

Influence

When working with people, the ability to get things done is important, as it requires influence regardless of one's position or authority.

Although we typically avoid discussing it in these terms, our ability to influence is crucial in accomplishing tasks. Whether it involves obtaining approval for expenses that exceed your budget or getting items included on the agenda for the next policy meeting, your capacity to influence is significant.

If you have seen someone without official authority achieve more than someone with a prestigious title, you have witnessed the power of influence. Similarly, even if you hold a position of authority, you may not feel powerful if your team does not view you as credible, relevant, or agreeable, resulting in minimal effort from them.

When faced with this situation, it is crucial to take a step back and identify the necessary adjustments that can be made to enhance personal influence. It is important to determine the actions that can be taken to increase one's ability to persuade and gain support from others.

Influence is derived from a range of sources, including expertise, credibility, visibility, and alignment with organizational objectives. These factors enhance one's ability to positively influence others.

In this training session, we will teach you how you can increase your level of influence. Afterward, you will have the opportunity test your knowledge by going through three scenarios. We will ask you for suggestions on how the people in the scenarios can become more influential and improve their situation. Throughout the lesson, you will learn:

- The factors that contribute to personal influence and strategies for developing it.
- The utilization of specific sources of personal power to enhance one's influence.
- The strategies for increasing influence and improving satisfaction in your work.

EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFLUENCE

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, influence is defined as the act or power of producing an effect without apparent force or direct authority. This relationship between power and influence is a crucial aspect of effective management.

In order to get things done, you need influence. The amount of influence comes from a combination of personal power and the work you do. Power and influence are closely connected. Just because someone seems powerful doesn't mean they are influential. However, for someone to be influential, they need to have some power.

It is an interesting dynamic to explore and one that you will likely encounter at work.

Power is often linked to negative activities, such as vengeful bosses and colleagues. Influence is also misunderstood and seen as manipulating people into doing things they don't want to do.

These notions have limited scope. Both power and influence can be utilized in productive and positive ways.

When utilized effectively, a significant level of influence can be seen as an indication of personal efficacy. Influential individuals often contribute to creating a favorable work environment and inspire others to excel in their work. As a result, individuals with influence are regarded positively within the organization, and others seek to be in their presence.

In reality, when individuals perceive a lack of control over decisions, issues can arise. This can result in frustration towards a system that disregards or rejects them, or a sense of apathy leading to giving up. Both reactions are detrimental to oneself and can cause others to disengage.

Insufficient influence leads to ineffective work. Excessive influence can result in abuses and also ineffective work. The ideal position is having enough influence to accomplish what is necessary. This is the empowered position you should aim for.

To establish a position of influence, one must employ strategies to build influence and effectively utilize various sources of power to achieve interpersonal influence.

INCREASING PERSONAL INFLUENCE

There are various sources of influence, including one's personal power, job position, and the type of work they do. By identifying where to focus one's efforts, it is possible to create a plan to enhance their level of influence, regardless of their title or job.

French and Raven's Bases of Social Power

In 1959, John JR French, JR and Bertram Raven published a theory on social and organizational power, where they identified five bases of power.

- **Expert** - Power is gained through knowledge, experience, and the ability to solve problems and make good decisions.
- **Referent** - Power comes from followers doing what the leader wants because they value the leader's approval and want to be more like the leader.
- **Legitimate** - Power comes from the position of leader, which entails the right to ask others to do something.
- **Reward** - the right to control pay raises, promotions, and other rewards that subordinates value.
- **Coercive** - has the right to punish others.

Expert power is a form of power that can be utilized to gain influence with individuals, regardless of one's position on the organizational chart.

Expert power is gained through possessing task-relevant knowledge or experience, which can be used to influence others. Building expert power requires dedication and effort, but the rewards are usually substantial.

It is important to be cautious about becoming too specialized, as this can lead to isolation. This is especially true if your expertise is not relevant to the main business of the organization or if it does not add value to the role you aspire to.

The consequence is that individuals may not perceive you as an essential part of the overall organization, but rather only in relation to a specific aspect. Please refer to the following discussion on how to establish centrality as a means of addressing this issue.

Charismatic Power

Charismatic power is a unique source of power that stems from socially desirable personal characteristics. It is often referred to as personal magnetism. Charismatic individuals possess confidence, assertiveness, and a certain presence that attracts others. Their strength of character, not arrogance, is what makes them stand out. The more positive attention and liking they receive, the greater their personal power and influence will be.

