



# Being Credible

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## Credible -- What Does it Mean? ---

### Definition:

Capable of being believed. Worthy of confidence. Reliable. When you are credible, you are worthy of other people's trust. They know they can count on you.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER:

How do you build credibility with customers? Think about who you trust and who you can count on. Think about how you came to trust that person. Your customer is the person who came to you for help, the person you're mentoring. Here are some things to consider as you begin your mentoring work:

- **Above all else:** be respectful. Never treat the person you're helping as if you're the boss, the mother, the dad, the know-it-all, or the one with all the power. Treat them the way you like to be treated.
- **Listen.** If you are the one with all the answers and you do all the talking, how will you ever learn anything about the person? People are individuals. No one knows better than the customer what he or she wants and needs.
- **Empower.** The story goes something like: "Give the people fish and you'll feed them for a day. Teach them to fish and they'll feed themselves for a lifetime." Be generous with power and information. Help people learn how to do it themselves. Help them learn they can.
- **Be positive.** People do amazing things when someone believes in them. Expect the best. Don't make those old assumptions about disability. Help the person clarify what they want to do and how they will do it. Encourage them to be realistic, but don't destroy their hopes.
- **Know your facts.** Do your homework. Start an information file for yourself. Order free materials. Pay for some. Ask around. Network. Go to the library. Get training. Take classes.....
- **Know what you don't know.** Don't tell people things that are not true. Don't pretend to know when you really don't.
- **Find out.** It's okay not to have all the answers. Tell the person when you don't have the answer and that you will try to find out. Or, better yet, tell them where they can get the answer.

- **Keep your promises**. Do what you say you'll do when you say you'll do it. At least try.
- **Keep in touch**. Get back to the person when you say you will and ask the person to call you if they don't hear from you soon. It's tough to hang around waiting for answers.
- **Be cool**. Don't get defensive when they do remind you. You don't have to be perfect. Say, "I'm glad you reminded me."
- **Remember who's in charge**. Isn't it the customer? Encourage the customer to be as involved as possible every step of the way. Don't make decisions for him or her.
- **Never betray a confidence**. You can't be credible if you can't be trusted. Keep information private. Don't talk to others about a customer's personal information, personal life, or personal matters. If there are personal things to discuss with someone else, you must get approval of the customer. The best way to handle personal information is to make sure the customer is there when it is being discussed and to talk ahead of time about what's okay to disclose. Let the person speak for him or herself if at all possible.
- **Give praise and encouragement**. Give credit where credit is due. Get results, but don't take all the credit. Put the power in the hands of the customer. If you did the job right, you helped the customer achieve a goal; you didn't do it all yourself.