



Influence

Without Authority

hello@focusu.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

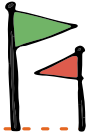
Chapter 1: Role of Influence in the Workplace..... 2

Chapter 2: Influence & The Flat Workplace..... 4

Chapter 3: Effective Tactics to Influence Without Authority 6

Chapter 4: Essential Groundwork For Successful Influential Outcomes..... 14

Conclusion..... 20





Chapter 1:

Role of Influence in the Workplace

Decision making in any organization is more about communication than it is about the nitty-gritty of the decision itself. How a person conveys his message can determine how well-received that message is and whether or not it is actioned.

People will accept your ideas and collaborate with you, only when you make them do so. You don't need to be the loudest in the team to achieve this, just the most persuasive.

The art of persuading people to side with your choices is called "influence." In the workplace, influence plays a key role in not just day-to-day decision making, but also in job recognition and career progression.



Image 1: Person without authority trying to influence.

Image Credits: Pixabay





ARE BOSSES THE ONLY INFLUENCERS IN A COMPANY?

In almost all organizational settings, influence is connected to authority. A person in a position of power always wields influence over other employees, purely because of the role they occupy. CEOs, departmental heads, team leaders, and project managers are the usual suspects.

But the world is changing, and so is the organizational landscape.

A study conducted by McKinsey & Company revealed that the people who senior management believe are employee influencers aren't always the most-influential in the workplace. There are hidden influencers in the workplace who persuade their colleagues to do things their way. These employees are usually in subordinate positions and aren't in traditional positions of power. But, they have the fastest growth on the corporate ladder because they're the ones who call the shots, behind-the-scenes.



Image 2: Customizing the influence approach – instead of group influence, one-on-one persuasion.

Image Credits: Pexels





Chapter 2: Influence & The Flat Workplace

Today's organizations are doing away with old-fashioned regimented hierarchies. Most places have adopted a flat organizational structure. Here, with the exception of a handful of people, everyone else is on an equal footing.

This type of flat hierarchy allows employees to make decisions independently. Employees are told to brainstorm and provide their ideas. Everyone is given a chance to present their case and have their ideas actioned.

But as they say, too many cooks spoil the broth.

Flat organizational structures can create mayhem. At the team-level, there's no formal figure of authority to take the final call. It becomes very easy to lose track of good ideas and valuable insights into the raucous that follows.

It's imperative to bring the team together in favor of a single course-of-action to ensure effective decision making and efficient operations. But how can you achieve such a consensus when you're not in a position of authority? How do you make your colleagues listen to you and take your inputs seriously?





INFLUENCING WITHOUT AUTHORITY

In an organization, a leader isn't a formal position or a job title. A leader is anyone who motivates a group of people to do a certain thing.

You too, can be a leader and influence your colleagues without holding authority. In fact, many workplaces globally are allowing proactive employees to take personal accountability for organizational success by becoming key decision takers. Such a leadership strategy can make the workplace more inclusive, empowering, productive, and engaging.

The trick here is to hone your skills of persuasion. In this eBook, we'll look at how you can develop the ability to become compelling influencers in the workplace, despite not being in a position of power.





Chapter 3: Effective Tactics to Influence Without Authority

Here's some good news: Influence over colleagues is easy to acquire. You don't need to be the boss to influence your team. You just need to be smart about it.

Here are eight easy and effective strategies you can use to influence without authority:



1. Give your colleagues the courtesy they deserve

The best way to influence without authority is also the simplest – give your team the respect they deserve.

When you're courteous, respectful, kind, and accommodating, you endear yourself to your team. They reciprocate this respect and kindness and are more willing to listen to your ideas. This tactic follows a common truth of life – we're loyal to those people who're kind to us.





So, accept your team's suggestions and inputs. Empathize with their challenges. Offer solutions to their problems. You won't believe how quickly and easily they'll buy-into your opinions then.



2. Tap into your workplace relationships

For most employees, their workplace relationships fall into two categories – formal networks and work friends. Both these groups can help you wield influence without authority.

Let's start with your professional networks first.

If you've met a senior member of the company through a networking event and you've made a good impression on them, you should use this relationship to your advantage. Drop them a mail with your inputs. For all you know, they may like the idea and suggest it to other people/managers. Usually, such individuals are very well-connected, and you can reach a larger group of people through them. Additionally, a word in your favor, coming from a respected employee, can really make you an influential figure in your team.

For your work friends, you need to take a more personal approach.





In many cases, you'll have connected with these co-workers on a deeply emotional level. Because of this, they'll be more open to accepting your ideas. So, it doesn't hurt to have an informal chat with your old mentor or the employee who sits beside you. You can also subtly mention your ideas to the people you routinely meet by the watercooler or in the cafeteria.

When you do this, your ideas will make their way to people from across team, and there's a higher chance of getting employee buy-in.