Building confidence, being passionate, and living a purposeful life are all factors that contribute to charisma. Additionally, adopting agreeable behaviors and improving one's clothing and grooming can also help build charisma.

Enhancing charisma can have its limits if you are not naturally charismatic. Charisma is something you either have or you don't. Using charisma as a strategy for gaining influence may not be suitable for everyone. Relying solely on charisma for influence may not be sustainable. Building substance in other ways is a better approach.

Building Personal Influence

Building power is one method of gaining influence, and there are other strategies that anyone can use to increase control in a given situation.

- **Good Work Ethic** – This is shown as a greater commitment than anticipated to the organization's success. Increasing your value to those in positions of authority and leadership will result in a higher level of personal influence. Putting in significant effort, working on important tasks, and paying attention to the details that senior managers may overlook are all strategies that can be employed to enhance your influence. These actions also often lead to increased personal responsibility, which is closely associated with influence.
- **Value Congruence** – This behavior aligns with the core values of the organization and is similar to referent power, where individuals who identify with influential leaders are granted more power. To establish personal influence, it is important to comprehend the organizational culture and collaborate within it to achieve objectives. When you behave in a manner that is consistent with corporate values, you are

perceived as more credible and legitimate, resulting in greater acceptance of your ideas.

- **Centrality** – Accessing information in a communication network establishes knowledge. More knowledge leads to greater personal influence. Being knowledgeable makes what you say and do more relevant and significant. Build a strong network and seek assignments that allow you to interact with people from various levels and departments in the company.
- **Flexibility** – This refers to the level of autonomy one has in accomplishing tasks. The ability to exercise discretion is directly correlated to one's perceived influence. Individuals who strictly adhere to instructions are not seen as having much power or influence. Seek opportunities to demonstrate initiative and explore creative approaches to problem-solving. Display critical thinking skills and the capability to make informed decisions in non-routine situations.
- **Visibility** – The degree to which leaders and influential people see your efforts is important. Demonstrating your competence to as many people as possible is beneficial. Building relationships with senior individuals in the company is even better. Participating in meetings and events where influential people are present is encouraged. Involvement in problem-solving committees is recommended. Increasing face-to-face communication and direct contact with senior individuals in the company is advised.
- **Relevance** – The alignment of your personal tasks with organizational priorities determines your level of influence. Financial and operational positions have more power and influence than administrative positions. Regardless of your job title, you need to demonstrate how your role contributes to the company's efficient operation.

Utilizing Your Power and Influence

To effectively utilize power and influence, it is essential to possess the skills to connect with others and garner their support. Despite having expertise, a prominent position, and extensive connections, if you lack the ability to build relationships and collaborate with others, your power becomes ineffective. The capability to engage others in working towards shared objectives is of utmost importance.

A effective approach for increasing influence with colleagues and subordinates is to utilize reason, which involves establishing commitment through a mutual understanding. Commitment is built by articulating legitimate needs and having trust in the positive intentions of others to collaborate with you.

Using reason involves persuading others by using facts, needs, and personal values as the foundation for your argument.

Your request has inherent value:

- "I would like you to ____ because it is beneficial/essential/aligned with..."
- "By agreeing to do this, you will meet your personal objectives."
- "The experts are in favor of my request..."

Your request aligns with their needs and values:

- "I require assistance. Can you help me?"
- "I am seeking your support based on our previous successful collaboration and mutual trust."
- "You have expertise in this area, and your assistance will greatly improve the outcome."
- "Your assistance is requested for the betterment of the community. "

Note: It is important to distinguish between persuasion, which involves presenting rational arguments, and manipulation, which is deceitful. Ensure that your appeal is straightforward and transparent, as being deceptive will not make you influential in the long run.

You can influence others by using an inspirational appeal along with a rational argument. People see you as influential and are already paying attention to what you say. When you combine influence with inspiration, you motivate people and build passion, excitement, enthusiasm, and commitment.

These are steps towards achieving success using the abilities and talents of a group. As an influencer, you can persuade people to consider switching to a new production system. They may not initially like the idea, but they will likely cooperate and contribute to a smooth transition. By providing inspiration and discussing the change with enthusiasm, and envisioning how the company will thrive, you are more likely to receive a positive and energetic response.

Effective work within an organization involves gaining power and influence and using them in a wise and beneficial manner for the organization. This leads to an increase in power and influence, creating a positive cycle.