

One of the defining characteristics of a great leader is the ability to influence people to dance to your tune without the use of a shotgun. Here Simon Sprowell shows how it can be done.

# The days of tell and do are long gone

**D**ale Carnegie wrote *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in 1936 and much of what he said then is still relevant today: get the other person to want to do what you want them to by arousing their desires. Talk in the terms of the other man's interest. Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view. Ask questions instead of giving direct orders. They're all gems from the Carnegie classic. The ability to influence others is unlikely to ever go out of fashion as a leadership skill.

It may often seem that we live in a world where those who are the most persuasive and influential are the most prosperous. Influencing others is the ability to consistently gain support for views and opinions and to achieve goals through the work of others.

The art of influencing – just like coaching – is becoming an increasingly critical leadership skill. With team members thinking much more for themselves and often not holding back in sharing their personal thoughts, beliefs and opinions, the days of tell and do are long gone.

Leaders must now engage others in the organisation and persuade them to act in a desired way to reach desired goals.

Leaders are becoming storytellers - gaining others' attention and imparting knowledge to them in a way they want to hear it.

Leaders are learning how to take people with them, get them interested and gain their support. In brief, an influential leader is likely to be:

- visible within the organisation with a strong presence
- persuasive and assertive in negotiations
- able to win people round to their view by using appropriate styles
- able to present arguments logically and face up to and resolve conflict
- able to engage different individuals or teams at every level of the organisation.

While much has been written on how to be a more influential leader, we believe there are some pragmatic actions leaders can take right here, right now.

## How to increase your influence

### 01. Know the individual

- What's their style?
- What's your style?

- How do these styles complement each other?
- Where are the glaring differences?
- What motivates the person you are dealing with, what are they passionate about?


### 02. Get organised

- a. Be very clear of the purpose of the meeting/conversation/interaction:
  - What do you hope to achieve?
  - What will good look like?
  - How do you want the other person to think, know and feel?
  - How will you feel at the end?
- b. Create a clear, concise and well thought through outline.
- c. Build evidence - facts and figures.
- d. Develop practical, simple, non-technical (if appropriate) examples.
- e. Frame and reframe your point/opinions:
  - Think about what's worked in the past and why.
  - What could you do differently and better?
  - Consider reason and emotion.
- f. Anticipate how your audience will respond:
  - What might their concerns be?
  - What alternative supporting arguments could you build?
- g. If it's a really important influencing conversation - plan time to have the conversation in full and leverage appropriate support from others

### 03. When you're face-to-face

- Revisit your preparation.
- Focus on the individual and keep "present".
- Watch the words, music (tone) and dance (body language) of the other individual. What's it telling you? What's yours telling them?
- Try reversing sides - think of points that support the other person's point of view - use this insight to tailor your communication to the individual's interests.
- Ask questions and seek to understand their point of view.
- Be compelling and consultative.
- Listen carefully; don't "reload" (listen while waiting to speak).

### 04. Afterwards

The conversation or interaction itself is just the start of improving your influencing skills. Personal reflection and awareness is key to improving your influencing skills. 

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