

Are You Making an Imus-like Mistake? How to Get an Accurate Picture of Your Credibility Rating

By Bonnie Budzowski

Do you have an accurate picture of the credibility that others assign to you? If not, you are vulnerable to receive a shock. It happened to Don Imus—it could happen to you!

A key ingredient in perceived credibility is a person's record. In defending himself, Imus insists that he is a good person with a good history. He wants people to know that he has raised millions for charity, that he and his wife run a ranch for kids with cancer and blood diseases, that he has used his influence to raise awareness for autism and other causes. Imus wants to be judged by the whole of his life, especially the good that he has done.

Unfortunately, Imus's record has two sides. While carrying on his benevolent work, Imus consistently used his show to make harsh and ugly comments about others. Imus has a long and consistent record of disparaging remarks about individuals and groups. Some of the remarks can be attributed to comedy; others cannot.

If Imus wants to be judged by his whole life, then he has to own up to both sides, not just the side that makes him look good.

Enough about Don Imus—perhaps it's time to apply his very public lesson to ourselves. It's easy to make an Imus-like credibility mistake: to judge ourselves by our good moments and good intentions while diluting the importance of our less-than-perfect moments.

To get an accurate picture of the credibility that others assign to you, answer the following questions:

- What's your track record on words that build others up rather than tear them down—especially when those others are not in the room?
- What's your track record of delivering what you promise when you promise it?
- How often do you genuinely listen before pushing for your own point of view?
- To what extent are you conscientious about giving credit to others for their contributions and ideas?
- Would your colleagues say you are concerned about their agendas as well as your own?

As you answer the questions, remember your good days and your bad days. Others will judge your life as a whole. Make sure you do as well.

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