

TIP #54 – JULY
COMPOSING YOUR PERSONAL CREDO
CONTRIBUTED BY JAMES M. KOUZES AND BARRY Z. POSNER

Objectives

To be able to articulate who you are, what you believe, and what you stand for, which is the first step toward being a credible leader

Audience

- current or emerging leaders
- any size

Time Required

30 minutes

Materials and Equipment

A Personal Credo Worksheet for each leader (at end of this PDF)

Area Set-up

Not applicable

Process

1. Hand out Personal Credo Worksheet
2. Say: “Through their extensive research, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have found that credibility is not based on job titles or hierarchical positions but with the human being in the leader’s shoes. Above all else, they found that *leadership is personal*. It’s not about the corporation, the community, or the country. It’s about *you* and your *relationship* with others. If people don’t believe in the *messenger*, they won’t believe the message. If people don’t believe in *you*, they won’t believe in what *you* say. And if it’s about you, then it’s about your beliefs, your values, and your principles. It’s also about how true you are to your values and beliefs. Your credibility journey begins with the process of self-discovery. Their research indicates that, to genuinely know the level of commitment you are willing to make, you must discover three essential aspects of yourself: your credo, your areas of competence, and your level of self-confidence.”
3. Encourage participants to pair and discuss their understanding of the phrase “personal credo,” then share their thoughts with the group.
4. Say: “Let’s revisit your childhood, say, until you were ten years old. This is when you learned to think and act and navigate in the world. Think about parents, relatives, neighbors, friends, and teachers who influenced you. What do you remember being told about how to act and what to think? Do you remember hearing “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all”? How about, “Don’t be such a tomboy” or “boys don’t cry”? Or “You must respect your elders”? Did you hear that work could be exciting and meaningful, or drudgery to be carried out? What were your beliefs about education? What shaped your beliefs about marriage and family? What did you learn about money and the

- definition of success or failure? What were the implicit messages about happiness, or making mistakes, or asserting yourself?”
5. Instruct participants to fill out their Personal Credo Worksheet. Allow ample time for completion.
 6. Encourage participants to pair and share before moving on to the next lesson.

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James M. Kouzes is a professional speaker, cited by the Wall Street Journal as one of the top twelve executive educators in the U.S., and an executive leadership fellow at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, California. **Barry Z. Posner** is professor of leadership at Santa Clara University and former dean of the Leavey School of Business. Jim and Barry are the co-authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, *The Truth About Leadership*, and *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*. They also developed the highly acclaimed Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), a 360-degree assessment tool based on The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®.

PERSONAL CREDO WORKSHEET

You can't do what you say if you don't know what you believe. The first stage of your credibility journey is to clarify your values and determine the roots of your personal credo.

- 1) Where did your beliefs about what is important in life come from?

- 2) Which of these ideas or principles still guide you now?

- 3) Which are still useful? How do they help, support, or guide you in your daily life now?

- 4) Which are no longer useful? Do any ever cause you conflict or uneasiness?

- 5) Is it time to let go of some old ways of thinking and acting?