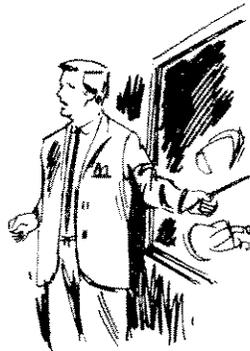


# Credibility and the Business of Range Professionals

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To address the question as to how the range profession might establish greater levels of credibility with public agencies, other professional organizations, and the general public, requires we first understand clearly what is meant by credibility. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1973), **credibility is worthiness of belief**. Thus, the real question we are asking is: How do we get people to believe us?

To address this question I have chosen to use Steven R. Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, (1989) as a foundation. This approach was suggested to me by my friend and colleague, John Walker, and I am grateful to him for the suggestion. In my preparation I found Dr. Covey's paradigm an effective means for organizing my thoughts. I believe Dr. Covey provides us with some very effective guidelines for making **paradigm shifts**.



The manner in which we see the world varies depending upon our individual paradigms. A **paradigm** is a model, an explanation, or a theory about something. It is a map of how to solve problems, how to get from point A to point B, etc. Unfortunately, our paradigms are sometimes our problem in that we have the wrong map. As such, viable solutions to our perceived problems are often difficult to attain, and as Albert Einstein observed, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking as we were at when we created them." This is what the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is all about. It provides us with some fundamental "people" skills needed to solve problems. In many instances it requires a change in the way we look at problems, that is, a shift in paradigms. It says "If you want to be trusted, be trustworthy. If you want the secondary greatness of recognized talent, focus first on primary greatness of character."

## HABIT 1 - Be Proactive

Proactivity means we are **responsible** for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen. Look at the word responsibility - "response ability" - the ability to choose our response. Proactive people recognize their responsibility. We are what we are today because of the choices we made yesterday.

Viktor Frankl, a Jewish psychologist and former prisoner in the death camps of WWII, suggests there are three central values to life: 1) **experiential**, that is, what happens to

us; 2) **creative**, that is, what we bring to our life; and 3) **attitudinal**, that being, our response to life's circumstances such as how we might respond to imprisonment in a Nazi death camp. From Dr. Frankl's experiences and observations, he suggests the most important of these three is attitudinal. He and others contend that it is not what happens to us that is important, but rather it is how we respond to what happens to us.

Proactive people focus their attention on things they can do something about (i.e., Circle of Influence) whereas reactive people focus on things that they have very little control over (i.e., Circle of Concern). Thus, proactive people are **influential** whereas reactive people are **passive** participants in life.

And, so it goes with professions and organizations. If our professional discipline (i.e., rangeland management) and society (i.e., SRM) want to have professional credibility, we must be proactive. We must take responsibility for whom we are and focus our activities on those things that we can change. We must take responsible positions on matters related to the stewardship of rangeland resources. We need to offer solutions not excuses to problems. If we want to be trusted, we must first be trustworthy!

## HABIT 2 - Begin With the End In Mind

To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear picture, image, model, or vision of our destination. It is based on the principle that "all things are created twice," that is, there is firstly the mental creation, i.e., the picture, followed by the physical creation.

Habit 2 is based firstly on the principles of leadership which develops the image or first creation. Management is the essence of the second creation, that being, getting the job done. **Management** is doing things right; **leadership** is doing the right things!

Mission statements are an extension of Habit 2. Effective mission statements are based on set principles, that is, principles that do not change. Dr. Covey believes much of IBM's long-term success is related to the underlying principles girding their mission statement which states that IBM stands for three things: the **dignity** of the individual, **excellence**, and **service**. These represent IBM principles and they do not change. Moreover, successful mission statements must reflect everyone's belief just not management's. They must involve everyone because without involvement there is no commitment. No involvement, no commitment!

So what is our profession's vision as it relates to credibility? Is credibility an important principle that will help us better meet our professional mission or is the primary reason we desire credibility is so we can be right? Are we willing to commit the time and energy required to engage in visioning activities designed to elucidate clearly our collective goals and missions? What is our vision?

### HABIT 3 - Put First Things First

Habit 1 says, "You are the creator. You are in charge. You are the programmer." Habit 2 is the mental creation. It is based on imagination and it says "Write the program." Habit 3 is the physical creation, the fulfillment of Habits 1 and 2. It says, "Run the program." It centers on how we manage ourselves. It involves doing things of importance, that is, things that produce desired results.

So if credibility is important to our profession, we need to do something about it. We must recognize we are responsible for what we are, that we are in charge (Habit 1). We must have vision, that being, we must want to be credible representatives of rangeland stewardship activities (Habit 2). And to fulfill this vision, we must begin to focus our attention firstly on doing those things that will produce desired results (Habit 3).

