

# Influence Others

As a manager, you will be required to influence others to accept or support new proposals, ideas, changes, and initiatives. This takes skill, patience, and a commitment to understanding what motivates people and what they value.

To successfully influence people, you must first take the time to build support. You

can do this by creating and maintaining relationships with others who can assist you in achieving your objectives or from whom you may want to gain buy-in later. Keep in mind that people enjoy and trust relationships when they feel appreciated and heard, and when they believe that their own interests matter to you.

**In this chapter, we will cover the following areas:**

- ▼
  - ▶ Exercise good judgment and timing
  - ▶ Readily command attention and respect in groups
  - ▶ Know which battles are worth fighting
  - ▶ Identify the agendas, concerns, and motivations of others
  - ▶ Anticipate the positions and reactions of others accurately
  - ▶ Generate enthusiasm for ideas by tapping into shared values
  - ▶ Know whom to involve and when; build coalitions or alliances
  - ▶ Give compelling reasons for ideas
  - ▶ Ensure that your positions address others' needs and priorities
  - ▶ Prepare appropriate influence strategies
  - ▶ Promote or assert your own positions and ideas with confidence and enthusiasm
  - ▶ Hold firm to your own position when necessary
  - ▶ Negotiate persuasively
  - ▶ Win support from others; get them to take action
  - ▶ Influence and shape the decisions of upper management

## Exercise good judgment and timing

*Remind people to choose a moment when others have time to listen attentively before they launch into an important topic.*

Requesting resources during budget cuts, criticizing the work of someone who stayed up all night to finish it, and pointing out that you warned of a consequence that just occurred are all examples of poor judgment and poor timing. Some people are so concerned with demonstrating that they were right, or so sure they know the best way, or so oblivious to what others think and feel that they harm themselves with their poor judgment and poor timing. These people are often seen as abrasive or insensitive. To avoid this fate, consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Recognize that timing is important. Your message may be the right one, but it won't be received well if it is delivered at the wrong time.
- ▶ Before delivering your message, ask yourself: How will others feel if I say that? or What will others think of me if I say this?
- ▶ View your comments or requests in the context of the situation. Here are some examples of poor judgment and poor timing:
  - ▷ Telling the leader of the organization's quality effort that the quality program is just a new fad.
  - ▷ Commenting that the organization is not truly committed to diversity at a meeting announcing a new diversity program.
  - ▷ Disagreeing with an idea just to generate discussion or analysis when the decision has already been made and no amount of discussion will change it.
- ▶ Realize that it is better to praise people publicly and criticize them in private. If you criticize someone in a large meeting, it will become an ego issue. A private conversation allows people to modify their positions.
- ▶ Pay attention to the cultural aspects of positive and negative feedback. In some cultures, it is considered rude to compliment others in public.



### Readily command attention and respect in groups

▼ If you express yourself well, you can capture people's attention. If you follow through on your commitments, you can earn their respect. Consider the following suggestions:

*Recommend that people practice giving persuasive presentations in front of others in order to get useful feedback.*

- ▶ Determine your typical behavior in group settings. What kind of contributions do you make? Do you simply agree with people, or do you make suggestions and ask questions?
- ▶ In addition to speaking up more often, demonstrate enthusiasm and confidence when you state your opinions. Don't hesitate to voice your thoughts or to label them as your own. Find ways to ensure that other group members take your contributions seriously and consider them when making decisions.
- ▶ Use effective eye contact and speak to all individuals in the group.
- ▶ Prepare for meetings. Knowing the points you want to make and how to state them will make you more confident and persuasive.
- ▶ Look for opportunities to lead groups. Volunteer to lead a task force or project group, and try some new techniques to increase your impact. To get a feel for how effective your techniques are, ask people in the group for feedback.

### Know which battles are worth fighting

▼ *Ask people to keep a log of the conflicts they engage in and rate the seriousness of each. Remind them to let go of small problems.*

Managers who have to win every issue, even at the expense of other people, reduce their overall effectiveness and diminish their credibility in the organization. Because they are so busy advocating their own agendas, they are not sufficiently aware of the needs or concerns of others. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Ask others about any conflicts in which they believe you are unwisely invested. Talk with your peers about the price you are paying for this involvement.
- ▶ Solicit feedback about whether you frequently get into conflicts that others believe are unimportant or costly to you, your team, or your relationships with others.



