

Six Steps To Mastering The Art Of Influence

There is no argument that the power to influence is a skill that helps form great leaders and is highly sought after by executives and managers. This highly coveted skill is a vital stepping stone towards success and is often the reason people either make it - or fail.

People in positions of leadership automatically have some degree of power; however, the power of influence is not automatically granted to these leaders. Those that have mastered the power to influence can not only easily get people to follow orders but encourage them to deliver above and beyond expectations - happily.

There are six sources of influence that drive behaviour which can be used in conjunction with each other to help master the art of influence:

1. **Personal motivation**

The process of changing a person's behaviour is often difficult as change is uncomfortable and even painful while old behaviours are familiar and routine. Most people aren't motivated to do things that are uncomfortable or stressful, which is one of the reasons why most of these efforts fail.

So how do you motivate someone who isn't motivated? The simple answer is - you don't, because it is nearly impossible to get people to do something they aren't motivated to do. Skilled influencers know how to build personal motivation to encourage people to care by connecting new behaviours to an individual's core values.

2. **Personal ability**

Successful leaders understand there is more to influence than simple motivation, as new behaviours can be far more complex than they appear on the surface. Many problems stem from a lack of ability where individuals simply don't know the skills to carry out what is required.

The key to personal ability is to concentrate on skill building. Results show that an effective training program is at the heart of successful influence strategies.

3. **Social motivation**

There are few motivators that are as powerful as the approval or disapproval of friends and co-workers. These social influences often work to prevent change and discourage behaviour reform.

In the case of social motivation it is critical to get peer pressure working for you instead of against you.

4. **Social ability**

Many leaders fail to understand how much support, feedback and coaching is required in the process of changing behaviours. However, most leaders don't have the time to offer support to everyone in the organisation. In order to leverage their "social ability" influential leaders will invest their time with managers at every level of the company and a select group of opinion leaders.

By doing this it is possible to extend a leaders influence to every corner of the organisation, quickly and efficiently.

5. **Structural motivation**

It is difficult to change behaviour without effective and correct incentives as they are often the only way to separate serious priorities from vain hopes. Employees at all levels often won't support change if the change isn't seen to improve their lives in the form of opportunities, money, promotions or lifestyle benefits.

However, incentives should not necessarily be used to motivate in the initial stages as this may undermine people's intrinsic motivations. Begin with personal and social sources of motivation and then reinforce them with well-designed incentive systems.

6. **Structural ability**

We are often blind to the incessant and powerful force the environment exerts on our own and others behaviours. In such cases the solution is to change the environment to make bad behaviours more difficult and good behaviours simpler. Addressing the issues of workspace, input data and cues, tools and layout will enable the attainment of a work environment which stimulates good outcomes and eradicates problem behaviours.