LEADERSHIP EXPERTS KOUZES AND POSNER CALL FOR A RETURN TO THE FUNDAMENTALS, CREDIBILITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

“My first suggestion on how to build your credibility: read this book and apply what you learn!”
---Marshall Goldsmith, author of MOJO and What Got You Here Won’t Get You There

San Francisco, CA—August 2011—Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner are award-winning leadership development author-experts with more than 30 years of experience researching the relationship between leaders and constituents. Their seminal book, the international bestseller, The Leadership Challenge, has spawned a thriving franchise with workshops, seminars, books, online tools and resources to help people become better leaders, whether they work for Fortune 500 companies, start-ups, universities, nonprofits, volunteer organizations, the military, or a professional service firm. Their extensive research has led them to an inescapable truth: credibility is the foundation of leadership, which they explore in CREDIBILITY: How Leaders Gain and Lose It Why People Demand It [Jossey-Bass; August 2011; $27.95; ISBN: 9780470651711] fully revised for the first time since 1993.

Nearly 20 years ago, when CREDIBILITY was first published almost half of America’s workforce was cynical, and while things improved in the 1990’s, the authors explain that by 2007 trust, the key ingredient of credibility, again took a major nosedive. More recently, the great recession, scandals within organized religion, questionable practices on Wall Street, and hypocrisy among politicians were big factors in the decision to revisit the topic. The book arrives at a time when “many wonder if there are leaders left who have the strength of character to sustain their trust.” CREDIBILITY is a research-based book that offers highly practical advice and real-life examples of what exemplary leaders do to become more influential and trustworthy.
In CREDIBILITY, Kouzes and Posner write, “we wanted to remind leaders how important it was to attend to the fundamentals...” Readers learn that leadership is a relationship, that there are three qualities people most look for and admire in leaders they would willingly follow, and that there are Six Disciplines essential to building and sustaining credibility over time. With The Six A’s of Leadership Accountability—Accept, Admit, Apologize, Act, Amend and Attend—the authors also show how credibility is restored once it is tarnished or lost. Kouzes and Posner, in example after example, illustrate “how values clarification and culture creation [must be] at the tops of a leader’s agenda.

This all-new edition of CREDIBILITY is broader in reach, it reflects what the authors describe as “the changing nature of the context in which people now work.” They show how credibility is important regardless of position, role or responsibility, and clearly document how it is a global concern, while blending international research with new case studies that reflect the realities of a global marketplace.

CREDIBILITY: How Leaders Gain and Lose It Why People Demand It
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About the Authors of CREDIBILITY

James Kouzes and Barry Posner are the authors of The Leadership Challenge, which has sold over 1.8 million copies and spawned an entire franchise of products published by Jossey-Bass and Pfeiffer. The authors are the premier leadership experts working today, they both live in the San Francisco Bay area.

James Kouzes is an Executive Fellow, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University. A popular seminar and conference speaker, he has been cited by the The Wall Street Journal as one of the twelve most requested "non-university executive-education providers" to US companies. Jim has been thinking about leadership ever since he was one of only a dozen Eagle Scouts to be selected to serve in John F. Kennedy’s honor guard when Kennedy was inaugurated President of the United States. Kennedy’s inaugural call to action — “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” — inspired Jim to join the Peace Corps, and he taught school in Turkey for two years. That experience made Jim realize that he wanted a career that offered two things: the chance to teach and the opportunity to serve. It was in his first job back in the U.S. training community action agency managers that Jim found his calling, and he has devoted his life to leadership development ever since.

Barry Posner is a Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University (located in the heart of Silicon Valley), where he served for 12 years as Dean of the School. At Santa Clara, he has received the President's Distinguished Faculty Award, the School's Extraordinary Faculty Award, and several other outstanding teaching and leadership honors. Barry is an internationally renowned scholar who has published more than 85 research and practitioner-oriented articles and he is currently on the editorial review boards of the International Journal of Servant-Leadership, Leadership and Organizational Development, and Leadership Review. Barry also serves on the Board of Directors for EMQ Family First. Described as a warm, engaging and pragmatic conference speaker and dynamic workshop facilitator, Barry has made presentations and conducted workshops across the U.S., and around the globe, from Canada, Mexico and Europe to the Far East, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.
A Q/A with the Authors of CREDIBILITY

Q. What's one thing you'd like people who read this book to do differently?
A. At the end of every day, ask yourself three questions:

- What did I do today that clearly demonstrated that I was true to my values and beliefs and kept my commitments?
- What did I do today that, even inadvertently, was inconsistent with what I stand for?
- What will I do tomorrow to make sure that I am a role model for others?