- ▶ Learn to catch yourself before you get locked into a conflict. Here are some signs that you are emotionally involved in a conflict:
  - ▷ Your voice gets louder.
  - ▷ You feel angry or hurt.
  - ▷ You talk a long time or explain your point of view over and over again.
  - ▷ You feel challenged or judged.
  - ▷ You feel frustrated, irritated, or fed up.
  - ▷ You say hurtful or judgmental things, such as "I'm sorry that you seem incapable of understanding this situation."
- ▶ Look for a role model—someone who chooses the right battles. Observe what the person does that you could emulate.

### Identify the agendas, concerns, and motivations of others

Before you can influence people and bring them together, you need to know what drives them. As you build relationships, you learn more about what people want to accomplish and what motivates them. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Identify your stakeholder groups: customers, shareholders, employees, suppliers and vendors, strategic partners, the community at large, and other groups.
- ▶ Periodically review and update your knowledge of each group. For example, learn what their goals are for the year, what business they're trying to bring in, obstacles they face, and recent successes. Compare the needs, preferences, and expectations of each group to see where they overlap and where they conflict.
- ▶ Look for common expectations across stakeholder groups. For example, some groups may expect products and services to be of the highest quality. Others may expect the organization to have sound management and planned growth.
- ▶ Develop strong relationships with representatives from each stakeholder group. Meet frequently with them to keep up to date on their issues and concerns.

*Ask people to identify what would influence an individual you both know. Compare this with your own understanding of that individual.*

## Influence Others

- ▶ Try to understand a situation from each group's point of view. Even if you think you have a thorough understanding of what motivates them, confirm your assumptions by talking to them. This will help you uncover details that you might not have known and develop a better understanding of the nuances of the situation.

**The following ideas will help you dig beneath the surface to discover what motivates people's behavior.**

*Ask tactful yet direct questions.*

- ▶ What is the personal impact if we proceed on this?
- ▶ What is the worst that could happen to you in this?

If you listen without judging, they may share one or two sensitive issues. Remain silent and wait for an answer to show your interest is sincere.

*Offer tentative hypotheses.*

- ▶ I imagine that if we go that route, your team will take some heat.
- ▶ When we've done this in the past, it hasn't always reflected well on those who had to make the call. Let's see what we can do to avoid any collateral damage to your area.
- ▶ If I were in your shoes, I know I'd be concerned about what's going to happen to me.

By floating some potential issues and showing interest, you make it safer for them to acknowledge their concerns and perhaps offer more.

*Observe them carefully and reflect on their reactions.*

Because you always have to assume that there is more than what they are saying, watch carefully to see what type of ideas they support or reject. Consider what they stand to lose or gain.



- ▶ Communicate with people throughout the organization. Take a break from e-mail-only communication. Take the time to walk through the halls and stop to chat with your direct reports and others. Ask them how their work is going, what their concerns are, and what changes and improvements they would like to see.

### Anticipate the positions and reactions of others accurately

Anticipating accurately how people are likely to react to your proposal or idea is often key to influencing them successfully. You won't be caught off guard or ill prepared, and you will have a better chance of making your case despite reluctance or resistance. For example, if you know that your manager feels strongly about a particular topic, you can present ideas in a way that shows recognition of and alignment with your manager's position. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Regularly discuss work-related topics with your colleagues. Take time to invite them to lunch or for coffee so you can talk in an informal environment.
- ▶ Keep notes on what you learn so you will remember where others stand on particular issues and what their needs, goals, and agendas are.
- ▶ Before presenting a new idea or action plan, determine whose support you absolutely need to have. Talk with individuals who work with those people or review your past experience with them to determine what you need to do to win them over.
- ▶ Meet with peers or higher-level managers who seem knowledgeable about others' positions to learn more about how they "read" people and gather useful information.
- ▶ To track how people view your proposal, use the chart below. Fill in the name of a person or group, and a short note about why support your proposal, are neutral about it, or want to block it.

