



I AM RIGHT

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

I have developed a tool to help people build more trust with others. It consists of a 3” button with the words ‘I AM RIGHT’ on it. When you first see the button, it looks like it is an invitation to quarrel more with other people. Once you understand the logic behind it, the button is a powerful way to **reduce conflict**, and it helps leaders create an environment where trust will grow faster. This article describes the background of the button, how I use it, and how people react to it in my work when I give out a button to all the participants.

The first time I ever saw the ‘I AM RIGHT’ button, it was worn by a fraternity brother of mine who defiantly wanted to remind the rest of the world that his perspective was always the correct one. It was a comical reminder not to cross swords with him. I forgot about the button for decades, then it struck me that if it was used properly, it could actually change the dynamic in many conflict situations and lead to higher rather than lower trust.

You own your parochial viewpoint and believe that your way of looking at things is right. If another person does not agree with your perspective, that person must be wrong simply because you are convinced that you are right. This logic is pervasive for leaders, which is why trust is so low in many organizations.

Leaders make decisions, take actions, and make statements all the time. They speak and act based on their own opinions. If an employee expresses an alternate viewpoint, it is human nature to push back, especially since the leader has an implied power advantage over the employee. So, in most situations when employees make assertions that are not congruent with the way the boss thinks, then they end up feeling put down or punished in some way.

This is where I use the power of the button to change the conversation. Most of the time I am working with leaders, or those people who aspire to become leaders. In describing the ‘I AM RIGHT’ theory, I actually put on the button so everyone in the seminar will know that is my perspective. Then, I hand out the same button to every person in the room, (I purchase them by the hundreds). Now the dynamic is a bit different. When someone in the room has a divergent opinion from mine, I can clearly

see that the person is also wearing the button. I can no longer easily ignore or belittle the other person's opinion because he or she believes it is right.

It is common for individuals in my seminars to say, "Can I get two buttons? My wife will want one, and I need one for myself!" It is all very comical, and people love them, but beneath the fun there is a fundamental shift in thinking that is vital for leaders, and really all people, to learn. **Look for the invisible button that every single person wears every day.** Once you get the hang of it, you will see the button everywhere, and it shifts the conversation. When people indicate a disagreement with something you have said or done, your first reaction will not be to show them the error of their ways.

You can say something much softer like this, "That is interesting to hear your point of view. I want to know more about your opinion because with the same set of information and circumstances, I came up with a different view. Tell me more, please." Now you are in a position to make the person glad they brought up their opposing view.

This method does not rely on both parties eventually agreeing on each point. Clearly you can agree to disagree and move on, but you come across as a leader who is willing to consider the opinions of others rather than become adamant or defensive, as many leaders do. That small change in dynamic can make a world of difference in the way people react to you as a leader. The same benefit works well with peers, or really any other person who expresses a divergent view from your own.

Try to spot the invisible 'I AM RIGHT' button on people, and you will find less conflict in your life. If you are a leader, your ability to listen and empower will be significantly enhanced.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals* (2003), 2. *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online* (2006), 3. *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind* (2009), and 4. *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change* (2014). In addition, he has authored over 500 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763**

