

## The ABC's of Influence: Getting what you want

*Influence:* the ability to motivate one to agree willingly with full knowledge.

Simply stated, influence is the ability to get what you want. We use influence in our careers to get a coworker to complete a request faster or to get permission to work from home. But we also rely on this essential skill in our personal lives to get a late fee reversed or get the kids to clean their room.

In every one of these situations, we rely on tactics to get the desired result. However, we often do not choose the appropriate strategy for a given situation or person. To increase your influence effectiveness apply the ABC's of influence.

**A** - Analyze the situation and select a strategy

**B** - Be open to influence

**C** - Create a win-win

### **A**NALYZE THE SITUATION AND SELECT A STRATEGY

Situations are like snowflakes, unique. Influence is subtle and frequently involves a combination of tactics. So how do you choose? What do you need to know? Ask yourself;

- Who do I need to help me and how have they influenced people?
- Is this a one time encounter or will I be interacting with this person in the future?
- What do I know about the lay of the land?
- What knowledge can I leverage?"

Questions about your relationships, the environment, and the information available will help you determine if you want to employ a relationship focused, organizational awareness or information based strategy.

#### **Relationship Focused Strategies**

##### **Empower**

It is exactly how it sounds, you are asking for input and ideas to make someone feel part of the process and valued. This is a collaborative approach which credits a person's contribution and incorporates their ideas into the solution to create buy in. This strategy is particularly useful with someone who values recognition.

*Example:* How do you suggest we tackle this problem?

##### **Building Relationships**

We are constantly meeting new people and networking both in and out of the office. Take the time to be friendly, build a rapport, learn about someone's interests or preferences and identify commonalities. The 'why' is obvious; people are more inclined to do things for people they like. If you are a social person, this tactic will be easier to employ.

*Tip:* Write down children's names, put birthdays in your calendar and always say hello.

### **Interpersonal Awareness**

I think of this as “tuning in”. By observing non verbal behavior like facial expression, body stance, and eye contact, we can sense if there is hesitation about your idea. Use your awareness to identify and address concerns thereby clearing the path for the response you seek.

### **Trade, Bargain or Negotiate**

We have all heard the saying, “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine.” Creating the win-win is the foundation for this strategy. Seek to understand what is preventing someone from the “yes” and suggest a solution to both problems.

*Tip:* Do a favor for someone first and they will be itching to reciprocate.

## **Organization Awareness Strategies**

### **Common Vision**

To establish a common vision, first determine the motivators of your target audience. Then show how your plan or idea supports the broader goals or encompasses the stated values. It is hard for someone to argue when their own stated goals are used to support the idea.

### **Center of Influence**

Is there someone in your company that everyone respects? Have you ever said, “if she thinks it’s a good idea, that’s good enough for me.”? Whoever that “she” is, is a center of influence in your life and likely many others. In order to build support for your idea, first get the support of those people that influence others. Keep in mind, their influence is often not based on their level in the company. This can also be thought of as playing the politics.

*Example:* I was brainstorming the idea with \_\_\_\_ and she thought...”

### **Power by Proxy**

“The CEO asked me to work on this project with you.” Now who is going to say no to that? Power by proxy is a strategy of enrolling assistance with your request by leveraging someone else’s belief in the goal. This is sometimes also referred to as legitimizing if you are using an established procedure, or legal authority as your reference. This method is useful when you are addressing someone with higher authority.

## **Information Based Strategies**

### **Logical persuasion**

This tactic is most productive with left brain thinkers who appreciate organization, information, and of course, logic. It relies on knowledge, expertise

and a logical presentation of the information to persuade. You will have reasons, data, statistics and other irrefutable information to leverage.

### **Dramatic Impact**

A bold statistic, an unexpected question, a shocking revelation or a personal story are all methods of grabbing attention and creating an impact. This strategy plays to emotions by appealing to values or modeling the behavior.

*Tip:* Make sure the statistic or story is not already known.

## **BE OPEN TO INFLUENCE**

Influence is an ongoing relationship, not a one-time exchange. The ability to influence a particular person is enhanced or inhibited with each interaction. If we expect others to be influenced, we must also be open to it. Effective influence requires listening and negotiating. Tactics that enhance openness include relationship building, interpersonal awareness, bargaining and empowering.

## **CREATE A WIN-WIN**

Influence is an art which requires both thought and skill. Effective influence is *not* simply imposing your ideas or demanding an action, *or else* – that is coercion. Seek to understand your audience's drivers. What is blocking them from taking your desired action? What are their goals and motivators? Use what you learn to design a solution that meets both parties' goals – that is creating a win-win.

In the end, influence is not about just getting what you want. Effective influence creates action that everyone wants. It is about collaboration and creativity, understanding your strengths and most importantly, it is about relationships.