

Building Credibility

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to strengthen your credibility. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Building Credibility
2. Credibility, Character, and Caring

1. Building Credibility

Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion.—Aristotle

You can not dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.—James A. Froude

Greek philosopher Heraclitus's famous maxim, "Character is destiny," has echoed through the ages: if you want to win the audience's trust, you must demonstrate that you are a person of character.

Aristotle argues that establishing good character is one of the most important means of persuasion. Roman orator Quintillian defines persuasive rhetoric as essentially "the good man speaking well."

British historian James A. Froude takes the colloquial idea of building character one step further, leading us to imagine a laborious undertaking in a blacksmith's forge, shaping character with a hammer.

The literature surrounding public speaking emphasizes the importance of establishing good character, but also admits that it is not easy.

2. Credibility, Character, and Caring

Personal **character** is an important addition to the elements of credibility we discussed in the last segment. However, it is important to note that, for a public speaker, character is not as simple as being a nice person or a law-abiding citizen.

Public speakers are responsible for communicating something of value to a large group of people. A public

speaker of character should listen to the needs of the audience, entertain potential objections, walk the audience through opposing viewpoints, and respond to questions. Show your listeners that you're looking out for them. After all, why should they trust you if you don't care about them?

To bring the audience's needs and interests to the forefront of your speech, follow these steps:

1. Find common ground with your audience.
2. Appeal to shared beliefs and values.
3. Identify a shared goal.
4. Return to this shared goal throughout the speech.
5. Demonstrate that you have considered other perspectives on the issue.
6. Show that you understand the appeal of opposing positions.
7. Make a case for your own position.



TERM TO KNOW

Character

Moral strength; consistency of values and principles.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that when **building credibility**, establishing your good **character** is a crucial part of winning the audience's trust. For a public speaker, character is not only about being a good person or a law-abiding citizen; speakers should also be looking out for the needs of their listeners. To show your listeners that you care about their needs and interests, find common ground with the audience, appeal to shared beliefs and goals, and entertain potential objections.

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TERMS TO KNOW

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