

Follow-Through & the Power of a Promise

Chances are that you've known someone who is very good at making promises, thus making people feel good, in the moment. Yet that person may have very poor follow-through, meaning that many promises go unfulfilled. Now, how do you think folks feel about him?

Don't be a leader known for empty promises and lousy follow-through! Here are some ways you can avoid that trap:

Refer When You're Unsure—People will ask you all sorts of things as a student leader. And, yes, it definitely feels good when you have the answer for them at your fingertips. Yet, the reality is that no one person can stash all the necessary knowledge in her brain! So, instead of giving people info that you're unsure about, refer them to the appropriate source instead. You'll be doing everyone a big favor while also demonstrating your ability to be an excellent resource person!

Don't Overpromise—Keep your promises in check by only promising things that you are absolutely sure you can follow through on in a timely manner. The next tip will help you keep track of that...

What Effective Follow-Through Looks Like...

- writing thank you notes within 48 hours of a program/workshop/training
- letting members know the answer to something that came up at your meeting that week
- putting important deadlines on your calendar so folks don't have to hound you for things that may be holding them up from doing their jobs, too
- tackling those necessary tasks that you don't like but still need to get done, instead of pushing them to the side where they may be quickly forgotten
- people being able to trust that when you say you'll accomplish something, you'll do it



Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

...when you promise to follow through on something, people are placing their trust in you. That's a very valuable commodity that you don't want to mess with!

Have a Cheat Sheet—Every time that you promise something, jot it down in your planner or on a bright piece of "Promise Paper" that you have clipped in your planner. This will keep your promises front and center to make you aware of what you've already promised and what still needs doing. There's nothing wrong with jotting it down to give your memory a nudge.

Keep in Touch—Sometimes, you won't be able to follow through in time to meet an initial deadline. Instead of hoping people will give you the benefit of the doubt because they know you're busy, be upfront and stay in touch with them about what's going on and a new deadline that they can anticipate. They won't feel blown off that way and will know that you're still on the case!

You can't be all things to all people, much as you'd like to be. By only promising what you know you can deliver on and making timely, positive follow-through your mode of operation, you'll become a trusted leader that others can count on.