### HABIT 4 - Think Win/Win

Habits 1, 2, and 3 are habits that produce **private victories**, that is, they are habits that help us "get our act together." Habits 4, 5, and 6 are habits that produce **public victories**, that is, habits that help us to successfully interact with other people. Dr. Covey suggests that successes arising from Habits 4, 5, and 6 are largely dependent upon building an **emotional bank account**. An emotional bank account is a metaphor that describes the amount of trust that's been built up in a relationship. It's the feeling of safeness you have with another human being. People develop emotional bank reserves by being courteous, kind, honest, and committed to others as opposed to being dishonest, disrespectful, and threatening. The six major ways we can make deposits to the Emotional Bank Account are: 1) understand the individual; 2) attend to the little things; 3) keep commitments; 4) clarify expectations; 5) show personal integrity; and 6) apologize sincerely when you make a withdrawal.

Win/Win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks **mutual benefit** in all human interactions. It is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. It is a belief in the **third alternative**, that being, it is not your way nor my way, but rather **our way!**

The principle of Win/Win embraces three interdependent dimensions of life. It begins with **character** and moves toward **relationships**, out of which flow **agreements**. It is nurtured in an environment where structure and systems are based on Win/Win. And it involves process; we cannot achieve Win/Win ends with Win/Lose or Lose/Win means.

So what have we done recently as a profession and society to develop Win/Win situations as they relate to our credibility? Have we explored fully opportunities to develop Win/Win agreements with our "detractors"? Do we have the character (i.e., integrity, maturity, and abundance mentality) to explore Win/Win opportunities with other individuals and organizations?

### HABIT 5 - Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood

"Seek first to understand" involves a very deep paradigm shift. We typically seek first to be understood. We typically do not listen to understand; we listen to reply. We are usually speaking or preparing to speak. Mark Twain recognized this fully when he stated that "the fact we have two ears and one mouth ought to be a clue" to appropriate avenues of communication.

Dr. Covey suggests we usually listen at one of four levels. We either: 1) ignore the other person; 2) pretend we are listening; 3) selectively listen; or 4) attentively listen. But seldom do we practice **empathetic listening**, that is, listening with the intent to understand. Successful empathetic listening provides humans with psychological survival, that is, human understanding, affirmation, validation, and appreciation. Only physical survival is a greater need than psychological survival; thus, meeting others' psychological needs is a prerequisite for understanding.

Dr. Covey believes seek first to understand is a mark of a true professional. It is the first step to achieving Habit 5 and the first step to creating a Win/Win situation. The second step is to be understood. It takes **consideration** to understand; it takes **courage** to be understood. Habit 5 is also in the center of our Circle of Influence. If we can learn to understand firstly, our level of influence grows dramatically.

The obvious question relative to Habit 5 is: Do we really understand our critic's position? Have we made every effort to understand their feelings, their thoughts and values, or has our emphasis been on making certain they understand us first? Does Habit 5 provide us opportunities to improve our credibility by improving fundamental relationships?

### HABIT 6 - Synergize

Synergy means the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and when properly understood, synergy is the highest activity in life. When we communicate synergistically, we are simply opening our minds and hearts and expressions to new possibilities, new alternatives, new options. It requires enormous personal security and openness and a spirit of adventure.

The essence of synergy is to **value differences**, human mental, emotional and psychological differences. The key to valuing those differences is to realize that all people see the world, not as it is, but as they are. If we think we see the world as it is, why would we want to value differences? A truly effective person has the humility and reverence to recognize their own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings.

Unless we value the differences in our perceptions, unless we value each other and give credence to the possibility that we're both right, that life is not always a dichotomous either/or, that there are almost always third alternatives, we will never be able to transcend the limits of that conditioning. When we initially see only two alternatives, ours and the "wrong" one, therein lies an opportunity, that

being, to discover the synergistic third alternative. There's almost always a third alternative, and if you work with a Win/Win philosophy and really seek to understand, you can usually find a solution that will be better for everyone concerned.

Question: What synergistic activities has the range management profession in general, and SRM specifically, undertaken recently to enhance their credibility as rangeland stewards? Are we willing to trust other organizations at a high enough level whereby we would be willing to cooperate fully with them in developing Win/Win situations? Is SRM mature enough to undertake such a course of action?

### HABIT 7 - Sharpen the Saw

Habit 7 focuses on preserving and enhancing the greatest asset we have, that being **ourselves**. It involves **learning, committing** to what we have learned, then **doing, relearning, recommitting**, and **redoing** time after time after time. It's renewing the four dimensions of our nature - physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional. This is the single most powerful investment we can make in life; **investing in ourselves**, the only instruments we have with which to deal with life and to contribute to life fulfilling activities.

