

## CHAPTER ONE

# Leadership Is a Relationship

“Although it was probably subconscious, I did not readily admit to my friends where I worked,” Beth Bremner told us. “I just used to say, ‘A big bank.’” The reason, she said, “predominantly had to do with the fact that I did not believe that our leaders were acting with the integrity and honesty that I hold so dear to my heart. I did not feel management set the kind of example that I wanted to abide by.”

Beth, South African by birth, was educated in the U.K. She holds an MBA from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and has worked throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.<sup>1</sup> But Beth’s sentiment is one that we hear time and time again all over the globe. Beth wants what the vast majority of people want from their leaders and their organizations:

I want to work for a company where I believe in the message being passed down from my top management team. I want to feel as though I am part of the team and that I have the same beliefs as the company does. I have learned that one needs to love what one does and believe that one is doing a good job for a great company. My best performance will never be ensured by feeling like a cog in the wheel of a company for a salary. I want to work



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in a company where I can share the direction and vision of my leaders. I have learned that most individuals are driven by the same thing as I. . . the possibilities that surround us and being excited about the future and what it holds.

Beth is right. The same things drive most people. They are energized by values and visions that give their lives meaning and purpose. They want to be surrounded by something that uplifts and excites them. And it is also clear that the thousands of professionals like Beth have certain expectations of their leaders. They won't commit themselves to work harder and more effectively for just anyone.

Leadership may once have been conferred by rank and privilege. It may once have been something that was characterized by a command-and-control, top-down, do-as-I-say style. But no more. Those days are long gone. Today, leadership is only an aspiration. It is something you have to earn every day, because on a daily basis, people choose whether or not they're going to follow you. It's something you keep striving to achieve and never assume you've fully attained.

The old organizational hierarchy just can't generate the kind of commitment that's required in our global society. This isn't a call for open elections inside organizations. But managers should not kid themselves. People do vote—with their energy, with their dedication, with their loyalty, with their talent, with their actions. Don't you put forth higher-quality effort when you believe that the people leading you are there to serve your needs and not just their own interests?

Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. Any discussion of leadership must attend to the dynamics of this relationship. Strategies, tactics, skills, and practices are hollow and fruitless unless the fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders and their constituents are understood and appreciated.



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So, what do constituents expect from leaders? What do leaders expect from constituents? What purpose do leaders serve? Why do people believe in some leaders but not in others? Why do some people choose to follow one leader while others reject that leader? What actions sustain the relationship? What actions destroy it? What is the state of the current relationship between leaders and constituents? These are the questions that intrigued us and that drove the research behind this book. We wanted to understand more deeply what formed the foundation of a constructive and positive relationship between constituents and their leaders, and what leaders needed to do to build and sustain that kind of relationship. Organizations and communities cannot be renewed and revitalized, nor can towering institutions even be dreamed about, until these and related questions are answered.

Consider what the late John Gardner—former cabinet secretary, founder of Common Cause, adviser to six U.S. presidents, and respected author and scholar—had to say about all this:

A loyal constituency is won when the people, consciously or unconsciously, judge the leader to be capable of solving their problems and meeting their needs, when the leader is seen as symbolizing their norms, and when their image of the leader (whether or not it corresponds to reality) is congruent with their inner environment of myth and legend.<sup>2</sup>

From his decades of experience in working with some of the most powerful people in the world, John learned that people willingly follow the direction of someone who is attuned to their aims and aspirations, worries and fears, ideals and images. He also found that ultimately the constituents are the arbiters of the quality of leadership they receive. In the end, leaders don't decide who leads. Followers do.



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Loyalty is not something a boss (or anyone for that matter) can demand or even command. It is something the people—the constituency—choose to grant to a leader who has earned it. The people's choice is based not upon authority but upon the degree to which the leader lives up to the expectations constituents hold.

Leadership is something one experiences in an interaction with another human being. That experience varies from leader to leader, from constituent to constituent, and from day to day. No two leaders are exactly alike, no two constituent groups are exactly alike, and no two days in the life of leaders and constituents are exactly alike. And even in this digital age, when face-to-face contact seems to be diminishing—and this change is the source of many of the leadership problems being experienced these days—it is the interaction between leaders and constituents that turns opportunities into successes.

The key to unlocking greater leadership potential can be found when you seek to understand the desires and expectations of your constituents and when you act on them in ways that correspond to their image of what an exemplary leader is and does.