*Ask people whom they consulted to learn how an individual might be influenced. Discuss why this is helpful.*

Support	Neutral	Block

**Generate enthusiasm for ideas by tapping into shared values**



People want to do more than go through the motions—they want to do work that matters. When you appeal to deeply held values and goals, your words and ideas resonate with people. They intrinsically understand that your proposal not only will help the organization, but also will help them live out their values and pursue their goals. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Convey your enthusiasm—it will inspire and motivate others.
- ▶ Learn about the values of the individuals on your team. As a group, come to a consensus on your shared values. Note where individual values are aligned and where there are differences.
- ▶ Create an environment in which people can live out their values. Make it a place where people identify and discuss values, feel comfortable talking about values in group situations, and have a process for working out issues in a way that recognizes and honors values.
- ▶ When you present your ideas to an audience, refer specifically to your shared values. Make the connection clear. For example, your proposal might address the fact that:
  - ▷ People feel strongly about developing state-of-the-art expertise in their area.

*Ask people to make a list of what key individuals value. Review the list and offer feedback.*



- ▷ People want to deliver superior products that create high customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- ▷ People want to serve a segment of the local community.
- ▷ People want to create products in an environmentally friendly way.
- ▶ People are encouraged by stories of other people's successes. Tell stories about people who created a value-centered workplace. Describe how people clearly defined their values and focused on what mattered to them.

### Know whom to involve and when; build coalitions or alliances

▼  
*Arrange for people to work with others who influence in ways different from their own. Challenge them to try new influence behaviors.*

At times, you need to band together with other leaders to generate sufficient support for your ideas. Proactively meeting with people to explain your ideas and initiatives can help you win support at the beginning of an initiative instead of trying to change opinions after the fact. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Identify whom you would like to include in a coalition or alliance. Look beyond your immediate work environment to the larger system. For example, consider involving people who contribute to the same core business processes you do, internal and external customers, vendors and suppliers, and people from sales and marketing.
- ▶ Be clear about why you want to form a coalition or alliance. Have a specific purpose and goal. Know why it makes more sense to approach the issue as a group than as individuals.
- ▶ Work together to decide the role of each group within the coalition or alliance. You should know what is expected of each group and what they will contribute to the effort.
- ▶ As each new group joins the coalition or alliance, ask them if they know of other groups that might be interested so you can invite them as well.
- ▶ Leverage the strengths of the coalition or alliance. Use diverse perspectives to generate stronger ideas and refine them. Extend your reach by asking each group within the coalition or alliance to contact everyone within its sphere of influence.



- ▶ Work out disagreements in the group before you communicate your ideas broadly. It will be better if you present a united front. This doesn't mean that you won't have a range of perspectives, but everyone should agree on the basic message and purpose.
- ▶ As a group, decide who will take the lead in communicating the message. You may choose to present as a group or to send representatives from each group in the coalition or alliance.
- ▶ Meet periodically with the broader coalition or alliance to discuss your efforts and progress. Determine whether you need to alter your plans or activities. Also, renew your commitment to achieving your stated goals.

### Give compelling reasons for ideas



Some people are impressed by a strong, logical argument, while others are swayed by a vigorous, impassioned personal appeal. To be most compelling, adapt your message and your style to suit the audience and the situation. Consider the following suggestions:

*Remind people that logical persuasion is only one method of influencing.*

- ▶ Before presenting your ideas, study your audience.
  - ▷ What is important to your audience? What are their main concerns about your message?
  - ▷ How will your message benefit them?
- ▶ Conduct informal discussions with members of your target audience to explore their understanding of the issue. Use what you learn to tailor your message to meet their needs and concerns.
- ▶ Make sure you're prepared before you talk to people. Identify your key messages and the supporting material for each message. Be sure to address any concerns you uncovered during your discussions.
- ▶ Put your ideas in a logical order that is easy for people to follow. In general, the simpler you can make the message, the better. You can add more detail as people ask questions.
- ▶ Give a brief introduction before you present your ideas. For example, "I've asked everyone to meet today to talk about next year's marketing



strategy. I have three ideas I want to share, and then I would be interested in getting your input.”

- ▶ When you deliver your ideas, pay attention to the reaction of your audience. Do they appear engaged? Are they asking questions? Look for signs that they are interested in what you are saying and want to know more.

