

Credibility is your most important asset



Although supervisors need a wide array of people skills and certain technical abilities, nothing is more critical to supervisory success than credibility.

When supervisors lose their credibility, they lose both their employees' trust and their effectiveness as leaders. Morale plummets and productivity stalls.

Fortunately, credibility is not a mysterious abstract quality that defies analysis. There are a number of very specific things you can do to build and maintain your credibility.

The most important of these are:

- 1. Be fair and consistent when you praise, evaluate or discipline.** If your workers see you applying different standards to different people, jealousy and resentment will fester.
- 2. Follow your own rules.** Act the way you would expect your employees to act if they faced the same situation. The first time you break one of your own rules without a very good reason that makes sense to your people, you will endanger your credibility.
- 3. Be open and honest.** If you must withhold information from employees, say so. Never lie about what you know. If you do, the person who catches you will tell everyone else. And the next time it's convenient for them, they won't believe anything you say.
- 4. Keep the promises you make.** When you want to help someone out, it's tempting—and easy—to say “yes” or “I'll take care of it for you.” But if things don't work out—even for reasons beyond your control—you'll lose that person's trust. And that person will talk to others. Think carefully before promising. Very often the vicissitudes of the workplace will force you to pull back on your end of the bargain. And although it may not loom big in your thoughts, employees have a keen memory for this sort of thing.
- 5. Work as hard as your people.** This doesn't mean that you should avoid delegating or that you must “suffer” to prove a point. But it does mean that you should devote as much energy and effort to being a good supervisor as you want your people to devote to *their* jobs. When it comes to credibility, what you do carries a lot more weight with employees than what you say. A boss with his or her sleeves rolled up scores a lot of points with employees.