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## **The Characteristics of Admired Leaders**

We began our investigation into what people expected from their leaders more than three decades ago, in a study sponsored by the American Management Association. We asked the open-ended question, “What values (personal traits or characteristics) do you look for in your superiors?”<sup>3</sup> (As you can see, we were stuck in the old hierarchical metaphors back then.)

More than 1,500 managers nationwide provided 225 values, characteristics, and traits that they believed to be crucial in the people leading them. A panel of researchers and managers subsequently analyzed the



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225 factors and reduced them to 15 categories. Of those, the most frequent categories, in order of mention, were

1. *Integrity* (is truthful, is trustworthy, has character, has convictions)
2. *Competence* (is capable, is productive, is efficient)
3. *Leadership* (is inspiring, is decisive, provides direction)

A follow-up study involving more than 800 senior public sector administrators replicated these findings.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent studies, we broadened the categories, elaborated on the earlier findings, and improved the research methodology. We eventually produced a twenty-item survey checklist, which became part of the research protocol for this book. Over the years, more than 75,000 people around the globe have completed the “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” checklist. People select from the twenty characteristics (or qualities) listed after this paragraph the seven that they most “look for and admire in a leader, someone whose direction you would *willingly* follow.” Pause for a moment and make a mental note of the seven that would be on your own list.

*Characteristics of Admired Leaders*

- Ambitious (aspiring, hardworking, striving)
- Broad-minded (open-minded, flexible, receptive, tolerant)
- Caring (appreciative, compassionate, concerned, loving, nurturing)
- Competent (capable, proficient, effective, gets the job done, professional)
- Cooperative (collaborative, team player, responsive)
- Courageous (bold, daring, gutsy)
- Dependable (reliable, conscientious, responsible)
- Determined (dedicated, resolute, persistent, purposeful)
- Fair-minded (just, unprejudiced, objective, forgiving, willing to pardon others)

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- Forward-looking (visionary, foresighted, concerned about the future, sense of direction)
- Honest (truthful, has integrity, trustworthy, has character)
- Imaginative (creative, innovative, curious)
- Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-confident)
- Inspiring (uplifting, enthusiastic, energetic, humorous, cheerful, positive about the future)
- Intelligent (bright, smart, thoughtful, intellectual, reflective, logical)
- Loyal (faithful, dutiful, unswerving in allegiance, devoted)
- Mature (experienced, wise, has depth)
- Self-Controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)
- Straightforward (direct, candid, forthright)
- Supportive (helpful, offers assistance, comforting)

Our research also includes more than 1,000 written case studies of “My Most Admired Leader,” in which people responded to questions about leaders with whom they had personal experience and for whom they had great admiration and respect. From these case studies we collected specific examples of actions of respected leaders, information on the affective nature of admired leader–constituent relationships, and profiles on the types of projects or programs involved. This information came from sources in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Focus groups further enabled us to determine the behaviors of admired leaders. Finally, a series of empirical studies provided further insights into the leadership actions that specifically influence people’s assessments of credibility.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, in-depth interviews with more than 150 managers revealed the qualities they looked for and admired in their leaders and why. These richly detailed, colorful anecdotes and specific examples brought the survey data to life. From all of this data we developed a framework for describing the actions that admired leaders take to

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build a special kind of leader-constituent relationship, one that not only leaves a lifelong impression but builds community and makes a significant performance difference.

The results of our studies over the last three decades have been strikingly consistent. They have remained consistent not only over time but also around the world and across categories of age, gender, ethnicity, functional discipline, organizational level, and the like. People are remarkably clear about the qualities leaders must demonstrate if they want others to voluntarily enlist in a common cause and to freely commit to action.

What are these crucial attributes? According to our empirical data, the majority of people look for and admire leaders who are honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. Take a moment to examine the data from these surveys. The results from the most current sample are displayed in the left-hand column of Table 1.1. Also shown are the accumulated results from two prior reports in 2002 and 1987.

As you can see, these four characteristics—honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent—rank well above the rest. And this is true not just today but has been over several decades as well. The same is true around the globe, as Table 1.2 shows. While the exact rank order (first through fourth) might vary from country to country, these same four qualities remain at the top of the list of what people everywhere want from their leaders.