Everyone needs to take the time to reflect every day on how they’re leading their lives, and if they’re acting in ways that are consistent with what it means to be credible. When this happens, our homes, neighborhoods, cities and corporations will be better places to live and work, and we’d all make better and more ethical decisions.

Q. Why was it so important that this book be written from the "constituents’ perspective?"
A. Way too many books are written about leaders and for leaders, and they seem to forget that it’s not all about the leader! After all, no one gets anything extraordinary all done by him or herself – the truth is that you can’t do it alone and so “would-be” leaders have to understand that what makes anyone a leader is that they have followers (we prefer the term constituents). This means that fundamentally leadership is about a relationship between leaders and their constituents. We’ve studied what people look for in those individuals they would willingly follow, and then provide a template for leaders about what they must be and do in order to gain the necessary trust for others to be keen to commit, and sometimes even sacrifice, in order to do what has been requested of them.

Q. We know, all-too-well, the headline grabbing ways leaders lose credibility (e.g. lying, stealing, and cheating) but are there common, everyday ways that we lose credibility in our busy, daily lives?
A. Ask people what credibility means behaviorally and they’ll give you some variation of “doing what you say you will do” (“walking the talk,” “putting your money where you mouth is”). Each day, individuals have numerous “moments of truth” where they get to demonstrate that they keep their promises. Some of the simplest violations are breaking the “golden rule” that says “treat others as you say you would like to be treated.” You don’t remain credible in other people’s eyes for very long when you are inconsiderate, thoughtless, insensitive, rude, mean, and the like. Here’s the rub: Other people always take what you say as a promise, even if you didn’t necessarily mean it as a commitment, so you better be careful (and thoughtful) about what you say. Moreover, we don’t find people very credible when they are always making excuses, and blaming others or situations, for why they didn’t deliver. Finally, people who only care about their own interests and have the attitude that everyone else can be “damned” do not generally generate the admiration of other people and are seldom willingly followed.
Q. In the same way that people sometimes mistake kindness for weakness, is it at all possible that credibility is confused with ineffectiveness?

A. The truth is that credibility is the foundation of leadership, and it really is at the center of every effective relationship (interpersonal and organizational). If people don’t trust you, if people don’t feel you know what you are talking about, if people believe that your lost, and if people sense that you don’t really care, than they are likely to reciprocate by not caring or working very hard and being suspicious of your motives.

Q. You’ve been researching and writing about the relationship between leaders and constituents for more than two decades, does power corrupt?

A. No. Contrary to the oft-quoted opinion of the late Lord Acton, power does not corrupt. Now, do some people abuse the power they have? Absolutely. Look, power is simply the capacity to direct or influence the actions of others to get things done. Every leader needs some source of power to make things happen. You need the power that comes from your competence, from your personal energy, and from the strength of your values to mobilize people to want to struggle for shared aspirations. You can’t fuel movements without power. But, you can use the power you have for good or evil. You can use it to save lives or destroy lives. You can use it to build people up, or you can use it to tear them down. You can use power to unite or you can use it to divide. That’s why it’s vital to focus on the character and integrity of leaders and that organizations and societies select, develop, and promote leaders who take seriously the notion that the essence of their work is to make other people feel more capable, and not less capable, as a result of what they do.

Q. Is there such thing as an arrogant, credible leader?

A. Not for long! While confidence in your competence is essential to being credible — after all, no one’s going to follow you if they think you don’t know what you’re doing — arrogance and hubris are credibility killers. “Know-it-alls” communicate that they are concerned more about themselves than they are about others, and human beings just don’t trust people who have only their own interests at heart. You have to show you appreciate others and that you see your job as serving others if you want to sustain credibility over the long term.