

Building your influence as a Leader

For individuals wanting to develop their leadership skills



[Introduction – Influence, a crucial leadership skill](#)



[Techniques for Influencing and Persuading Others](#)



[Influence and Organizational Politics](#)



[Influencing Others as a Leader](#)



Introduction

Influence is a crucial leadership skill. Successful Leaders communicate, motivate and energize, as well as understand organizational politics.

- Why is it so hard to get people to agree to a good idea?
 - Why are some leaders constantly faced with challenges and objections?
- Reaching agreement as a leader does not mean you should manipulate or force people to accept your ideas and accomplish your objectives; there are ethical ways for leaders to successfully build influence.
- Leaders attempting to influence and persuade others are faced with the challenges of navigating through organizational politics. An effective leader recognizes that organizational politics can provide positive ways to influence others in order to accomplish goals.
- In this Mini Series, you will be guided through a few **techniques for effectively influencing a team to accept your ideas**.
- You'll be introduced to the **importance of political awareness** and the essential skills involved in **using positive politics**, and **avoiding negative politics when persuading others**.



Techniques for Influencing and Persuading

Others

Effective use of influence and persuasion will help you build trusting and respectful relationships.

Using Influence

As a leader, your job is to achieve organizational goals, but you can't do this by yourself. You need the help of others in your organization. You may have good ideas, but you can't force people to embrace them.

Effective use of influence and persuasion will help you build trusting and respectful relationships. And in turn, you'll be better able to secure support for your ideas and lead successfully through change.

Neither influence nor persuasion involves overpowering, bullying, pushing, or coercing to get what you want.

Together with exchanges, they're used to inspire, motivate, resolve conflicts, sell ideas, change values, establish vision, and educate and empower others.

Keys to Influencing Effectively

• **Communication** – As a leader, your communication skills impact your ability to influence others. The key to successful persuasion is to show how the achievement of what you want will also help others achieve something they want. In this way, the purpose, goal, or objective becomes a common one.

ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT

- Be careful.
- Clearly define what you want and why
- Then develop an objective to help ask for what you want.

E.g. "I am developing a prototype and need your engineering talent to make it operational" - Or "I need \$20,000 to implement this system. Can you back me up financially?"

CUSTOMIZING THE MESSAGE TO APPEAL TO THE PERSON YOU NEED TO INFLUENCE

- Appeal to the person you need to influence.
- To target your message effectively you need to know:
 - The person's interests.
 - The person's agenda.
 - What's important to them.
- WIFM – what's in it for me?
- Choose an appropriate format.

E.g. "Because this affects you, you will be pleased to know that the procedure will generate a log, allowing you to trace activity." - Or "As head of research, you may be interested to know that the government is generously funding innovation in this field"

USING QUESTIONS

- Open-ended questions:
 - Are used to gain information
 - Encourage discussion
- Closed-ended questions:
 - Require a definite answer
 - Are good for obtaining agreement

E.g. "Are you satisfied with that solution?" - Or - "What is it that makes you hesitate?"

ACKNOWLEDGING OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES

- Keep an open mind.
- Acknowledge, but move forward.

E.g. "I agree. However, reframed as an opportunity to fill a niche market, how does it look?" - Or - "You're right. But what about its potential as an incentive to perform?"

USING LOGIC AND EVIDENCE

- Helps prove your position is valid.
- Can persuade and help combat scepticism.
- Logic and evidence are hard to argue with.

E.g. "Recent polls show a shift in opinion. If we can act now, we can grab significant market share" - Or - "Our managers say the trial group got terrific results and embraced this procedure, so why not implement it throughout the company?"

PROVIDING OPTIONS THAT PEOPLE CAN AGREE TO WITHOUT COMPROMISING THEIR POSITION OR DIGNITY

- Useful way to influence a stakeholder who is resistant.
- Provides a way for people to commit without losing face.

E.g. "I have revised the plan to include a server, and you can take the lead on implementing it" - Or - "You've been pretty frank with your objections, but I think I have a way we can all get what we want".

RESOURCE

[Using Influence and Persuasion – Assessment Activity](#)

This activity will help you to determine your level of effectiveness in using the various techniques for influencing others.