### Ensure that your positions address others' needs and priorities

▼ Situations do not have to turn into zero-sum games. If you pay close attention to the needs and priorities of individuals and groups within the organization, you can find ways to tie your positions to theirs and create win-win results. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ List all the people your proposal would affect. Begin with the most obvious groups and individuals, and then move outward to the larger system in which your group works.
- ▶ Meet with people from each group on your list to talk about your idea, request, or proposal. Learn more about their needs, interests, and concerns. What is important to them? What are their main concerns? How would they like to work with you and your team?
- ▶ If your idea or proposal will cause problems for others, ask these questions:
  - ▷ Why is it a problem? What could be done to alleviate the problem?
  - ▷ What would make the extra trouble worth it to them?
- ▶ Influence gained by exchange is cooperative rather than adversarial. Once you have assessed other people's interests and needs, find something you can offer them. Determine the value of what you are asking them to do and offer something that is (at least) of equal value to them. If they accept your offer, everyone will win.
- ▶ Compile a thorough inventory of what you can legitimately offer to others at your level, and at other levels in the organization. List your offerings in several categories, including power, recognition, money,

*Ask people to explain the point of view of someone they want to influence. This will help them come up with ideas the other person will support.*

fame, opportunities, learning, and inclusion. Examples of what you might offer are:

- ▷ The use of equipment or personnel to help with a particular project.
- ▷ Access to information.
- ▷ Active support for an idea or request.
- ▷ Public praise.
- ▷ Genuine appreciation.
- ▷ A promise to return the favor in the future.

### Prepare appropriate influence strategies

Building a broad base of support within and across work groups, functional areas, and organizations is beneficial and often necessary to obtain the level of influence you need for a particular proposal. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Raise your visibility within the organization. Identify five to ten key people who are necessary for your success and invest time building rapport with each person. Influence is often as much a function of who knows you as of whom you know.
- ▶ Build positive relationships with your colleagues. Don't wait until you need something from them to show an interest in their ideas, goals, and concerns. Take a genuine interest in them now.
- ▶ Understand what is important to the people you're trying to influence. You need to know what motivates them, what concerns them, what they're trying to accomplish, and what persuades them.
- ▶ Approach people who share your viewpoints and suggest that you join forces to advocate for your position. Brainstorm ways you could work together and support each other.
- ▶ Recognize that influencing techniques do not work instantaneously; you probably won't change people's minds during a single meeting or conversation. Instead, progressively move people toward accepting your idea.

*Discuss people's strategies to influence others in order to get approval on a solution. Talk through their rationale and approach.*



- ▶ Use a range of influencing styles, including:
  - ▷ *Networking*. Identify people who can support you, especially opinion leaders, and build relationships with them. Include people from inside and outside your organization.
  - ▷ *Pie making*. Increase the scope and value of solutions so all parties will benefit. Find solutions that exceed the expectations of all parties.
  - ▷ *Brokering*. Facilitate win-win exchanges of goods and services.
  - ▷ *Banking*. Keep track of your assets and the holdings of people around you as you influence and negotiate.
  - ▷ *Leveraging power and resources*. Use status, information, services, and scarce goods to gain greater influence.
  - ▷ *Inspiring*. Appeal to people's values, interests, and concerns.

### Promote or assert your own positions and ideas with confidence and enthusiasm

▼

*Provide feedback about verbal or nonverbal behavior that diminishes people's influence when they're delivering a message.*

If you want to engage, motivate, inspire, captivate, energize, or convince people, you need to present your ideas with confidence and enthusiasm. Your ideas deserve the best delivery you can give them. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Increase your confidence by becoming well versed in your topic. Be ready to talk about it both broadly and in detail, and to answer a wide range of questions.
- ▶ Clarify your purpose for sharing your ideas. People need an overall sense of what you're talking about and why they should listen to you. If you don't have a clear purpose, people may understand your points but fail to understand why you're making them.
- ▶ Show your confidence by talking about how people will benefit from your idea. Talk about how it connects to other initiatives, both present and future. Tie your idea or solution to an already acknowledged problem.



