



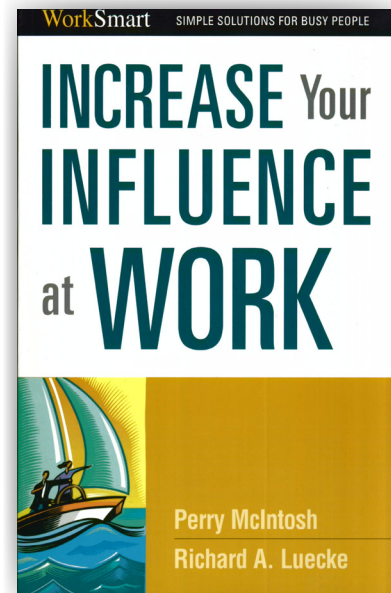
BUSINESS BOOK Summaries

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Increase Your Influence at Work

Perry McIntosh and Richard A. Luecke

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INTRODUCTION

Influence gives people the ability to have an effect on others in the workplace, making it an important skill for success within a company. From entry-level workers to CEOs, people with influence make more effective leaders, earn support for their ideas, contribute more to their workplace, and get ahead in their careers. These benefits all lead to increased satisfaction at work and a greater control over both work and personal life. In **Increase Your Influence at Work**, Perry McIntosh and Richard A. Luecke show readers how to gain influence over their subordinates, peers, and supervisors in order to achieve their career goals and maintain higher levels of work satisfaction.

INFLUENCE, POWER, AND PERSUASION

The average workplace structure gives people the ability to sway co-workers' opinions and behaviors through power, influence, and persuasion. Power

is the ability to achieve goals through command, and power over co-workers usually comes with higher-ranking positions that allow people to make decisions affecting how work is done in the business. In Western culture, many people mistrust the use of power as a way of getting things done. Managers who rely on their positional power to achieve their goals are met with antipathy, and this method rarely elicits the best efforts from workers. Still, positional power is an important asset to organizations during any situation where workers need firm direction (like during crises), when subordinates lack either the skill or the information to move forward, or when decisions cannot be made through other means. Unilateral power must also be employed when the ultimate responsibility for the decisions and their consequences falls to the people in charge.

For workers with no positional power, and even

for those with complete power, there are ways of achieving goals without using direct orders. Influence lets people use their intrinsic value to sway others through their words and actions. Since there is no compulsion or potential for consequences involved, influence is a form of soft power.

Persuasion is also a soft form of control, and it is often used as a tool to further a person's influence. Anyone at any level in an organization can use persuasion by employing logical arguments, persuasive rhetoric, or emotional appeals to convince other people of something.

THE FOUNDATION OF INFLUENCE

Influence is not a magical, intrinsic characteristic; rather, it is built by people who have certain foundational attributes that make others more predisposed to listen to them, and who then use supporting tactics to build those traits into strong influence. Someone lacking the foundational traits will never become influential, since their opinions and ideas will be quickly dismissed due to their personal character.

Trust is a valuable commodity in the workplace, and anyone who has proven themselves to be trustworthy has one of the key attributes of an influential person. In order to be convincing, arguments need to be based on fact; if someone regularly makes unsupported or invalid claims, co-workers are likely to take notice and disregard these suggestions as coming from an untrustworthy source.

People whom co-workers can rely upon to follow through on commitments earn themselves respect and influence within their company. At the same time, regularly failing to complete tasks will quickly lead people to ignore suggestions from that person. Developing a reputation for reliability happens over a long period of time. Traits that develop reputation include not making impossible promises, following through on decisions, persevering through setbacks, sticking to agreements, and doing research.

To be influential, workers must be assertive enough to put ideas, suggestions, and requests out in the open. Assertive people stand up for themselves and their ideas openly and directly, but are also respectful of other people and ideas. They support their own

KEY CONCEPTS

- People can affect their co-workers' behavior and thoughts through influence, power, and persuasion. Positional power is only available to people with senior positions in the company hierarchy and can be ineffective. Influence and persuasion, however, are available to people at all levels in a company.
- There are three necessary personal attributes that form the foundation of influence in the workplace: 1) trustworthiness, 2) reliability, and 3) assertiveness.
- Carefully target influence towards key groups and individuals to maximize the benefits of influence-increasing strategies.
- Since direct supervisors play the lead role in determining a person's work environment and advancement opportunities, anyone who holds influence over their boss will have much more control over their overall satisfaction and advancement.
- Whenever influence is applied, it should first be evaluated to ensure that it is ethical and acceptable behavior for the workplace. Unethical behavior damages a person's reputation and will severely lower their influence in the workplace.