## Honest

In virtually every survey, honesty is selected more often than any other leadership characteristic. No matter where the studies have been conducted—regardless of country, geographical region, or type of organization—the most important leadership attribute since we began our research in 1980 has always been honesty.

*Credibility***TABLE 1.1** Characteristics of Admired Leaders (Percentage of People Selecting Characteristic Over the Years)

Characteristic	2010	2002	1987
Honest	85	88	83
Forward-looking	70	71	62
Inspiring	69	65	58
Competent	64	66	67
Intelligent	42	47	43
Broad-minded	40	40	37
Dependable	37	33	32
Supportive	36	35	32
Fair-minded	35	42	40
Straightforward	31	34	34
Determined	28	23	20
Cooperative	26	28	25
Ambitious	26	17	21
Courageous	21	20	27
Caring	20	20	26
Imaginative	18	23	34
Loyal	18	14	11
Mature	16	21	23
Self-Controlled	11	8	13
Independent	6	6	10

Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership. If people are going to follow someone willingly, whether into battle or into the boardroom, they first want to assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust. They want to know that the would-be leader is truthful, ethical, and principled. This is exactly the point that Ken Chang, branch manager for Schenker China-BAX Global, made about his general manager: “Whether it is good news or bad news, we’ll get it. He keeps us posted on what we are doing and the progress we are making.” And



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**TABLE 1.2** Characteristics of Admired Leaders Around the World (Rank Order by Country)

Country	Honest	Forward-Looking	Inspiring	Competent
United States	1	2	3	4
Australia	1	2	3	4
Brazil	1	2	4	3
Canada	1	2	3	4
China	3	2	1	4
Japan	1 <sup>t</sup>	1 <sup>t</sup>	4	3
Korea	1 <sup>t</sup>	1 <sup>t</sup>	4	3
Malaysia	1	2	4	3
Mexico	1	2	3	4
Philippines	1	3	2	4
Scandinavia	3	2	1	4
Singapore	4	2 <sup>t</sup>	1	2 <sup>t</sup>
South America	1	2	4	3
Turkey	3	1	2	4
United Arab Emirates	1	2	3	4

<sup>t</sup> indicates a tie in the rank order.

the payoff, as Ken pointed out, is that “when the leader is honest with his followers then we will be honest in return. This helps to form an honest atmosphere in the organization.”

The benefits of honesty cannot be overstated. Employees must know they can trust their leader—as they can only do when someone is honest with them. As Anand Reddy, project manager at Intel, explained: “A failure of honesty poisons the team, damages the trust between people, and breaks down team cohesion. Besides, nobody wants to follow a leader who is not honest.” For Ian Foo, working as a consultant with Accenture in Australia, the importance of honesty and trust was demonstrated in the way his most admired leader kept his word: “Being honest means that if you make promises to people



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you never break them. You are only as good as your word: If you cannot deliver, do not offer your word.” Honesty earns the respect of others and fosters their confidence that leaders can be trusted to follow through on their commitments.

### **Forward-Looking**

Vani Bhargava, manager of financial accounting and analysis at YouWeb Incubator, learned about the importance of being forward-looking from her most admired leader, who told her that it is “critical to have a vision about how things could be and to be clear enough about it that others will be able to see it themselves.” Gloria Leung told us that because her most admired leader at Hang Seng Bank (Hong Kong) is forward-looking, “this provides us the capacity to walk a path towards the future with great confidence, and fosters shared values because we all know where we are heading.” “Where people fail as leaders,” explained Alex Popovic, director of strategic sales accounts at National Semiconductor, is where they are “myopic in their approach and are unable to communicate the long-term future of the group.” “You can’t be buried in the details,” said Marie Ross, senior manager of EMC’s customer reference program. “You have to be looking at the bigger picture.” Leaders are expected to have a sense of direction and a concern for the future of the organization. Leaders must know where they are going. They must have a destination in mind when asking others to join them on a journey into the unknown.

It isn’t all that surprising that being forward-looking would be so important for senior executives. But the data also indicate that it is very important for frontline supervisors and middle managers as well. If leaders are to be admired and respected, they must have the ability to see across the horizon of time and imagine what might be. People are unwilling to follow those who are directionless. Leaders can be unquestionably



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honest, but if they don't know where they are going, no one is likely to go any further ahead with them than they themselves can see.

