

INFLUENCING OTHERS WHEN YOU'RE NOT THE BOSS: TECHNIQUES FOR GETTING THINGS DONE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

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It's easy to get things done when you have the authority and/or power to simply require it of others. It takes talent, intelligence, creativity, persistence, and huge amounts of persuasion to get things done without authority. Nonetheless, people in organizations are often given responsibility for producing something yet they are not accorded the authority to simply require it of others. It is in these situations that techniques for effective influence are needed to produce results. Fortunately, the techniques have been investigated, defined, articulated, tested, and have been shown to triumph in a wide variety of work situations. So, don't influence without purpose – do it right! And get something done for your trouble. Here's how.

TECHNIQUE I: KNOW YOURSELF AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU – It is impossible to be effective at influencing if you aren't clear YOURSELF what you are influencing about. This seems to be a self-evident proposition, yet it is way too frequently overlooked. People waste enormous amounts of time influencing just for sake of it. What a waste! Focus your influencing on things that are meaningful, useful, or otherwise important to you. What do you want to get done, exactly? What specific part of it do you want someone else to help you with and what exactly do you want them to do to help? Now, once you're clear about these things, proceed with the influencing part.

TECHNIQUE II: KNOW WHAT YOU BRING TO THE PARTY – Others also try to influence from time to time. (You may have noticed.) When they do, for the sake of charity (and good business), see if you have some resource that could be used to get them to cooperate by doing something for them that they can't do for themselves. You don't necessarily have to actually use the resource to get them to stop; just pay attention to what it might be in case you want to use it later for bargaining. Of course, if you don't actually do something, you'll probably have to put up with more of their influencing.

TECHNIQUE III: KNOW THEM, THEIR RESOURCES, AND THEIR NEEDS – Before any effectiveness can be expected from influencing to get someone's attention or anything else from them, it is obvious that we must first know something about them, their resources, and what is important to them. People usually only respond to influencing over issues that mean something to them or over which they have some control. If they don't care about what you're sniveling about, or if they can't do something about the reason for your whining, then save your breath and do some more homework.

TECHNIQUE IV: CREATE AND STRENGTHEN TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS – As a church usher and philosopher (actually, I think he was a football coach) once said, "You have to make friends before you can use them." Having good relationships with other members of the organization, especially those who have some juice, is just good politics and smart practice. You never know when you'll need a friend. Take some time to get to know lots of people and be sure they come to know you as a trustworthy individual. Don't lie to them. Tell them only the truth. Keep your agreements with them. Change your agreements with them if you have to, but don't break agreements. Take risks with them by sharing relevant information about yourself that you would ordinarily keep quiet about. Avoid being judgmental about them even though you may give them straight-talking feedback from time to time. Be sure your

feedback is descriptive and not critical. If you make a mistake or let them down, immediately take the rap, apologize, and ask how you can make it up. Don't delay. Trust is a fragile thing. It's easier to keep it intact, than it is to win it back after it's gone. Once trust is gone, they won't want to listen to any of your influencing at all, ever, about anything. So, be careful.

TECHNIQUE V: MAKE FAIR DEALS – Get something for giving something. This is one of the most effective ways to get things done without having any authority. You have to be clear, however, about these things: What do you want to get done? (Refer to Technique I.) What can they offer you to help you get it done? (Refer to Technique III.) What can you offer that will be valued by them? (Refer to Technique II.) What evidence can you provide that your request for assistance is made for appropriate purposes? What assurances can you offer that you will keep your bargain in good faith? What signs of appreciation can you make that will show how you value them and the help they provide? (Refer to Technique IV.) Aim for a win-win outcome.

TECHNIQUE VI: USE FACTS, EVIDENCE, AND PERSUASION – Build your case for their helping you using the solid bricks of facts and evidence. Spice up your influencing with persuasive reasons, based on facts, that describe why they should provide the help you need. Show how they will also get something of value by helping you get done what you want to achieve – both of you will win.

WHAT IF THEY JUST WON'T HELP, ACT AS AN OBSTACLE, DON'T WANT A RELATIONSHIP, CAN'T BE TRUSTED, BREAK THEIR AGREEMENTS, USE THEIR POWER AND RESOURCES TO UNDULY BLOCK OTHERS, AND JUST AREN'T VERY NICE AT ALL? MOREOVER, WHAT IF THEY COMPLAIN ABOUT YOUR INFLUENCING EVEN WHEN IT'S DONE PERFECTLY!

TECHNIQUE VII: AVOID THEM – Find a different person who can provide the resources that you need and go use your influencing techniques on them. Skip around the block.

TECHNIQUE VIII: SURPRISE THEM – If you just can't avoid them, attempt a random act of kindness on the creep and see if, by some miracle, you get a glimmer of a positive response to your overture. Fan the flames of warmth with expert influencing and see how far you can get in your quest.

TECHNIQUE IX: OUT FLANK THEM – Join up with someone else who is sympathetic to your influencing, or at least to your cause, and who has equal or greater power than the creep. Approach the obstacle together and seek a peaceful resolution that includes progress on your mission.

TECHNIQUE X: LAST RESORT THREATS – “If this, then that” puts hard consequences up against their continuing to be a block to your getting something done. Be sure you're in the right; that your facts and mission justify the threat before you roll it out. Be sure the “that” is indeed a threat to the person and that you can deliver it effectively (otherwise it's just a hollow threat and you will have lots to complain about for a long time). Even with the threat, you may not get what you want. And, for sure, once you have quit influencing and used a threat, you can never expect to be trusted again by the other person involved. At best, this technique produces a win-lose outcome. It could produce lose-lose. This is the kind of situation that could give you lots of painful experience. Remember, experience which is what you get when you don't get what you want.