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viewpoints through honest and direct interactions with co-workers, seek visibility within organizations, and regularly engage with other people. Assertive behavior falls in the middle of a continuum of personal behavior and communication; it is the balance point between passive and aggressive behavior, moderating the extremes of the two styles to interact with others in a positive, open way. Assertiveness can be better understood by looking at the two extremes:

1. On one end of the spectrum, the *passive* person tries not to influence others, and instead disregards their own needs or desires in favor of what other people want. Passive behavior means internalizing anger instead of confronting its source, and keeping opinions to one's self. The few opportunities this type of person receives will likely pass them by.
2. *Aggression* holds down the opposite end of the personal behavior spectrum from passiveness, and it is characterized by a disregard for others' needs and views in favor of unilateral domination through intimidation or organizational power. By creating a hostile work environment through bullying, verbal abuse, and overbearing tactics, aggressive behavior can be disruptive to a team or workplace. To make the situation even worse, people with aggressive personalities often think they are merely being assertive and do not realize the damage their aggressive behavior causes.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Perry McIntosh has over 15 years of management experience at middle and senior levels. **Richard A. Luecke** is a business writer and former editor at Harvard Business Publishing. The two have co-written a series of books for aspiring managers which includes *How to Become a Better Negotiator* and *The Busy Manager's Guide to Delegation*. Both live in Salem, Massachusetts.

Assertiveness represents a happy middle ground between aggressive and passive behavior. In contrast to passiveness and aggression, the assertive individual sticks up for herself and her ideas through open and honest communication while still respecting boundaries and other viewpoints. When an assertive person speaks, they use direct language that gets the point across with no hemming or hawing.

People who function in the assertive mode have a strong sense of self-esteem that allows them to protect their needs and interests and advance their agendas. They use open, direct, and honest communication with others. They make themselves visible in organizations and work collaboratively with others.

TACTICS

The foundational attributes are necessary to become influential, but they do not in themselves create influence. To maximize the benefits of trustworthiness, reliability, and assertiveness, workers can employ numerous tactics that will spread their influence throughout a company. While different people may have several different options, some tactics are available to any person at any level within an organization.

Create Reciprocal Credits

The principle of reciprocity is recognized and honored nearly everywhere in the world, and leveraging colleagues' willingness to return favors is a good way to gain influence in an organization. Every time someone goes the extra mile to help a co-worker, they earn a credit that can be called in at a later date, making reciprocal favors a form of currency. People who stockpile credits end up with a network of contacts who are willing to return past favors, giving them a high degree of influence. Since there are time and energy constraints on the number of favors any one person can perform, identifying target groups ensures that the biggest gains in influence come in areas that will be most beneficial. To earn reciprocal credits most effectively, determine the values of people in these target groups and focus on providing assistance in ways that will be most valued by them. As a rule of thumb, people generally value any assistance that eases their workload or improves

the quality of their work, helps them achieve specific goals, or makes them feel appreciated.

Be a Source of Expertise, Information, and Resources

Not everyone has organizational power they can apply, but anyone can find opportunities to stand out as a source of expertise or resources. By becoming the holder of knowledge or materials that are valuable to other people within a company, they gain influence as the “go-to” person for those things. The more valuable the resource is to the company or superiors, and the greater the level of mastery the person has on the information or materials, the more influential they will become.

How are people framing the important issues facing your company or work group? Chances are that the frame people accept will define the boundaries of subsequent discussion and the ultimate resolution of those issues. Thus, if you can get people to adopt your frame, you will have exerted substantial influence over eventual decisions and actions.

Help People Find Common Ground

One key to building a successful working environment and business is keeping each employee working in harmony toward common goals. This task gets increasingly difficult as the business grows, since organizations are likely to become compartmentalized and communication between groups becomes more difficult. At best, this leads to difficulties in coordinating initiatives; at worst, employees can lose sight of company goals and become so self-centered and divided that different parts of the same organization will actually compete against each other.

Within this troublesome situation lies an opportunity for a communicator to gain influence. Someone who can step in to direct the efforts of disparate groups toward a common goal and resolve internal conflicts will make themselves a precious commodity within the company, and their suggestions will be given a great deal of attention if they can perform the necessary problem solving to keep initiatives on track. This person must be well versed in the goals and methods of the company and always keep them foremost in their mind. At the same time, they must understand the interests of the groups involved in

order to learn how to best align them so that both the conflicting parties and the company as a whole benefit from the resolution. This is not always an easy task, so it is a good idea to always brainstorm multiple possible solutions and then carefully choose the one that best suits everybody’s needs, which helps to keep the process from stalling out when one idea proves to be unsuitable.

