions of you, shapes their interactions with you, and helps them decide whether to trust and respect you. Personal credibility is "about respect, trust, and being believable," writes Algeier, and it is judged by our actions. What you do—and don't do—determines whether people trust us. Algeier says we should aim to avoid what she calls "credibility busters." Here are some of the most common:

- » **Failing to do what you say you will do.** The number one way to bust your personal credibility? Just fail to deliver on the promises or commitments you make.
- » **Breaking appointments (or frequently rescheduling them).** It's annoying, at best. And after it happens more than once or twice, you stop trusting them. *Don't* be this person.
- » **Making decisions while keeping others in the dark.** Trust and credibility are built when others feel valued. It is broken when others feel like they don't matter to us. Let's say you head a project team, and, after reaching a consensus agreement with the team, you learn additional information and change your decision. As the leader you have the authority to do that. But—the team needs to understand your thought process. Otherwise, they won't believe you really ever wanted their input, and your credibility as a leader is busted.
- » **Telling little white lies that morph into Big Hairy Lies.** Admitting to a mistake is far better than being forever branded a liar and backstabber. When you lose someone's trust in this way, you can never get it back.
- » **Trying to do everything—but ending up doing it all in a half-a..ed way.** You're sure to make mistakes, if you extend yourself. It's far better to say *no* to some things than do a poor job at everything."
- » **Putting others down to pull yourself up.** With each put-down you are demonstrating your own lack of credibility, Algeier writes.
- » **Being a rigid rule enforcer rather than a flexible problem solver. (Think Dwight on *The Office*.)** Rules and policies *are* helpful, but being flexible is ultimately better. People trust problem solvers; they distrust people hung up on rules.

Some others are: **Casting blame when you should be solving problems. Coming across as "all knowing" when you're really just thinking out loud. Exhibiting body language and vocal tone that don't match your words.**

Does this abbreviated list seem overwhelming? It doesn't have to be. Focus on one "credibility buster" at a time and work to eliminate it from your life. The results you see will spur you on to keep improving yourself.