Constituents ask that a leader have a well-defined orientation toward the future. They want to know what the organization will look like, feel like, and be like when it arrives at its goal in six months or six years. They want to have it described to them in rich detail so that they will know when they have arrived and so that they can select the proper route for getting there.

### Inspiring

People admire and respect leaders who are dynamic, uplifting, enthusiastic, positive, and optimistic. Claudio Lucero, who led the first South American team's climb to the top of the world's highest mountain, explained: "Dreaming about something is not enough; you have to be able to share that dream and get others to work with you to achieve it." Leaders can't just have dreams of the future; they must be able to communicate those dreams in ways that encourage people to sign on for the duration and to work hard for the goal. In this way they are expected to be inspiring.<sup>6</sup>

Ziya Boyacigiller, serial entrepreneur in the United States and Turkey, testified to the importance of being inspiring. He spoke about the need to "get others to believe so strongly in the vision that they are transformed into followers who are not afraid to fail." The enthusiasm of leaders is contagious and gets everyone to feel that they can make the impossible possible.

### Competent

If people are to enlist in another's cause, they must see that individual as capable and effective. Emily Li, APAC finance director at Mindspeed Technologies, described her most admired leader at Efinity in these



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terms: “He knows what he’s doing—he sets goals that are realistic and knows the steps necessary to achieve them—and that creates confidence and motivation in his followers.” And, she pointed out, “he knows about how to build upon the expertise of others.” The universal expectation is that the leader will be able to get things done for the organizational unit. In this sense, having a winning track record is the surest way to be considered competent.

The type of competence that constituents look for does vary somewhat with the leader’s role. For example, leaders who hold officer positions are expected to demonstrate abilities in strategic planning and policymaking. If a new technology challenges the organization, a person more knowledgeable about that technology may be perceived to be a more appropriate leader. A leader on the line or at the point of customer interaction will typically have to be more technically competent than someone removed from day-to-day contact. Yet it is not necessary that the leader have the same level of technical competence as constituents. Much more significant, explained Victor Wang, marketing technical services manager for the Swedish steel company ASSAB Tooling in Dongguan, China, “is that the leader takes the time to learn the business, to know the current operation and everyone in the company, before making changes and decisions.”

Expertise in leadership skills per se is another dimension of competence. The abilities to model, inspire, challenge, enable, and encourage—the practices identified over the years in our study of leadership bests and published in our book *The Leadership Challenge*—must be demonstrated if leaders are to be seen as capable.<sup>7</sup>

### **Consistency Over Time**

Honest. Forward-looking. Inspiring. Competent. These four prerequisites to leadership have stood the test of time and geography, even



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though there have been modest changes in emphasis. For example, in the years since we first collected this data, both *forward-looking* and *inspiring* have increased in importance. More people want their leaders to provide future direction and show uplifting enthusiasm than when we began our research. These times of transition require leaders with the vision and the energy to sustain hope.

*Competent* remains one of the four most admired characteristics, but it has slightly less importance now than in the past. Some people may be looking more for vision and direction, for inspiration and excitement, than for a track record of getting things done. This shift causes some pause, however, given the increasing complexity of organizations and their environments. It is doubtful that any leader could navigate the white water of today's organization without clear competence, but relative to the original study some people have elected to trade competence for another quality. For instance, *intelligent*, *broad-minded*, *supportive*, and *dependable* receive more votes now than ten and twenty years ago.

The quite modest changes in the most-admired rankings underscore the remarkable consistency of people's expectations of leaders over a wide variety of personal, organizational, and cultural dimensions. Nineteen of the twenty leader characteristics have not changed by more than a few percentage points (plus and minus) since the first data was collected in the early 1980s.<sup>8</sup>

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### Global Leadership and Local Variations

Context matters, and the external environment may influence what people look for and admire in a leader at any given moment or in any specific organization or location. Not that any shifting winds will push people away from seeking leaders who are at their core honest, forward-looking,



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inspiring, and competent. Over time and across organizations, these four qualities remain the prerequisites to developing yourself as an all-around leader. Yet to be a leader, you must also learn to adapt to and shape your local surroundings. Expectations can vary from organization to organization, function to function, group to group, level to level.

For example, in one particular organization we surveyed, *supportive* was selected as a most admired characteristic by significantly more people (56 percent) than in any other group studied. In this organization, being understanding and helpful was considered dramatically more important by all—whether exempt (salaried) or non-exempt (hourly), male or female, young or old—than in other companies. To be successful in that place, you would have to develop the skills to be supportive along with the skills to demonstrate the other four attributes. In another organization, *courageous* was selected significantly more often than the international norm.

