

# Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner)

By James M. Kouzes, Barry Z. Posner

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**Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner)** By James M. Kouzes, Barry Z. Posner

**The first true revision of the classic book from the bestselling author of *The Leadership Challenge***

As the world falls deeper into economic downturns and warfare, the question of credibility (how leaders gain and lose it) is more important than ever. Building on their research from *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner explore in *Credibility* why leadership is above all a relationship, with credibility as the cornerstone, and why leaders must "Say what you mean and mean what you say." This first full revision of the book since its initial publication in 1993 features new case studies from around the world, fully updated data and research, and a streamlined format. Written by the premier leadership experts working today, *Credibility*:

- Reveals the six key disciplines that strengthen a leader's capacity for developing and sustaining credibility.
- Provides rich examples of real managers in action
- Includes updates to the applications and research

This personal, inspiring, and genuine guide helps you understand the fundamental importance of credibility for building personal and organizational success.

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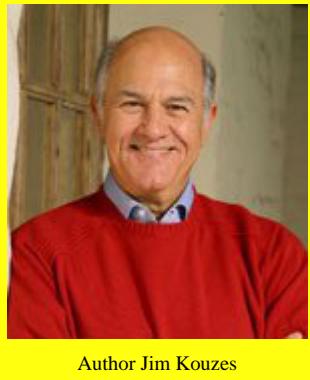
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## **Editorial Review**

Amazon.com Review

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### **Q&A with Authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner**



Author Jim Kouzes

#### **Why is credibility so important?**

Credibility is the foundation of leadership: This is the inescapable conclusion we have come to after more than thirty years of research into the dynamics of the relationship between leaders and constituents.

Leadership is a relationship. You can't talk about leadership without talking about the expectations of those who are led. The three qualities people most look for and admire in leaders—that they be honest, competent, and inspiring—are the qualities that comprise what communication researchers refer to as source credibility. Simply put, people won't believe the message if they don't believe in the messenger.

#### **Once credibility is lost, is it possible to gain it back?**

Yes, it is. But first, let's remind ourselves that despite everyone's best intentions, despite the pursuit of flawless leadership, things don't always go as planned, expected, or promised. Sometimes circumstances change, and you can no longer do what you said you would do. Sometimes you realize, probably belatedly, that you don't have the competence or resources to do what you said. Sometimes you and others make errors in judgment or choose the wrong strategies. Sometimes you just mess up. No human being is exempt from failure. The trouble is that leadership failures and human frailties can sometimes seriously damage your credibility. That's why it's important to understand what you can do to regain credibility if ever you should tarnish or lose it.

Once that happens, you need to follow what we call the Six A's of Leadership Accountability: Accept, Admit, Apologize, Act, Amend, and Attend. When people are asked what's the most important thing a leader should do after making a mistake, the universal response is "admit it." First, you have to accept personal responsibility for your actions, and, in the case of leaders, the actions of your organization. Then you have to publicly acknowledge that you have made a mistake. Offering an apology is another important step in rebuilding credibility. It lets constituents know that you are concerned about the impact your actions may have had on them, as well as the problems your actions may have caused them. Quick action to deal with the immediate consequences of a mistake needs to follow an apology. A quick response lets others know that you are going to do something about the problem. Making amends for mistakes is also a necessary but often

overlooked part of the rebuilding process. People don't expect you to resign for an honest error or lapse in judgment, but they do expect some form of reparation or personal participation in the hardship. The amends should fit the problem. And finally, to make sure that you are attuned to the influence your actions are having on restoring lost credibility, you should pay close attention to the reactions of your constituents.

**This is the first true revision of *Credibility* since its initial publication in 1993. Why revise it now?**



Author Barry Posner

Timing is everything. When the first edition of *Credibility* was published in 1993, we noted that nearly half of America's workforce was cynical. The late 1980s and early 1990s were also a period of recession—there were few jobs, we were also recovering from a market crash, and we had begun the Gulf War. Public faith in its leaders was low. In the late nineties and at the turn of the century, we saw increases in trust, confidence, and credibility among leaders of major institutions. But these shifts turned out to be very short-lived. After rising for a decade, confidence in institutions and leaders began to slide in the early 2000s, and by 2007 trust (the key ingredient of credibility) had taken a nosedive. Whatever gains had been achieved had been lost. People doubted the competence of leaders, and they also questioned their integrity. Scandals, financial misdeeds, and greed had taken their toll on people's belief in their leaders. And when the economic collapse and subsequent recession hit in 2007-2008, cynicism and distrust soared. We may have hit bottom again, but it's too soon to tell.

Leaders need to take more seriously the importance of earning and sustaining credibility. We revised this book because we want to offer a useful framework and practical suggestions on what leaders can do to increase the trust and confidence others have in them. We won't see increases in engagement or performance until we see significant increases in leader credibility.

