

Persuasion and Influence

Richard Hemsworth (Project Coach and EPMO Director)

Most people will tell you that to influence, all you need to do is apply interpersonal and communication skills. Wow, how easy is that! No wonder we're all so good at it?! So, this handout is a place holder for personal coaching; because influencing skills need to be practiced and feedback from a good mentor hones the skills. Here are four key skills that might progress our influencing capability.

**There are couple of other coaching handouts that go with this paper - please see the references.*

Skill 1. Active listening provides a wealth of information about the person you are speaking with. Ask open questions, probe on issues and never argue. Ask lots of clarifying questions, and chunk up a logical level to get agreement.

Skill 2. Build rapport by signposting your intention and preparing the listener to help them focus on your point of view. Soften the introduction of difficult subjects. Provide a commentary to the conversation with words like: 'let's see if I understand your perspective...' and feeding it back to them.

Pacing is also a key part of building rapport. Your choice of language will pace their engagement. Negative or overly formal language will affect the tone of the discussion and disturb the rapport you are aiming for. It is always possible to say 'and' rather than 'but' to move the topic on from areas of difference. Matching predicates to the persons information style also aids in building rapport. There's an old saying that might prove useful: 'people like people that are like themselves.'

Skill 3. Selling can be a negative concept in some contexts. Salespeople have a reputation for getting you to buy something you don't want, but really they are trying to persuade you of the link between their product and your needs, that is, to influence you to buy it. The tactics they use work to find out what is important to you and gear the discussion to the things that will attract you and serve your needs.

Skill 4. Assertiveness is controlled behaviour that is planned and well-thought-out to lead to the outcome you want. Assertiveness skills boost persuasiveness and enhance influence. Assertiveness means being straightforward and clear about what you want to say, always keeping to the point and being succinct. Leave out the padding and make sure everything is relevant to the position you're trying to put across. Remain calm to protect yourself from being put off course by people who may use emotional pressure, as you come back to your point in a neutral way.

Barriers to Successful Persuasion

One way to think about what works in persuading others is to think about what doesn't work first. In his book Persuasion IQ, Kurt Mortensen lists ten obstacles to successful persuasion:

- Thinking that you are better at persuasion than you are, and therefore failing to hone your skills. Instead, take a long, hard look at yourself, and see where your skills need to be improved.
- Trying too hard to persuade. Seeming too keen probably puts people off faster than anything else.
- Failing to put in the effort required to get what you want.
- Talking too much. Stop, and just listen to the people you need to persuade.
- Providing too much information, which just confuses people, and makes them think you are trying to blind them with science.
- Getting desperate. Like insincerity, people can spot fear at a distance, and don't like it.
- Being afraid of rejection. This can even stop people from trying to persuade in extreme cases.
- Not being prepared. You can't 'wing it' every time. Your audience will see through you, and will think that you value your time more highly than theirs.
- Making assumptions about your audience, and then not being prepared to reassess when new evidence emerges.
- Forgetting that the whole conversation is important. You need to engage in order to persuade, right from the beginning.

How to Use Core Values to Influence

1. Ensure that you have developed rapport with the person and understand where they are coming from.
2. Work out what 'core values group' applies to the person you are trying to influence. What do they want for them to move with you towards the goal? (See the Core Values Chart)
3. Design the message to sit well with their preferred core value.
4. Have the message in specific and positive terms, that can be measured based on sensory evidence, and is results oriented.
5. Sell the message calmly and with enthusiasm. If they argue, you haven't hit their core value.
6. Listen to any objections, and deal with them as they arise.

References:

Coaching handouts from Sandar:

Building Rapport - <http://sandar.com.au/Documents/BuildingRapportHandout16Mar16.pdf>

Motivating through Core Values - <http://sandar.com.au/Documents/ContextContentValuesInChange16Mar16.pdf>

Motivation & Values Chart - <http://sandar.com.au/Documents/MotivationAndValues17Mar04.pdf>

How you view the world - <http://sandar.com.au/Documents/OrganisationalFramesWorksheet16Mar15.pdf>

Emotional Intelligence Elements - <http://sandar.com.au/Documents/EmotionalIntelligenceWorksheet15Mar16.pdf>

Covey, Stephen R. (2004). *The Eighth Habit*. Free Press, London.

Fisher R. and Ury, W. (1997). *Getting to yes: negotiating an agreement without giving in*, 2nd edn, London: Arrow.

Gillen, T. (1999). *Improve your powers of influence*, London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Laborde, Genie Z. (1998 reprint). *Influencing with Integrity*, Crown House Publishing.

McCrae, B. (1998). *Negotiating and influencing skills: the art of creating and claiming value*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Mortensen, Kurt, (2008). *Persuasion IQ: The 10 skills you need to get exactly what you want*, AMACOM/American Management Association, New York.

Shell, G.R. (1999). *Bargaining for advantage: negotiation strategies for reasonable people*, London: Penguin.