As you might imagine, the differences between the supportive and the courageous organization were palpable. The organizations were as different as night and day, even though each was among the best in its own industry. In academic institutions the percentage of people selecting *intelligent* has been above the norm, while in health care organizations the preference has been *caring*. Among college students *broad-minded* has been more important, and with senior citizens *mature* was selected more often than the norm. But these “local” choices do not take away the majority of votes within each sample population that still go to honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.

People may also see the world a bit differently based on their roles and positions. Managers consistently look for a leader who is *forward-looking*; often fewer than 50 percent of non-managers do. Indeed, the weight given to *forward-looking* goes up in direct proportion to the age and years of work experience of respondents. When it comes to *supportive*, more than 60 percent of exempt employees look for it,





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while fewer than 40 percent of senior managers do. Professionals in the human resources function are more likely to value supportiveness than are professionals in other disciplines. More women than men tend to value supportive leaders. People in sales tend to value *inspiring* more than those in accounting. Health care professionals place a higher premium on *caring* in their leaders than do those from the manufacturing or engineering sectors. Ethnic minorities often look for more *broad-minded* leaders than do people from the majority ethnic group. Understanding these local differences is important.

If you are likely to rove about as a leader in your career, serving one constituent group today and another tomorrow, it is critical to keep a local perspective without losing or compromising your global understanding. Much as specific attributes may vary from country to country, organization to organization, and function to function, some things remain constant and universal. Honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent are those constants. They need to be part of your transportable leadership repertoire. Leaders are expected to carry at least these four qualities with them wherever they go.

Taken singularly, the characteristics of *honest*, *forward-looking*, *inspiring*, and *competent* provide a consistently useful guide for leadership selection, action, and development. Taken together, they communicate a more powerful message, one that offers a deeper understanding about the fundamentals of leadership.

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### Credibility Is the Foundation of Leadership

The characteristics of trustworthiness, expertise, and dynamism compose what communications researchers refer to as “source credibility.”<sup>9</sup> In assessing the believability of sources of information—whether the president of the organization, the president of the country, a salesperson,





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a TV newscaster, or a product spokesperson—those who rate highly on these three characteristics are considered to be credible, believable sources of information.

These three dimensions of source credibility are strikingly similar to three of the most frequently selected qualities in the “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” checklist: *honest*, *competent*, and *inspiring*. The three factors that explain why a person is a believable source of information—trustworthiness, expertise, and dynamism—are synonyms for three of the top four qualities people look for in a leader they would willingly follow. For trustworthiness, you can say *honest*. For expertise, you can say *competent*. For dynamism, you can say *inspiring*. In other words, what we found quite unexpectedly in our initial research, and what has been reaffirmed since, is that above all else, people want leaders who are *credible*.

People everywhere want to believe in their leaders. They want to have faith and confidence in them as people. People want to believe that their leaders’ words can be trusted, that they have the knowledge and skill necessary to lead, and that they are personally excited and enthusiastic about the direction in which they are headed. *Credibility is the foundation of leadership*. As General David Petraeus, commander of the International Security Assistance Force and of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, and tenth commander of the U.S. Central Command, noted,

There was a point in time when somebody came to me—at the real height of the violence, the most difficult period . . . and candidly there was not much support in certain quarters at that point in time—and said, “Sir, the only thing we have left is your credibility.” I took that pretty seriously.<sup>10</sup>

All leaders must take their credibility seriously. Credibility is the foundation on which leaders and constituents will build grand dreams





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of the future. Without credibility, dreams will die and relationships will rot.

Just think about it this way. Imagine a time when you might need to borrow some money. Imagine that you are trying to get a mortgage to build the house of your dreams, or to open a new business. You sit down across the desk from the loan officer at your local financial services company. After you've completed all the paperwork, the first thing that the loan officer is likely to do is check your credit.

Credit and credibility share the same root origin, *credo*, meaning "I trust or believe." A loan officer checking your credit is literally checking trust and belief, searching to know whether you can make good on your word. The officer wants to know whether to believe you when you say that you will pay the loan back on time and with interest.

