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From the publication in 1936 of Dale Carnegie's best-seller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, to the marketing world's current exploitation of social media influencers to gain market share, the ability to influence has been considered key to success in business for decades. So, what exactly is influence and why does it matter? Merriam-Webster defines influence as "the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways." In the business world, that boils down to getting people to do what you want – not because you told them to, but because they are convinced it's the right thing to do. Doris Clark, author of *Entrepreneurial You*, says that when you have the ability to influence, "You get more done and you advance the projects you care about and are responsible for." According to Clark that translates into you being "more likely to be noticed, get promoted, and receive raises." And while the ability to influence can benefit you personally, it also helps those you lead because they feel collaborated with and listened to rather than ordered about. In today's world of myriad digital distractions, taking the time and energy needed to build influence is harder than ever. We, and our colleagues, work so quickly and are often stretched so thin that learning how to build constructive influence sometimes falls by the wayside. Below are a few suggestions that might help you build your influence as a leader in your company or firm. Building trust requires honesty and transparency. If your colleagues don't trust you—your intentions, your integrity, your consistency—then even the most compelling arguments will fall flat. People are more likely to be persuaded by someone they respect and believe has their best interests in mind. To build that foundation, start by practicing transparency. Share what you know. Be honest about what you don't. When you communicate openly and regularly, you demonstrate that you're not withholding information or pushing a hidden agenda. This builds credibility, a cornerstone of influence. Trust also grows when you invest in relationships without strings attached. Offer help. Celebrate others' successes. Ask questions about what matters to your coworkers. These seemingly small actions foster goodwill, which often translates into stronger support when you need buy-in on big ideas. Consistency matters here too. People need to know you'll show up the same way every day—reliable, respectful, and steady. As you establish yourself as a dependable team member, your influence will begin to grow naturally. Leadership skills training in New Jersey and other regions often starts with trust-building as a foundational skill. That's because without trust, no amount of persuasion techniques will work in the long term. One of the fastest ways to improve your influence is to listen—truly listen. When people feel heard, they are more likely to listen in return. Active listening signals that you value others' input, and it opens the door for more meaningful conversations. Effective listening goes beyond nodding or waiting for your turn to speak. It means giving your full attention, making eye contact, putting your phone away, and asking thoughtful follow-up questions. It means responding with curiosity, not judgment. When you listen deeply, you uncover what motivates others, what they care about, and what challenges they're facing. These insights allow you to tailor your message in ways that resonate, making your ideas more persuasive and your leadership more inclusive. Listening is also a core component of emotional intelligence, a critical skill for those who want to build long-term influence. Leaders who are in tune with their teams are more effective in guiding change, resolving conflict, and inspiring action. If you're working to develop influencing skills, start by improving your listening habits. You'll be surprised how much more influence you have when others feel truly understood. Consistency is a powerful and often underestimated element of influence. When your behavior, decisions, and communication are reliable over time, people begin to trust not only what you say—but how you'll show up in every situation. That trust becomes the bedrock of your influence. Consistency means showing up with the same level of professionalism, attention to detail, and follow-through across projects and conversations. If one week you're fully engaged and responsive, and the next you're distracted or disengaged, your credibility erodes. It becomes harder for others to depend on you, and as a result, they'll be less likely to support your ideas or initiatives. Consistency also applies to your values and how you treat others. If you hold yourself to a standard of fairness, respect, and accountability, people will notice—and they'll be more inclined to support you because they know where you stand. Being consistent doesn't mean being inflexible. You can evolve your ideas and grow as a leader while still maintaining a dependable presence. What matters most is that your core approach remains steady. If you're participating in influencing training or leadership development, consistency is a key area of focus. It's what makes influence sustainable over time, especially in high-pressure environments. Confidence is one of the most visible and immediate signals of influence. When you speak with clarity, stand behind your ideas, and demonstrate conviction, others are more likely to take your message seriously. Confidence creates a sense of leadership presence—an intangible quality that makes people want to listen, follow, and engage. But confidence isn't about being the loudest voice in the room. It's about preparation, poise, and clarity. When you take the time to research your ideas, understand your audience, and anticipate questions, you can present your perspective with grounded authority. That's the kind of confidence that earns respect and builds influence. It's also important to recognize the difference between confidence and arrogance. Arrogance shuts people down; confidence brings them in. A confident leader invites discussion, listens to others, and remains open to feedback. This balance allows you to advocate strongly for your position while still being receptive to new ideas—a combination that earns trust and expands your influence. If you're looking to grow your leadership influencing skills, confidence should be a focus area. This is often a central theme in leadership coaching and leadership skills training in New Jersey and beyond, where professionals learn how to speak with impact, manage resistance, and engage with both humility and strength. One of the misconceptions about influence is that it's about winning. In reality, some of the most effective influencing skills involve knowing when to yield. Great leaders understand that compromise is not a sign of weakness—it's a demonstration of strategic thinking and emotional intelligence. When you compromise thoughtfully, you show others that their perspectives matter. You communicate that you're focused on long-term outcomes, not just short-term wins. This makes