

Your Congruence

Trust increases when others can see that your words match your actions. This is called congruence. Agreement and harmony in verbal and nonverbal messages increase your ability to influence. When congruence is lacking, a red flag is raised and, either consciously or subconsciously, your listener will not give you her/his full trust. It's like the clothes you wear every day. If your clothes match well, usually no one really pays attention to what you're wearing. If your clothing choices clash and are mismatched, however, they will be the only thing people notice and remember about you. Just remember that 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 audience trusts you categorically.

As one author put it, "People love someone who seems to believe in what he is doing, who is a man of principle. It doesn't seem to matter what the principle is, as long as he holds to it against all odds, expresses himself clearly, does not get defensive and sticks to his story." When they manifest, most incongruities are found in our body language. Countless studies demonstrate that when body language is incongruent or in disagreement with the message being portrayed, the body language will always be believed over the message. Hence, if you want your message to have maximum impact on your audience, your body language must be congruent with and support or enhance your message.

Are you congruent with your history, your last interaction and your reputation? 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 incongruities will wave in your prospects' faces. Suspicion will be roused and your prospects 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. We are natural liars.

detectors. When you attempt to fake congruence, you will also spend your time and energy trying to fake your message.

Never assume that people trust you. Always show the world that you are someone to be trusted, no matter what the circumstances are. You can gain and enhance trust by doing the following:

- Keep your promises.
- Be reliable.
- Under-promise and over-deliver.
- Admit your failures and weaknesses.
- Use logic with your emotion.
- Exhibit true concern for and about others.
- Never assume people completely trust you.
- Tell people only as much as they'll believe.
- Tell the truth, even if it hurts.
- Downplay any benefits to you.