3. Leverage your expertise & credentials

Do you have colleagues who set store by job titles and positions? Are they unwilling to entertain any ideas that come from someone not in a position of authority?

Don't worry. There is a way to persuade them.

Expertise and credentials work wonders with people who prefer concrete proof of your capability/knowledge. Showing them your academic degrees, talking about your professional accomplishments and giving them real examples of projects you handled successfully, can be great ways to get their support.

In fact, as a rule, do mention your expertise and credentials to anyone you're pitching your proposals to, as they can work in your favour.





4. Become a fountainhead for information

As they say, *"information is power,"*; and in an organization, power is akin to influence.

When your colleagues and supervisors know that you have access to information that others may not be privy to, they will take your proposals more seriously.

When we're talking about information, we don't mean frivolous gossip about co-workers. We're referring to important information that can impact day-to-day working. So, information like policy changes, project developments, company reorganizations, budget/resource re-allocations, and opportunities for internal job movements can put you in a position of power.

You should try and acquire as much information about upcoming changes by networking with the right people.



5. Tap into the primal need for peer consensus

Time for a story.

"A man points to the sky and cries out, "UFO!". A woman comes by and looks at where he's pointing. The sky is clear, and there's nothing there. "I can't see anything," she says. But the man cries, "Look there, it's right there."



He seems utterly convinced.

The man's confidence makes the woman doubt herself. She believes she may have missed seeing the UFO. Not wanting to contradict him, she lies "Ah, there it is. I see it now".

As they stand watching the sky intently, a group of people joins them. Both the man and the woman point to the patch of sky and shout, "UFO!" Since there are two people claiming to have seen it, the crowd believes them. Soon, more people join the crowd and then still more. As the size of the crowd increases, so does their belief in the UFO sighting."

What does this story tell you?

People will believe anything you say if you say it with complete conviction. If you're sure about the potential your idea holds, then others will think so too. All you need is one person's support. This is enough to encourage more people to give you their vote of confidence.

After all, psychology dictates that people follow what their peers follow. No one wants to be the odd one out who contradicts the rest.





6. Look for common ground

One of the easiest ways to influence without authority is to target people who you have something in common with. This could be something on the work front – the same job role, the same challenges, the same grievances – or, it could be something personal – similar hobbies, the same college attended, a shared language or food habit etc.

When you have something in common with another, it becomes easier to explain to them why you want to do things a certain way. After all, both of you think the same way, right. Additionally, your colleagues will feel connected to you because of these shared interests or concerns, and they'll be more empathetic to your cause.



7. Make the case from the listener's perspective

Persuading people to implement your ideas, especially when you're not the authority, is one of the biggest challenges in the workplace. The truth is, you often face resistance purely because others don't see how your ideas could benefit them. In these situations, you should become more empathetic.

Before you speak to your colleagues, think from their perspective. Put yourself in their place and consider what their challenges may be, what





professional goals they may have, and how your proposals may affect them.

Doing so can help you make your ideas better and more acceptable. Plus, you'll be able to make more compelling arguments for your case.



8. "Inception" Works

Let's face it. The workplace is a dog-eat-dog world, and every employee wants to outshine the other. The very people you want to influence, may consider you their greatest threat/competitor. They may be hesitant to run with your ideas because they don't want to seem "less smart" than you are.

The answer to this problem lies in "Inception". (Yes, the movie)

If you've seen the film, you know what happens. An idea is planted in a person's mind, and the dreamer believes that the idea was theirs in the first place.

This actually works.

You're not outright manipulating someone here; you're just leading them to the idea. This tactic works especially well when you're trying to influence a person in an actual position of authority, say, your manager.





In his book Unconscious Branding, author Douglas Van Praet says, “If you can get someone to imagine something vividly enough, you are well on your way to making the suggestion real.”

Although this book is about marketing, the lesson is true for employees as well. When trying to influence someone, explain in-depth the benefits of taking a particular action. Don’t ever directly suggest that you want to do it, just talk about it conversationally. Someone is bound to pick up the idea and suggest it themselves.





Chapter 4:

Essential Groundwork For Successful Influential Outcomes

The tactics we've discussed in the previous chapter will work only if you implement them the right way. For this implementation to be correct, you need to first lay the right foundation.

Here are the key things you need to do to ensure your strategies to gain influence yield positive results:



1. Develop the right attitude

Influence is different from control. This is something you need to understand right at the start.

Your attitude towards your co-workers and supervisors shouldn't be one of exerting control. You should focus on helping them understand and acknowledge the true value of the insights you're offering.



When talking to colleagues, be assertive, not aggressive. Keep the lines of communication open and let it not become one-sided. Remember that even though the idea was yours, you could learn something in the process too.

2. Implement positive body language

One of the key tenets of successful persuasion is body language. The right gestures, facial expressions, and postures can help you gain influence even over the most resistant people.