When it comes to leaders, in many respects constituents act like loan officers. When leaders make promises (that is, complete verbal promissory notes) about what they will do to guide the organization on a journey to an uplifting new future, people instinctively do a credit check. They ask themselves, "The last time this person made such a promise, did it get kept?" "Was it the truth, or was it just some campaign pledge to get us to sign on?" "Can I trust this person?"

People also ask, "Do I see enough enthusiasm to keep us excited along the difficult road to the future?" "Can this leader inspire others to make the sacrifices necessary to make it through to the end?" And they wonder, "Does this leader have the competence to get us from where we are now to where we'd like to be?" "Does this leader have a track record of accomplishment that would give us confidence for the current effort?"

If the answers to these essential questions—about being honest, inspiring, and competent—are yes, then people are likely to lend their time, talent, and toil willingly. If the answers are no, then people are not likely to voluntarily sign up. Of course, they may go along because they



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have to (for example, they need this job), but that hardly means that they will take it upon themselves to do more than they must (surely something quite less than their best). When leaders ask others to follow their new strategic directions, their visions of exciting possibilities of a better tomorrow, people first decide whether those leaders can be believed.

Of all the attributes of credibility, however, one is unquestionably of greatest importance. The dimension of honesty accounts for more of the variance in believability than all other factors combined. Being seen as someone who can be trusted, who has high integrity, and who is honest and truthful is essential to being believed. You may know someone who is clearly competent, dynamic, and inspirational, but if you have a sense that that person is not being honest, you will not accept what that person is telling you, and you will not willingly follow. So the credibility check can reliably be simplified to just one question: “Is this person worthy of my trust?”

If your answer is yes, then follow. Even if your endeavor is unsuccessful, you will still respect yourself. If your answer is “I don’t know,” get more information, and get it fast. But if your answer is no, find another job or find another leader. Even if you are successful, you will not respect yourself. Every time you follow someone you do not trust, you erode your self-esteem: you are diminished in your own and in others’ eyes. Your worth depreciates, and you become less valuable to yourself and to others.

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### **Earning Credibility**

“You cannot follow someone who isn’t credible, who doesn’t truly believe in what they’re doing—and how they’re doing it,” said Gayle Hamilton, chief of staff for the senior vice president at Pacific Gas and



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Electric. And this viewpoint goes a long way toward explaining why Gayle has always preferred to stay close to those she leads, going back to the decision she made as a division manager to keep her office right next to the train tracks where her crew worked, rather than move to a plusher corporate setting. As she explained: “I don’t think people enjoy working for long stretches for someone who won’t be part of what’s happening.”

Leaders like Gayle know that credibility is something that is earned over time. It does not come automatically with the job or the title. It begins early in your life and career, and it is something that you develop day by day, year by year. People tend to initially assume that someone who has risen to a certain status in life, acquired degrees, or achieved significant goals is deserving of their confidence. But complete trust is granted (or not) only after people have had the chance to get to know more about you. The credibility foundation is built brick by brick, stone by stone. And as each new fragment is secured, the support on which you can erect the hopes and dreams of the future is gradually built.

We know that without a firm foundation of personal credibility, leaders can have no hope of enlisting others in a common vision. In this book we concentrate on the solid base on which these visions stand; we do not talk much about the dreams themselves. We focus on the leader’s foundation of credibility, because only when it’s strong can dreams of the future be supported.

Obviously the loftier and more expansive a leader’s dream, the deeper the foundation must be. The less stable the ground underneath, the more solid the foundation must be. Especially in uncertain times, leadership credibility is essential in generating confidence among constituents. Without credibility nothing can be built—at least nothing that can survive the test of time.



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But does building the foundation warrant the effort? Does credibility really matter? Don't you hear almost daily of business, labor, military, political, and even religious leaders who've become successful, yet who lack credibility? Besides, isn't business about getting results, and if you lack credibility but get good results, then so what? What difference does it make anyway?

It matters a great deal. Despite the evidence that some people can succeed, for a time, in ways that are devious and dishonest, credibility has a significantly positive impact on individual and organizational performance. In the next chapter we examine the difference credibility makes, and what leaders can do to strengthen their credibility.

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**Key Ideas From Chapter One**

- Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow.
- People choose to follow a leader not because of a leader's authority but because a leader lives up to the expectations constituents hold.
- The majority of people look for their leaders to be honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.
- Credibility is the foundation of leadership.
- Credibility is earned by daily actions leaders take over time. It does not come automatically with the job or the title.