



Stanford eCorner

Establishing Credibility

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1334/Establishing-Credibility>

Seligmann talks about how a not-for-profit organization like Conservation International builds its credibility when interacting with governments of other countries.



Transcript

How do we established our credibility? It was difficult. Because most governments actually do not have experience or history of dealing with not-for-profit organizations and they didn't understand us. I remember right after we did this first debt-for-nature swap in Bolivia. The Japanese government was really interested in us and they sent teams of observers to visit our offices, to wander around and just try to understand what is a not-for-profit. What exactly are you doing? And we've had that experience in many, many countries. But I think that what really gives credibility is when you say you're going to do something, like present a million dollars worth of trust fund, we actually deliver it. And when you say that you're going to try to engage a business in work, in manufacture of buttons, and you actually deliver. And you begin to build credibility. The challenge of creating this organization has been kind of step-by-step. I mean, it's always kind of reaching a little bit further and it's always an assessment of what are our assets.

I mean, not just financial, but the trust assets, the relationship assets, the partnership assets, the financial assets and how do you go from that place to this greater scale. And it's just delivery. If you don't deliver or you exaggerate, it's like you start all over again. And so, we've worked hard to do what we say we're going to do. That has led us, by the way, into a very deep commitment to measurement. We have basically a saying at CI: if you can't measure it, don't do it. And so, within measure. What are the outcomes? How we measure whether we've accomplished that? What's finite, concrete, definable? We're not held accountable in terms of if we failed, we don't get there. It's more benchmarking and learning. And that's helped a lot in terms of our ability to deliver.