The physical dimension involves caring effectively for our physical body. The spiritual dimension is our core, our center, our commitment to our value systems and its renewal provides renewed leadership and purpose to our lives. Renewal of the mental dimension is continuing education. And the social/emotional dimension centers on the principles of interpersonal leadership (Habit 4), empathic communication (Habit 5), and creative cooperation (Habit 6). Renewal of the social/emotional dimension involves renewed commitments to serving others for as N. Eldon Tanner said, "Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth."

In light of Habit 7, one wonders if our profession has spent appropriate amounts of resources in renewal activities. Are we continuing to hang on to our historical roots and our founding traditions with undo tenacity thereby diluting our effectiveness as credible spokes people for rangeland stewardship issues?

### Conclusions and Suggested Actions

How does the range profession establish professional credibility with agencies, organizations, and the public? I suggest we consider the following actions as appropriate starting points.

1. We must **take responsibility**, develop a **powerful vision**, focus on actives that **make a difference**, develop **Win/Win opportunities**, develop **empathetic listening skills**, learn to capture value of **human differences**, and **learn, commit, do, relearn, recommit, and redo**. We need to focus our attention on building coalitions with other organizations having mindsets similar to our own. And we must not become discouraged on this jour-

ney in the absence of quick fixes because "**small steps** over time really do make **big differences**."

2. We need to continue to **hold firm** to our science as the foundation of sound rangeland management strategies and tactics and to **guard against** the temptation to change our story depending upon the audience. Problems associated with overgrazing and general abuse of rangeland resources by agriculturalists (i.e., livestock graziers) must be addressed with the same level of commitment as problems arising from the overgrazing of such national treasures as Yellowstone National Park, for "if we want to be **trusted** we must first be **trustworthy**."
  3. We need to consider ways in which we might **change our image** so as to enhance others' first impression of our profession. How about the *Journal of Rangeland Science*, the official scientific journal of the **Society of Rangeland Stewardship**? And what about a **new logo**? Does the **Trail Boss** readily portray our profession's commitment to multi-use rangeland stewardship values?
  4. We need to consider **sponsoring Super Bowl XXXI**. I recognize most will consider this suggestion as approaching the absurd and that it is. But my point is: **credibility can be bought!** Consider Steve Forbes and the idea of a flat income tax. Like it or not, his money has "assisted" him in gaining some level of credibility and it is important we recognize the need for our profession to expend some "advertising" funds in our efforts to attain new levels of credibility. It seems important also that we recognize that SRM is never going to be able to capture substantial "advertising" opportunities at an annual dues rate of \$50!
  5. We need to consider **hiring credible professionals** to address such questions as: How do we establish professional credibility with agencies, organizations, and the public? Although I would like to believe that the articles written for and presented in this symposium are all credible and subsequently helpful to our profession and SRM, I know for a fact that they were "cheap" to come by. My question is: Do we spend adequate amounts of available resources (e.g., time and money) on professional development? Would we benefit by hiring trained professionals to address such professional issues as addressed in this symposium? It is good to see the Leadership Development Workshop being offered as a part of our annual meeting, but I wonder if more of our efforts should not be focused in this direction? If we assume generally that rangeland scientists are below average social scientists, then we might conclude that this symposium was of "below average" quality because the questions posed in this symposium were of a social nature and the "professional" respondents were of a rangeland scientist nature. Granted they were cheap, but still of a rangeland scientist nature! Just a thought.
- Lastly, I believe it important that we understand that many professional, scientific-based organizations are currently facing the same "credibility" challenges as SRM. For example, the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (1996) recently sponsored a Leadership Conference for

technical and professional food, fiber, environment, and agriculture related societies. Delegates from the 48 participating societies reached a number of understandings including the following: 1) they need not "go it alone" when facing workplace changes; 2) other societies are facing the same or similar challenges; 3) cooperation and collaboration between societies and among their members are necessary; 4) member needs are changing more rapidly than their societies are able to respond; and 5) traditional approaches to strategic planning, mission writing, and vision statements are not adequate to contemporary challenges.

My point is: we are not in this alone! Other societies are facing similar challenges and that provides opportunities for us to grow with them.

In summary, I believe we simply need to develop **proactive attitudes**, identify clearly who are our **customers**, within the realization that we cannot be all things to all people, and move forward with a **Win/Win** strategy. We need to adopt a **Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood Attitude** and guard against the idea that "telling is teaching." We need to adopt Pogo's eternal optimist's philosophy that "life is a series of insurmountable opportunities." And finally, I believe it imperative we understand the old adage that "whether we think we can or cannot, we are correct." I choose to believe that **together** we can. What do you choose to believe?

#### Literature Cited

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