

How to Influence with Integrity

“You build trust with others each time you choose integrity over image, truth over convenience, or honour over personal gain.”

- John Maxwell

Everyday in life we get the opportunity to influence others. In the work domain, this includes our peers, direct reports, our manager who may be the MD or CEO and our customers and suppliers.

The two extremes

Some of us react negatively to the thought of “having to influence” while others do this unconsciously – almost automatically – when the need arises.

On the other extreme, is the more politically motivated example where people do this in a very calculated and strategic manner.

Either ends of the extreme have their own drawbacks – from being invisible and looked over for projects to being seen as a political animal – without necessarily the follow through on delivery – that one needs to be weary of.

So what is influencing?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Influence as “the capacity to have an effect on the character, development or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.” And to be able to do this without exerting force or pressure.

Being able to influence or choosing not to be influenced is a necessary survival skill in business.

As a leader, unless you are able to influence others to buy your vision, you will not be gaining follow ship and full engagement from those you are leading.

As a team member, unless you can influence or stand up to others influence that are less than positively inspired, you will not be able to harness respect, good collaboration and sharing from others.

The old model of coercive and autocratic leadership – “do as you are told” no longer holds sway as it disempowers employees and managers alike. Not being able to connect with people and see them as capable and competent contributors of their teams and the organization is not only disrespectful but it will not motivate them to give their best!

Building relationship may not increase influence. But no-one increases influence without building relationship. - Dr. Mark Strom

So what are some things to be mindful of when influencing others?

The KEY is to Influence with integrity.

Be mindful of the following points:

1) The Greater Good

Ask yourself – “what is the bigger cause or greater good here?”

As a business leader, this means coming from a bigger picture or higher place of “advancing the cause” such as rolling out a vision, making a positive contribution, creating growth and opportunities – all of which benefit the individuals, team, organization and or community.

In other words, it is less about “you” and “your agenda” but more of a win-win outcome or one that will benefit more than just yourself. Obviously there will be some overlap here too.

The term Dharma as in the Hindu philosophy meaning “doing the right thing” captures the spirit well here.

Your orientation is one that is beneficial and not harmful. Think Hitler. He was a hugely influential leaders ...need I say more?

2) Values-driven

Knowing and living your values also helps in influencing with integrity and decision-making. Our values help us with our “true north” and helps us chart the course in challenging times.

Influencing with integrity means having a comfortable degree of alignment between your own values and that of the organization.

Clearly at times this will not be perfect but as per Richard Barrett who has been a leading proponent of culture work has said, 60% or more works.

3) Being authentic

Having worked with many great CEOs over the years, one thing I have come to know is that they value authenticity in their managers who are going to share their honest view even if this is divergent from the CEO’s thinking.

Or as an Executive Assistant, you may not have the power to change your manager’s thinking but you still can be true to yourself and speak your thoughts and feelings; not be chameleon like or blow with the wind.

Authenticity through being one’s reliable and consistent self helps build TRUST and RESPECT as people get to know each other and can rely on this knowledge to achieve mutual objectives faster. This becomes your BRAND.

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