people more likely to support you, collaborate with you, and offer their best ideas. It also builds goodwill, which pays dividends when you're advocating for bigger or more complex initiatives in the future. To use compromise effectively, choose your battles. Focus on what really matters. Look for shared goals. Identify areas where interests align. Stay flexible without losing sight of your priorities. Leadership coaching and influencing training often include practical exercises to help leaders develop these negotiation and compromise skills. When you know how to assess a situation, understand competing needs, and offer a flexible but firm approach, your influence grows. Being adaptable doesn't mean being passive. It means knowing when and how to give, so that progress continues and relationships remain intact. Influence isn't just about logic and strategy—it's also deeply personal. People are far more likely to be influenced by someone they like and enjoy working with. Being personable doesn't require you to be extroverted or overly social. It simply means showing warmth, empathy, and interest in the people around you. When you're approachable, colleagues feel more comfortable engaging with you, asking questions, and sharing their own ideas. This fosters stronger working relationships and opens the door to collaboration. Influence becomes easier and more natural when people genuinely want to work with you. Here are simple ways to build rapport: Greet people by name and take time for small talk. Express appreciation regularly. Be respectful of others' time and perspectives. Show genuine curiosity about your colleagues' ideas and experiences. A positive demeanor also helps when tensions rise. Leaders who remain calm, kind, and constructive in tough moments earn a reputation for emotional steadiness—something teams value and remember. If you're working to develop influencing skills, don't overlook the role of emotional connection. Leadership isn't just about strategy; it's about humanity. Being personable helps ensure your ideas are received with openness, not resistance. Influence Starts from Within. Influence is not about power plays or persuasion tactics. It's about building trust, communicating effectively, and leading with intention. The most respected and impactful leaders are those who influence through integrity, empathy, and consistency—not pressure or authority. By focusing on trusted relationships, active listening, consistent behavior, and confidence, you lay the groundwork for influence that lasts. Compromise and kindness reinforce that influence and make it sustainable. These aren't just personality traits—they are leadership skills you can learn, practice, and refine. At Loeb Leadership, we specialize in helping leaders at all levels develop the skills they need to lead with influence. Through leadership coaching, tailored influencing training, and leadership skills training in New Jersey and beyond, we help professionals unlock their potential and guide their organizations with clarity and impact. Ready to explore how to gain influence and lead more effectively? Our team can help you assess where you are today and design a path for growth. Because the strongest leaders don't force outcomes—they inspire them. More Guidance is within reach! Want to learn more about how to level up your leadership and influencing skills? Loeb Leadership offers leadership and executive coaching, extensive and customizable learning & development workshops, and OD & HR consulting. Our team of experts can help you find solutions. Reach out today and see what's possible! Leadership coaching can help you improve your influencing skills and provide you with practical experience and actionable strategies. Find out if you would be a good candidate for leadership coaching by taking our quick assessment below. This is a no-obligation assessment to get you thinking about where your strengths lie and what areas of your leadership could benefit from coaching. [1] Clark, D. (2017). *Entrepreneurial You: Monetize Your Expertise, Create Multiple Income Streams, and Thrive*. Harvard Business Review Press. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Do you aspire to be in the C-suite, leading people and driving change? If you do, you'll need to master the art of influence — a skill which, like any other, can be learned. Influencing skills are a set of skills that every leader should have. They can help you encourage your coworkers or your employees to listen to your ideas to reach company or department goals. Depending on your position, influencing skills can promote teamwork among employees you supervise and motivate them to put their best efforts toward projects you assign them. If you're not in a leadership position yet, working on your influencing skills could boost your chances of being considered for one. Use these skills to persuade your supervisor to consider your ideas for boosting sales or reducing operating costs, for example. When you put these skills to use after improving them, this also helps your supervisor see your potential as a leader. What Are Influencing Skills? Think about the kinds of skills you might need in order to effectively communicate with people, handle conflicts, or conduct negotiations. These are known as influencing skills, since they help you persuade others. With these, you can help your department, team, or individual employees increase their productivity. You can also use influencing skills to maintain a good work environment and reduce conflicts between employees. The following are some of the most useful skills successful professionals use to influence others at work. Interpersonal Skills When you establish a rapport or build relationships with others at work, you're using interpersonal skills. They help you communicate with others and understand them while building trust with them. With these skills, you can work better with other members of your team or colleagues. You can develop and improve several interpersonal skills, such as teamwork, flexibility, patience, empathy, and active listening. Understanding how to read others' body language is another interpersonal skill that is useful to have in the workplace. All of these skills make it easier to handle day-to-day interactions at work, as well as any complex problems that occur. Negotiating Techniques Being able to negotiate with others is a technique that allows you to reach a compromise with the other party that satisfies both of you. To do this, you might need to be flexible with your own ideas and be willing to consider theirs. For example, you might find a way to use both ideas, or you might use your idea on one project and theirs on another. Becoming familiar with negotiating techniques and practicing them at work can help you improve this influencing skill. Keep in mind that negotiating involves using several skills, such as effective communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, integrity, and persuasion. Conflict Resolution No matter how well people at work get along, conflicts can occur from time to time. Team members might come into conflict over how a project is handled, or