Techniques for Influencing and Persuading Others – Take Away

- Influence is the ability to move people toward the achievement of specific outcomes. Your ability to influence others will impact your capabilities as a leader.
- Successful leaders are great communicators, have built relationships on respect, and derive the power to influence from the credibility they've established based on example and experience.
- Six techniques can help you influence others and gain their support – (1) Asking for what you want, (2) Customizing the message, (3) Using questions, (4) Acknowledging opposing perspectives but moving on, (5) Using logic and evidence, and (6) Providing options that people can agree to without compromising their position or dignity



Influence and Organizational Politics

Recognize actions that use politics to influence others in a positive way.

Organizational Politics are at work in your organization. Denying this or purposely abstaining from the use of politics will diminish your capabilities as a leader. Politics exist in every organization because the individuals and groups that make up an organization have different, and often competing, interests.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

- Politics are at work in your organization
- Politics exist because of different interests
- Stakeholders must find ways to cooperate and resolve conflicting interests
- Interplay between cooperation and competition gives rise to politics
- Everyone benefits if used right
- Political power is valuable

USING POLITICS IN A POSITIVE WAY

Positive use of politics builds:

- Relationships
- Credibility
- Influence
- Political power

POLITICAL POWER

- Capacity to influence using the political network.
- Politics can be constructive.
- Be open and honest, not deceptive and secretive.
- Relationships are an integral part of your political power.

NEGATIVE POLITICS

Be aware of destructive politics and avoid:

- Using politics to further the goals of one set of stakeholders at the expense of another
- Pitting stakeholders against each other
- Abusing position power

USING POLITICS IN A POSITIVE WAY

You can use politics to:

- Help remove barriers to team goals.
- Build alliances with influencers.
- Build support for goals.
- Maintain influence as a leader.
- Acting ethically is key to your capacity to influence others.

ABUSING POSITION POWER

You can abuse position power by:

- Using formal authority to make threats and manipulate others
- Using rewards and consequences to further personal, rather than team, goals
- Withholding information or deceiving

IMPORTANT FACTORS OF THE POLITICAL REALM

- Your organization's political frame
- Yourself

CREATING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

- Build one-on-one relationships.
- Mutual respect leads to reciprocity.
- To create strong relationships:
 - Understand the other person's point of view.
 - Make the support mutual.

PROMOTING UNIFYING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (tbc)

- Use your political power to promote unifying goals and objectives.
- Benefits include:
 - Minimizing competition between competing interests
 - Cultivating an attitude of doing what's best for organization
 - Moving from destructive politics to constructive politics.

USING POLITICS IN A POSITIVE WAY

You can use politics to:

- Help remove barriers to team goals.
- Build alliances with influencers.
- Build support for goals.
- Maintain influence as a leader.
- Acting ethically is key to your capacity to influence others.

CULTIVATING POSITIVE POLITICS

Leaders commonly apply two strategies to help them use political power appropriately for the good of the organization, and in positive ways:

- Create strong relationships.
- Promote unifying goals and objectives.

PRECAUTIONS FOR MAINTAINING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

- Don't get too personal
- Don't use manipulation
- Never foster team spirit based on animosity

PROMOTING UNIFYING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Choose a neutral goal
- Put shared metrics in place and objectives
- Promote shared standards
- Build a bandwagon

Influence and Organizational Politics – Take Away

- Competing interests make **politics a fact of life in organizations**.
- The competition for limited resources and the need to cooperate to achieve organizational goals introduces political behavior.
- **Politics can be positive or negative, and as a leader, you must be careful to refrain from using politics in a negative way.**
- **Avoid using politics to further the goals of one set of stakeholders at the expense of another**, pitting stakeholders against each other, and abusing position power.
- After you have examined your organization's political frame and how you're going to operate within it, you can **start using politics, in a positive way, to influence others**.
- Two strategies you can use are creating strong relationships and promoting unifying goals and objectives. Both will increase your influence and political power, and your leadership capabilities.



Influencing Others as a Leader

Use influence techniques to persuade others while avoiding the negative use of politics, in a given scenario.

