

Trust Skill 5 Congruence

Great persuaders are congruent, but what is congruence? When things match, we don't notice, but if something seems off, it grabs our attention either consciously or subconsciously. Just like the misspellings in the first sentence of this paragraph. You noticed it and your mind told you something was wrong with that word. Congruence is when your words match your actions. Agreement and harmony between what you say and what you do are paramount to instilling trust in those you work with. The more consistent and congruent you are in every aspect of your life, the more honest and genuine you're perceived to be. If you believe in your message, you'll practice what you preach. If you practice what you preach, you'll be more authentic, and the door of trust will then swing wide open for you. When you possess congruency, there's no need to manipulate or camouflage your behavior.

An interesting study was conducted with dentists, whereby an ad was put in the newspaper asking for people to participate in a painful dental procedure.¹¹ The first amazing thing about it was that people actually showed up. During the first part of the study, the dentists were told that they would only pretend to use a painkiller on their patients. A placebo would actually be given. The dentists were instructed to do everything just as they would normally do during the procedure. Most of the patients in this half of the study felt pain during their dental procedure. During the second half of the study, the dentists were told to perform the exact same procedure, except this time they would be administering a real painkiller to their patients. When told that the dentist was going to numb their mouths, most of these patients did *not* feel pain. The reality was, however, that unbeknownst to dentist or patient, a placebo had again been administered again in place of the painkiller. Even though in the dentists' minds they had performed the exact same procedure with both sets of patients, the first group of patients picked up on incongruities in the dentists' behavior. Consciously or subconsciously, they knew that something was wrong and thus felt pain.

Are you congruent with your history, your last interaction, and your reputation? Does your nonverbal behavior match your actions? Are your emotions congruent with

your message? What are your audience's expectations of you and your message? When your past history and your message don't match, flags of incongruity will wave in your audience's face. Suspicion will be roused and your audience will start to look for things that are wrong with you or your message. This inconsistency will decrease your ability to gain influence and trust. That's because humans are natural lie detectors. When we attempt to fake congruence, we must also spend our time and energy trying to fake our message.

What are some nonverbal behaviors that will trigger incongruence and a sense of deception?

- Forced eye contact
- Shifting back in chair
- Rubbing lips
- Scratching your face
- Dilated pupils
- Yawning
- Pitch of voice rising