When trying to influence others, remember to:

- Maintain eye contact with each individual.
- Face people directly when talking to them.
- Offer genuine, heartfelt smiles.
- Have an open body posture that looks welcoming and non-threatening – palms



Image 3: Team members agreeing with influence.
Image Credits: Pexels



facing upwards, arms held loose, shoulders relaxed.

- Mirror their body language – this is a sign of engagement between you and your conversation partner.
- Not invade their personal space.

3. Become an active listener

A true influencer, a true leader, is empathetic. They really listen to the concerns and challenges of others and suggest actions that can be helpful for everyone.

When you develop the skill of active listening, you are better able to visualize and appreciate others' frame of reference. That's the only way to ensure that you have a win-win situation – you get your way and others benefit from it too.

So, in addition to having a warm and welcoming body language, you should be an active listener as well.

4. Don't neglect the emotional dimension

Organizations are made up of people. Decisions are taken by people. As you know, people are as ruled by their feelings, as they are by logic.



The outcome of your bid to influence your colleagues succeeds or fails depending on the emotional state of the people you're interacting with. That's why, it's important to account for the unique expectations, baggage, and needs that each individual has when trying to influence them.

So, work on developing your emotional quotient as well. Manage your own negative emotions and become positive in your outlook. Really get to know the people you work with and understand their stressors. Be mindful of the way you phrase things and don't let a past bad encounter influence your future interactions.

5. Be consistent in your actions

As we've discussed, there are many employees who want to see concrete results before agreeing to follow someone else's suggestions. In order to win over such people, you need to be consistently excellent in your job performance.

As a rule, live what you preach. Actually implement the ideas and proposals you're making. You can use this as evidence to showcase the true worth of your ideas.

Showcase integrity and honesty in your decision making. You'll appear more reliable and trustworthy this way. In fact, it is these traits that will encourage people to follow your lead.



6. Anticipate the resistance

As we've discussed, there are many employees who want to see concrete results. People in authority often experience resistance when persuading people to adopt a particular idea/action. This resistance is more when you try to influence without authority.

The only way to tackle this challenge is to understand the possible types of resistance you may face and where they'll come from. Who amongst your colleagues is the most-likely to challenge your influence? What might they say?

It helps if you have a meaningful relationship with your colleagues and supervisors. Your interactions will give you insight into how people think and what type of persuasive tactics they'll respond best to. You can then customize your approach for each person.

7. Set the expectations and ask for commitment upfront

When you try to influence someone to do something, there will be an outcome. But sometimes, the outcome may not be what you desire. Often, this is because of misunderstanding between the two parties. Someone may have accepted your proposed ideas, without really understanding what is expected out of



them. Forcing them to do something they didn't sign-up for will not only destroy your relationship with them, but it will certainly be devastating for the company.

For a truly successful influence outcome, you need to be upfront and transparent about what you expect from others. You need to let them know what resources and time commitment you need from them, what support or skill sets you require from them and what sacrifices you expect them to make.

You should go a step further and seek their commitment to your proposed plans. If not complete buy-in, you should ensure that all parties are willing to comply with your plans.

This type of compliance and commitment is the only way to protect and preserve your relationships with your co-workers in the long run.





CONCLUSION

Influencing without authority is one of the toughest tasks in the world. Not only do you need to persuade your colleagues and managers about the profitability & potential of your proposal, but you need to do so without jeopardising your relationship with them.

The good thing is, it is easy to influence without authority when you customize your interactions and approach to each individual. By understanding what makes each person tick, you can know how to appeal to their best nature.

Once you get consensus and buy-in from the people who matter, it becomes easier to increase your scope of influence.



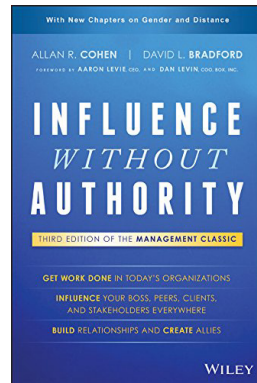
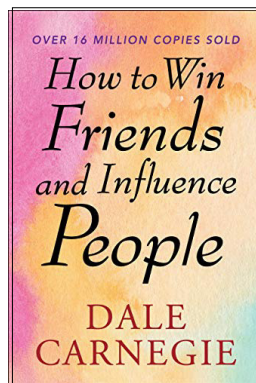
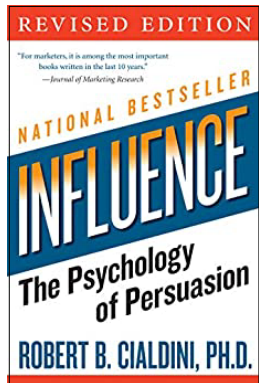
Image 4: How the right influence can help the company.

Image Credits: Pixabay





A few books that we recommend:



www.focusu.com