

Top Tips

Influencing

What is influencing?

Often you will be in a situation where you want to change something or someone. You may want to get a colleague to change behaviour, or you may want your line manager to agree to your proposal. You need to make them want to change their point of view, and support yours. You cannot 'just tell them'; and influencing is not about using your power over the other person, or being aggressive and shouting at them until they do what you want, neither is it about manipulating or using underhand tactics.

Influencing factors

Influencing can be viewed as a combination of two factors;

Emotion or **Logic**

My agenda or **Your agenda**

- **Emotion** appeals to feelings and instincts, & is a high-energy style.
- **Logic** appeals to reason, and is a low-energy style.
- **My agenda** is one-way 'from me to you', and focuses on what I want.
- **Your agenda** is two-way, and starts with the other person's agenda

Combinations of these give four styles:

Your agenda	<p>Attracting</p> <p>'Imagine a massive order for top of the range machines being delivered into the customer's premises'</p>	<p>Responding</p> <p>'Do you want to examine the MFD before choosing to see how it meets the criteria you specified?'</p>
	<p>Asserting</p> <p>'If we can't reach my solution, I shall feel very let down'</p>	<p>Persuading</p> <p>'The figures elsewhere show sales increases of up to 25%'</p>
My agenda		
	Emotion	Logic

The key is to identify the best mix of these for each situation, and decide which style of influencing will work best to get you the result you want.

Does the person you want to influence:

- Prefer detail or big picture?
- React better to logic or emotion?
- Think linear (words and figures) or visual (pictures)?
- Respond better to a bullet pointed list, or a flow chart?
- Rather listen to you talking or have a document to read?
- Feel better with a 'softly softly' approach or a 'tell it how it is' style?

Having answered as many of these questions and found out as much as you can, select an appropriate style or styles and work through the suggestions as a starting point. Prepare a fallback approach for if you find you're not getting the result you want.

Attracting

- Attracting works by conveying your enthusiasm for a point of view, so number one rule is to be enthusiastic about it!
- Describe what the 'big picture' looks like, and how you feel about it
- Envisage the end result yourself and think how you might describe it
- Work out what it will feel like when the goal is achieved

Responding

- Responding works by drawing out other peoples' points of view to establish their wants and needs. You will need skills such as:
- Questioning techniques: probe to get to the reasons for their opinion
- Active listening skills: reflecting, summarising, encouraging
- Establishing a common ground as a point for going forward

Asserting

- Asserting is about stating expectations and standing up for your own point of view, whilst respecting the other person's
- Be specific: stick to relevant points and specific examples, concentrate on the issue, not the person, and on facts and figures
- Set your own bottom line and stick to it; don't be made to give in
- Make your requirements (for action, funding etc) clear

Persuading

- Persuading is about working on the other person's agenda, and fitting in with what they want, so the first thing is to find out what that is
- Link into the other person's wants and needs using reason and logic
- Emphasise strong points, such as benefits to the team or individual
- Base your discussion on firm facts and figures

The influencing process

There are six stages to successful influencing:

- 1. Preparation**
- 2. The opening**
- 3. Say what you want**
- 4. Listen to and understand others**
- 5. Agree and summarise**
- 6. Review**

Depending on the style you use, you may want to swap stages 3 & 4, so that you listen to the other person before making your own case.

1. Prepare

Research the person you want to influence, both to plan the appropriate mix of styles and to identify the tactics you may need. Find out what makes them tick, and what's likely to work or not work.

2. The opening

Set the scene by outlining the situation that has made you want to influence the other person. Clarify their view of the problem, and get agreement that a change is needed. Use phrases like: 'What I see us doing together ...' or 'I feel we could improve....'.

3. Say what you want

Select the key facts to use and agree on the main point/s before introducing details. Dependant on the style you use, this may include proposing your solution and/or inviting the other person's. Use phrases like: 'I would like....' or 'I propose....., because....'.

4. Listen to and understand others

This will include gaining the other person's reactions to your proposal, and possibly their objections with it - clarify these through active listening and questioning skills. At this point, you may make an amended proposal to gain your result whilst taking the other person's objections into account. Use phrases like: 'What makes you feel that way about ...' or 'If I ... then would you...'. You may need to repeat this a few times before you agree.

5. Agree and summarise.

Agree by focusing on the common ground and moving towards a situation where both parties are happy with the outcome. Summarise at the end, to make sure that you are both agreeing on the same outcome, then commit to a plan of action to take matters forward. Use phrases like: 'So we're agreed then, that...' or 'So what we'll do, is you'll ... and I'll...'

6. Review

Is the effect you had the one you intended – if so, why? If not, why not? What will you do next time?

For related topics see Top Tips:

- **Assertiveness**
- **Communication**