- ▶ If you do not show enthusiasm naturally or easily, choose words that will emphasize your message. Use words that are more dramatic and powerful than you would generally use to express your excitement about the idea.
- ▶ Study how several leaders present their ideas and positions, how they respond to challenges and tough questions, and how they show boldness and confidence. Practice using some of their methods.
- ▶ If you don't feel confident or enthusiastic about your idea, determine why and resolve the issue. Otherwise people will pick up on the contradiction between your words and your attitude.
- ▶ Use nonverbal actions that show your enthusiasm. Project your voice, smile more, and use broader gestures.
- ▶ Don't lose momentum and energy in your argument by getting bogged down in details. Give people the overall picture, and get into more detail as you answer questions.

### Hold firm to your own position when necessary

As a leader in your organization, you are probably an advocate for individuals, groups, ideas, initiatives, programs, and issues. When you face opposition, your people count on you to hold firm. Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ When you defend your position, monitor your nonverbal actions. People will believe what you do more than what you say. If you appear to be uncertain, they will keep trying to change your mind. If you appear to be confident, they will be more convinced that you will hold firm.
- ▶ Recognize that even though people may respect your view, they will feel compelled to try to modify it, especially if they disagree with you.
- ▶ When you encounter resistance, find out why the person or group objects to your position. Set up a meeting to learn more about their views. Focus more on understanding their views than on explaining yours.

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### Negoti

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*When you see people being too forceful in an attempt to get their own way, let them know this is causing others to resist them.*

- ▶ After you have done all you can to understand opposing viewpoints, hold firm when:
  - ▷ You feel that you have all the essential facts or input needed to make a decision.
  - ▷ You believe that the decision is fair to all the stakeholders involved.
  - ▷ You believe it is consistent with other policy decisions.
  - ▷ You believe that acquiescing would result in an action that is unethical, unsafe, illegal, or entirely inappropriate in the workplace.
  - ▷ You are convinced that any other decision would be harmful to the organization, your team, your customers, or the quality of your product.
- ▶ If you are the decision maker, send a clear message that this is your final decision on the matter. Do not leave others with the impression that you are open to further discussion. You can harm your integrity if you claim that this is your final decision and then back down later.

### Negotiate persuasively



Effective negotiation depends on a number of factors, including preparation, knowledge of the other person's position and needs, and creativity in coming up with alternative solutions. The following techniques can help you improve your negotiation skills:

- ▶ Before presenting your point of view, think about and investigate others' positions and needs. What is important to them? What are their goals? What can you do for them? The answers to these questions will give you the information you need to frame your argument during the discussion.
- ▶ Take the time to examine the pros and cons of both sides. Too often in the attempt to persuade, people argue the advantages of their own position and the disadvantages of the alternative. They inevitably get nowhere because they are simply not communicating. Be willing and prepared to discuss and accept both the pros of others' arguments and the cons of yours. Use the chart below to assist you in assessing all positions:

*Listen to a person who is trying to influence others. Would you be influenced? Why or why not? Discuss your perceptions.*

	Pros	Cons
Position A		
Position B		
Position C		
Etc.		

- ▶ Talk with others who have dealt with the people with whom you will be negotiating. Find out what tactics have and have not worked in the past.
- ▶ Know what you want from three perspectives: what is absolutely necessary, what is ideal, and what you would be willing to give up.
- ▶ Be prepared to bargain, barter, and trade to find an agreeable exchange. Think about the resources you have to offer that would be of value to each person or group you want to persuade.
- ▶ Go into a negotiation with the perspective that the other side is your ally rather than your enemy. Thinking about dealing with an ally can help you look for solutions that benefit both of you.
- ▶ In negotiation meetings, listen carefully to what others are saying. Try to discern the needs behind their requests. If you successfully identify their needs, you can better generate alternatives from which you both can benefit.
- ▶ Refrain from getting into a win-lose discussion in which the only alternatives are for one of you to benefit and one of you to lose out. If the discussion reaches that point, note this fact and communicate your desire for both or all of you to get something out of the agreement you reach.
- ▶ Be careful not to burn your bridges. If you succeed at the expense of others, don't be surprised when future attempts to influence these