Steps for influencing others

You can use a **four-step process to influence others**:

The scope of these steps is broad and there can be overlap between them. If you face resistance or need to do more work before moving forward with a stakeholder, you may even have to perform some steps more than once.

Think of these steps as overarching, and apply each as necessary.

1. PREPARE YOUR CASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define what you want - Identify the stakeholders - Prepare responses to points of resistance
2. ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be clear - Helps to create a unifying goal or objective
3. MAKE YOUR CASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customize the message - Provide options that people can agree to - Use questions to elicit or focus the discussion - Acknowledge opposing perspectives, then move on - Use logic and evidence
4. ASKING FOR COMMITMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess each stakeholder's readiness to commit. - If a stakeholder is ready to commit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Confirm their intentions o Clarify what they'll be responsible for - If a stakeholder is still hesitant or resistant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Figure out how to gain their commitment o Continue to make your case

Influencing Others as a Leader – Take Away

- As a leader, you use influence to gain commitment and support for organizational goals.
- Following the four steps can help you do this. The steps are to prepare your case, ask for what you want, make your case, and ask for commitment.

Techniques for Influencing and Persuading Others

Assessment Activity

This activity will provide you with an opportunity to assess your approach to influencing others. What you learn about yourself may help you become a better leader. You can use this assessment as a reference guide the next time you need to use influence and persuasion techniques.

Take a moment to think about times or situations when you use influence and persuasion in your work. Guided by the questions asked in this activity, reflect on your approach to influencing others.

Situations that require you to use influence and persuasion

Who are you trying to influence? List the individuals or groups of stakeholders and employees you try to influence.	
What types of things are you generally trying to change? Identify proposals you make for goals you want to achieve.	

Techniques, tactics, and strategies you use

Use the table provided to identify the techniques you use when influencing others, and to rate their effectiveness.

Ratings: 1 = Poor; 2 = Fair; 3 = Good; 4 = Very good; 5 = Excellent

Identify the techniques you use, and their effectiveness	Yes / N	Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you clearly define what you want and why you want it? Do you customize your message according to the person or people you are trying to influence? Do you use open-ended questions to gain information? Do you use closed-ended questions to obtain agreement? Do you keep an open mind and acknowledge opposing perspectives, but move the discussion forward? Do you use logic and evidence to support your position? Do you provide options people can agree to without compromising their position or dignity? 		1 2 3 4 5

Your approach

Is your approach effective?	
Can you think of weaknesses in your approach?	
When have you got yourself into trouble with something you've done or said?	
What can you learn from these situations?	

Your unplanned and perhaps uncontrolled reactions and behaviours

Are there times when your ego gets in the way? If so, when?	
Are there triggers to these inappropriate or ineffective reactions and behaviours?	
What can you do to control this?	

DISCLAIMER

The purpose of this document is to provide information on leadership. The information is not intended to provide advice about any legal, financial, accounting, engineering, tax, psychological, or other professional services. If legal or other expert assistance is necessary, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

This document is designed to educate and entertain. It includes information gathered from multiple sources, including personal and professional experiences.

The reader should use this document as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of information. It is not the purpose of this document to include every possible bit of information regarding this subject, but rather to complement and supplement other resources available to the reader. You are urged to read as much available material as you can find and to learn as much as possible about training and development; you are then encouraged to tailor the information to your individual needs. The suggestions offered may not be suitable for every situation. Likewise, the examples provided within are not meant to imply that the reader will achieve the exact, same results. Each instance will vary.

The author has made every effort to make sure that the information contained in this tutorial is reliable and accurate based on information available as of the publication date. However, it is difficult to ensure that all information provided is entirely accurate and up-to-date. Therefore, the author and the publisher accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions and specifically disclaim any liability, loss, or risk, personal or otherwise, that is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and/or application of any of the contents of this document.

While inspired by actual events, all case studies, events, locations, organizations, persons, and characters contained in this material are completely fictional. Any resemblance to any events, locations, organizations, persons, or characters, real or fictional, living or deceased, is entirely coincidental and unintentional, unless specifically noted. There is no guarantee that any websites or links mentioned herein will remain active. If you do not agree with, and do not wish to be bound by the above terms, do not read this document.

By using this information, you agree to the above terms.