**What is different in this new edition? (Or, what can fans of the first edition of *Credibility* expect from this new edition?)**

This new edition of *Credibility* is completely revised and has a longer and broader reach than the earlier book. Our research is global, and the cases in this edition reflect that. From Asia and Australia to Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America, we show how people around the world affirm that credibility is the foundation of leadership. All the cases in this book have been updated, and 90 percent of them are new to this volume. They are fresh illustrations of the changing nature of the context in which people now work, especially as new generations enter the workforce.

This second edition is also slimmed down from the original. In addition to the worthy goal of saving the planet some paper, we trimmed the length for several reasons. First, we sharpened the focus on our central theme: how leaders earn and sustain credibility. In the first edition, we took detours into issues of service quality, for example, which, while important, weren't directly on message. Second, technology now allows us to move some of our research to our website. Third, we developed an entirely new companion volume to accompany this book. *Strengthening Credibility: A Leader's Workbook* provides many developmental and application exercises for building and sustaining credibility.

What has not changed is our intense interest in how values clarification and culture creation must be at the top of a leader's agenda. Some of our earliest research clearly shows that commitment, satisfaction, productivity, and other positive outcomes are significantly higher when people shared the values of their organizations. This finding is reaffirmed in our most current studies.

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#### From the Inside Flap

Credibility—and how you gain and lose it—is more important than ever.

As the world falls deeper into economic downturns and armed conflicts, as communities become more heatedly partisan, and as many workplaces show growing signs of disengagement, issues of credibility remain front and central.

In this thoroughly revised and updated edition of their bestselling book *Credibility*, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner explore why leadership is above all a relationship, with credibility as the cornerstone, and why leaders must "Say what you mean and mean what you say." Building on their more than thirty years of ongoing research, *Credibility* expands on their seminal work *The Leadership Challenge*, and shows why credibility remains the foundation of great leadership.

Throughout the book, Kouzes and Posner reveal how leaders can restore trust and confidence, and take the actions needed to strengthen credibility over time. Featuring in-depth interviews with international leaders from the business, government, education, and nonprofit sectors, this all-new edition contains personal stories and rich examples of the key actions and behaviors of credible leaders who get extraordinary things accomplished.

At the heart of the book is an exploration of the six key disciplines that strengthen a leader's capacity for developing and sustaining credibility: Discover Yourself; Appreciate Constituents; Affirm Shared Values; Develop Capacity; Serve a Purpose; and Sustain Hope. Addressing the needs of today's turbulent times, Kouzes and Posner also examine the tension that exists when leaders try to respond to constituents while remaining true to their values.

This personal, inspiring, and genuine guide offers an understanding of the fundamental importance of credibility and how to gain it in order to build personal and organizational success.

#### From the Back Cover

"*Credibility* is the most timely and important issue of our age. And with this book, based on a solid foundation of research plus their years of experience, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have thrown us a Hail Mary pass that can help to restore confidence and trust in our institutions. I am personally grateful to receive their pass. I bet that you will be too."

—**Warren Bennis**, Distinguished Professor of Business, University of Southern California; author, *Still Surprised: A Memoir of a Life in Leadership*

"My first suggestion on how to build your credibility: read this book and apply what you learn! Nothing is more important to a leader than credibility. Jim and Barry do a wonderful job of showing us all why it matters, how to earn it, and how to keep it! Another amazing contribution from the world's authorities on leadership!"

—**Marshall Goldsmith**, author, *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

"Credibility should be on the must-read list for all leaders and potential leaders, and should be a required text for all business majors. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner clearly outline the values and traits of credible leaders, and they both confirm and support the theory that we all want to work for 'credible' leaders. It is a fantastic read for all of us who aspire to be the leader that others want to follow."

—**Ann Rhoades**, author, *Built on Values*; president and founder, People Ink

"Over the past twenty-five years, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have built—no exaggeration—the most significant body of leadership work on the planet. Credibility is a masterpiece because it accomplishes the seemingly impossible: it boils the vast, often-complicated and confusing act of leadership down to its purest essence and then teaches us how to put it into practice in all aspects of our lives. Simply put, this book will not only inspire you to make a difference, it will help you do it."

—**Steve Farber**, author, *The Radical Leap Re-Energized and Greater Than Yourself*; president, Extreme Leadership, Inc.

"When I graduated from business school back in the early 1980s, I thought I had to be a 'superhuman' if I were to ever be a CEO some day. After two dozen years of being a CEO, I now know that it's not about being superhuman; it's instead about being a super human. If there's one leadership book that is the operating manual for how to be a super leader and a super human at the same time, it is Credibility. Loved every word of it!"

—**Chip Conley**, founder and executive chairman, Joie de Vivre; author, *PEAK and Emotional Equations*

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This Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner) book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is definitely information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This specific Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner) without we realize teach the one who reading it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't always be worry Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner) can bring any time you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It (J-B Leadership Challenge: Kouzes/Posner) having great arrangement in word and layout, so you will not really feel uninterested in reading.

#### Jeannine Ricks:

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**Carlos Pollard:**

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**Paul Evans:**

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