- people fail, or when they take advantage of an opportunity to benefit at your expense.
- ▶ Draw out information by using open-ended questions (questions that call for more than yes and no answers) to facilitate dialogue.
  - ▶ If you are presented with new facts, continue the discussion until you have a clear understanding of this information or, if appropriate, postpone the meeting and take time to get up to speed before you meet again.
  - ▶ Avoid becoming emotional or defensive.
  - ▶ Prepare for the possibility that no decision will be reached. Create a list of actions you could take if you fail to reach agreement.
  - ▶ Don't be too committed to reaching an agreement quickly. Some alternatives may not yet be readily apparent.
  - ▶ Be willing to modify your position if your needs can be met through an alternative solution that will better meet others' needs as well.

### Win support from others; get them to take action

▼  
*In a role play, challenge people's positions to see how they respond and how they incorporate your opinions.*

Gaining support from others is a skill that can take time and practice to hone. Good ideas are often not enough to get others to accept your point of view. If you find that you don't get support for your ideas as often as you'd like, consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ Ask someone you trust in your organization for input on your ability to win support. Have this person watch you in situations in which you are attempting to gain others' support. Get feedback on how you came across and what you could have done differently.
- ▶ If you feel comfortable, ask for feedback from the people who did not support you. What were their concerns? What could you have done that would have swayed them?
- ▶ Observe people in your organization who seem particularly skilled at getting others to take action. What techniques do they use? What do they do when they run into roadblocks? How do they state their arguments? What appeals to you when you listen to them?



- ▶ Incorporate some of the most effective techniques you've observed into your influencing efforts and see how they work for you. Take care not to choose a technique so far out of character for you that you won't be able to use it effectively. Not all techniques work for all people.
- ▶ Before presenting your idea, explain it to a few trusted colleagues. Get their input on its feasibility, and encourage them to challenge you on the various aspects of the idea. Use this information to analyze aspects you might have overlooked.
- ▶ Be aware that your speaking style directly affects how convincing you can be. Record yourself as you practice presenting your idea and ask yourself the following questions:
  - ▷ Are my tone of voice and inflection consistent with the meaning of my words and the intention of my message?
  - ▷ Does the pace of my speech facilitate understanding?
  - ▷ Are my enthusiasm and liveliness appropriate for the topic and setting?
  - ▷ Are my words clear enough for others to understand easily?
- ▶ If you want others to support your efforts, reciprocate by supporting their ideas and objectives whenever possible.
- ▶ Take the time to get to know higher-level managers and people in different functions. Volunteer for a cross-functional committee or project so that other managers can get to know your ideas and experience your enthusiasm firsthand. Find ways to stay in touch with these people after the committee has disbanded or the project is over and build relationships that benefit both parties.

### **Influence and shape the decisions of upper management**

One of the most important areas in which to focus influencing efforts is upper management. The ability to win the interest and support of your manager and his or her peers is a critical skill to have. To develop your skill, consider the following suggestions:



*Enable people to attend meetings with upper management so they can see issues, interactions, and influence strategies at work.*

- ▶ When you propose an idea or action to upper management, be clear about how it will benefit the organization—how it will help solve a problem, cut costs, increase return on investment, decrease turnover.
- ▶ When you see that a decision from higher-level management might have a negative impact on your area, let your manager know and cite tangible consequences.
- ▶ Watch what is important to upper management. Look for ways to spot opportunities important to the company. Strategize with your manager.
- ▶ Meet with your manager periodically to let him or her know what you are doing, and to hear about issues that concern upper management.
- ▶ Use time wisely. When you meet with busy higher-level managers, keep your explanations brief and focused. Don't burden them with details they do not need, decisions you can make, or problems you can solve. Instead, provide your manager periodic, condensed updates on your work groups' activities.
- ▶ Find a mentor higher up in the organization who can help you learn to influence those with more authority than you. Mentors may have insights about norms or general techniques, suggest tactics specific to certain individuals you will encounter, or connect you to networks that would otherwise be closed to you.
- ▶ Be willing to make appropriate concessions. People's trust in you will grow when your initiatives benefit the entire organization, not just your own area. Your manager will be more willing to give you what you want if he or she sees that you have a balanced perspective about what is best for your area and what is best for the company.