

CREDIBILITY IS WHERE THE LEADER'S COOKIE CRUMBLES

STAYING TRUE TO YOURSELF

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In a previous article about crisis leadership, I mentioned that there were four levels to human engagement, as written by Gallup authors John Fleming and Jim Asplund.

I explained that one has to progress from confidence to integrity, and from integrity to trust, and from trust to passion.

There are four levels for this progression and, ultimately, it will become easier for us to understand the concept as to why people follow some leaders passionately. We are given the wrong impression that it is something we either have or we don't.

Passion is the result of a process and one does not become an effective leader overnight.

Even as I explained that crisis leaders have some of their leadership taught to them by the situation, its implication also means that their authority is consented upon them by the people they lead. There are, however, some prerequisites.

To emphasise: People "allow" leaders to lead them. While there are many cases where leadership has been implied or stated because of a position, this does not translate directly into influence, which ultimately defines a leader's effectiveness.

Credibility is where the leader's cookie crumbles! In John Maxwell's book: *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, he described his sixth Law as the "Law of Solid Ground": Trust is the foundation of leadership.

Just as Fleming and Asplund describe integrity and trust in *The Human Sigma*, Maxwell further describes the importance of trust.

I quote: "Trust is the foundation of leadership. To build trust, a leader must exemplify these qualities: competence, connection, and character."

While this could be considered a generalised view of how trust is established, we can see how some of these elements we described have their equivalencies between Fleming and Asplund, and Maxwell.

Competence is what builds into confidence, while integrity and character build into trust. Trust and passion are the ultimate results.

THE MORAL QUOTIENT

There seems to be a common understanding that competence is linked to knowledge or an intelligence quotient, while connection could be classified as a function of emotional quotient and, most recently, character is linked with what is now known as a moral quotient (MQ).

Given these dimensions added to what is known to be prerequisites for effective leadership, one can easily recognise that you cannot get to the top with just intelligence alone.

While knowledge, interpersonal skills and practice could give you the first two prerequisites, we have seen some of the most recognised leaders in history tumble with just one blow to his/her character.



MQ tends to deal with a person's integrity and forms much of the bases for trust. Integrity could be defined by its root word: "integer" which is a mathematical term that means "whole number" or a non-fraction. It is further defined as "one that is complete in itself".

A LEADER OF INTEGRITY

The literal meaning lends a number of similes to a person's character and integrity. A leader of integrity must be in a state of being undivided and consistent.

There should be no dichotomy between a leader's moral and professional life.

There are no compromises when it comes to integrity and character.

A leader's character and integrity are built over time, as character is constantly built up with consistency. Character and trust cannot be gained overnight.

Leaders are always set at the front lines of scrutiny. They are constantly being watched and assessed by people to see if they will deliver consistently.

It is implied that leaders and their followers have a psychological contract between them, such that leaders are beholden to their followers in constantly delivering on their promises.

This consistency is what builds into integrity in forming his/her character and thereby results in the people's trust. A lack in consistency and integrity compromises a leader's ability to lead.

Above all things, a person's moral integrity defines his character and his capacity for effective leadership.

JUMPING THE CREDIBILITY HURDLE

While we tend to look at effective leadership as the ultimate result of years of character development, we are also presented with the opportunity to lead on a daily basis.

Keeping the long-term in sight, we need to use this day to build ourselves to be the leaders that we would like to become. We have to take ourselves back to the first steps of developing an acceptable level of credibility.

Whilst credibility opens the doors to leadership, what exactly gets you through?

Credibility, simply put, is defined as the quality of being believed and eventually trusted.

● Competence resulting in confidence

A leader must exhibit a certain level of competence in knowing the subject matter, issues, and objectives at hand.

While it might be asking too much to have a leader who knows everything, the leader must exhibit the ability to know where and from whom to find the answers to issues.

Exhibiting an ability to navigate competently through issues develops confidence in the people you are leading. Do not pretend to be a "know-it-all".

● Integrity as a result of consistency

Always deliver on your promises and be known as a leader who brings consistent results. It is inevitable for you to fail in achieving certain objectives, but do so in a way which communicates how and why

these failures happen without making your team members look bad.

Take responsibility and focus on the root causes instead of passing the blame. People want to be led by people who make them feel safe. Always speak the truth and be who you say you are.

READY, STEADY, GO!

Being the leader you envision yourself to be might be a steep goal based on the many things we have said about integrity and character, but everyone needs to start somewhere.

Start from where you are! Be excellent at work. Be a positive influence to the people around you.

Be passionate about what you do and create a reputation for consistently delivering the results.

Most importantly, be true to yourself so that you always speak and act with the truth.

Perhaps, if you cannot find yourself doing and leading from where you are in the next few years, then you owe it to everyone else to lead yourself out from where you are into a workplace that is better for everyone.

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COMPETENCE IS WHAT BUILDS INTO CONFIDENCE, WHILE INTEGRITY AND CHARACTER BUILD INTO TRUST. TRUST AND PASSION ARE THE ULTIMATE RESULTS.