supervisors might disagree on new policies. Being able to resolve conflicts takes considerable skill and influence. Staying impartial, being patient, keeping communication open, listening to both sides, and understanding each side's emotions will serve you to successfully handle conflicts that come up at work. Part of conflict resolution also involves helping both sides collaborate or compromise as needed. When you improve your conflict resolution skills, you'll be able to smoothly deal with minor and major conflicts that occur at work. Strategic and Persuasive Communication Having solid communication skills is a necessary part of maintaining influence at work. Being able to communicate with team members or colleagues in a persuasive way helps them understand your viewpoint, your ideas and goals. When you use strategic communication, you're persuading or convincing others to consider your ideas for achieving long-term goals for your department, team, or company. This type of communication involves being able to effectively communicate your intended outcomes and explain how to reach them. Why Do We Struggle With Influence? Failing to influence others can happen for several reasons. Using coercion instead of persuasion to try to get others to listen to you or do something for you, for example, often results in failure. Persuading others involves treating them with respect, while coercing others does not. Instead, coercion is more like manipulation. Relying on manipulation or coercion to influence others can have the opposite effect and cause them to refuse to listen to you, since these are not tactics that a leader would use. You might also fail at influencing others if you are judgmental or talk down to them rather than respecting them. Not being flexible can cause others to refuse to listen to you as well. For example, if you insist that a project be done your way without any input from others, this lack of flexibility can lead to a failure to influence others. Tips for Developing Influencing Skills Improving your influencing skills can help you advance your career and gain a leadership position. If you're already in this type of position, working on these skills can help you become even more successful and be an effective leader. You might be good at some of these skills, but keep in mind that there's always room for improvement. For example, you might work on using a different negotiating technique or conflict resolution strategy. When working on developing these skills, you can choose to focus on a certain one or do a bit of training in multiple skills at the same time. The following tips can help you improve or develop your influencing skills. Improve Your Emotional Intelligence Emotional intelligence refers to your ability to identify and manage your emotions, while also being aware of emotions in others. This can help you avoid letting strong emotions cloud your judgment or affect your reasoning when making important decisions and handling conflict. With greater emotional intelligence, you'll also be able to perceive other people's emotions better. When you can identify others' emotions, this can help you influence and encourage them. For example, being aware of others' emotions, such as anger or frustration, can help you resolve a conflict at work. You can improve your emotional intelligence in several ways, including practicing being an active listener and responding to conflicts rather than reacting to them. Other ways to work on having better emotional intelligence include using an assertive communication style instead of an aggressive one, maintaining a positive attitude on the job, and practicing self-awareness. When you improve your emotional intelligence, you'll be in a better position to influence others, whether you're trying to resolve a conflict or persuade others to use your ideas for a project. Do Your Research Taking time to do research can help you improve and develop influencing skills when dealing with others. You might explore understanding audience motivation in order to better persuade or influence others. When you research this motivation, you'll learn more about what inspires your audience, which can help you understand how to connect with them more effectively. Finding common ground or identifying mutual benefits allows you to form a connection with others and show them how your ideas can benefit them. When others think you know what you're talking about, they'll be more likely to listen to you and consider your ideas. Positioning yourself as an expert can help you achieve this and make it easier to convince or persuade others on a regular basis. Networking and Relationship Building Forming connections with other professionals through networking and relationship building are essential parts of improving influencing skills. Networking allows you to get to know other people in your industry, which can open doors and provide opportunities to influence others. Look for networking opportunities such as conferences or other events in your industry. Relationship building with people at work can help you gain influence within your department, organization, or team. Focus on establishing genuine relationships with colleagues or team members based on mutual respect and trust. You can work on building these relationships on a regular basis at work. Take a Professional Development Course Going back to school is a great way to work on your influencing skills. Some schools offer professional development courses that focus on specific areas or skills necessary to influence others. Through these courses, you can learn from experts in your industry and develop new skills that help you persuade others. For example, you might take professional development courses on Intentional Influence, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution or other courses that focus on improving communication with others. Other courses that can help boost your influencing skills include leadership skills courses and teamwork courses. Going through these kinds of courses can help you better understand the importance of being able to influence others in the workplace while also providing plenty of opportunities to improve these skills. Books and Resources Several books and other resources can help you improve your influencing skills. Some notable books to consider reading in your spare time include the following: You can also download apps that guide you through the process of working on these skills, such as the *Exercising Influence* app for iOS and Android. Apps and online tools offer convenient ways to improve your influencing skills at home or during breaks at work. Improving your influencing skills can take considerable time and patience. For more help with these skills, please contact the University of Minnesota College of Continuing and Professional Studies to get more information on our professional development courses. These courses in leadership, teamwork, communication, and other areas can provide you with additional help improving your influencing skills. Find a program that works best for you, depending on whether you're looking for online or classroom courses. Sources