Frame the Issue Your Way

Individuals have their own perspective through which they see and interact with the world. This perspective creates a frame for everything they think and do. Jobs, education, background, and priorities shape how people frame the world around them. Sometimes, persuading co-workers to frame an issue in a different way can lead them to a solution they may not have found on their own, or even to see an opportunity instead of an impediment. No matter the outcome, when someone convinces other people to view the world from their perspective, they automatically gain influence.

Build a Network of Support

Not every individual is lucky enough to have organizational power, and many companies are even structured in ways that block certain positions from having any influence at all. Combating this red tape requires the support of other people within the company. The voice of one worker in a large corporation is easily ignored, but if that person is respected and supported by many others within the organization, they are more likely to be heard.

Almost everyone already participates in networks, whether they be informal groups that meet for lunch or official labor unions. Other members of personal networks include friends, people who depend on you in some way, and people who share your goals. The most valuable people to have in a network are those that have influence in the organization thanks to their personal virtues or standing within the company, and who also support your ideas and goals.

Building a network that contains numerous influential

people takes work. Individuals must show good character traits like reliability and trustworthiness, be willing to go the extra mile for more influential people, collaborate, and contribute to individuals and the company as a whole. A good networker will leverage these attributes to extend their sphere of influence into every department in a company and build a strong base of support that will give them far more sway than their organizational power provides alone.

Employ Persuasive Communication

Persuasive people use verbal communication and a strong understanding of peoples' needs and interests to influence them with reasoning and language. Fully understanding the views of other people allows the persuasive communicator to focus on framing issues in ways that the other person can relate to, making them more compelling and convincing. It is important to spend time probing to discover the wants and needs of other people through interrogative questions, and then clarifying the answers and signaling for more information. This process is meant to get other people talking about information that can later be used to persuade them.

Persuasion is a powerful tool, but only if directed at the appropriate people; trying to persuade a low-level employee to take a stance on a decision that will be made by an executive is a waste of time. Instead, workers must direct their persuasion to final decision makers and those who provide advice to decision makers. To figure out who influences whom in an organization, draw an influence map with arrows between individuals representing the direction and magnitude of influence that each person has over the other. Use this as a guide to better direct persuasion attempts toward the people who will have the most influence over the outcome of each issue.

Since persuasion is accomplished through language and communication, choosing the right sort of language will greatly increase persuasiveness. To be convincing, communications must make a credible, logic- and evidence-based case; appeal to both logical thought and emotional needs; accurately describe

features and how those features benefit the listener; and be unqualified, strong, and positive.

APPLYING INFLUENCE DOWN AND SIDEWAYS

Once the foundational attributes of influence are developed, the next step is to apply influence to the most beneficial places. The people that will most often be the targets of influence are subordinates, peers and customers, and supervisors.

Today more than ever, subordinates respond better to the soft influence employed in an *employee empowerment model* of leadership than the direct power of the increasingly ineffectual *command and control style*. Obtaining the trust of subordinates is a prerequisite to gaining influence over them, and the best way to do this is to fully participate in team efforts. Leaders who share the hard work earn their subordinates' trust by demonstrating a commitment to the project and team. In the same vein, sharing information about performance and financial aspects of projects helps lower-level workers feel more engaged in projects and with their managers, increasing the trust they place in their leadership.

Good communicators know that they learn nothing while they're talking. Consequently, their initial conversations with people are used to probe, to clarify, and to signal that they are giving people their full attention.

Persuasion means communicating in ways that alter someone's beliefs, actions, or attitudes, and the success of this influence relies on having an understanding of the needs and interests of subordinates in order to build logical arguments that apply to those issues. By identifying the most pressing concerns of a worker, an influential manager can frame a proposition in ways that increase its appeal by addressing those concerns.

Although employing positional power is often a poor way to control workers, actions that demonstrate power without using direct commands can be used to illicit positive responses from people. Decisions concerning who is assigned to what project or which shift can be used as rewards that workers can strive to obtain. Managers can mete out decisions of this type to encourage certain behaviors without having to give

direct orders to their employees.

Unlike with subordinates, workers' relationships with peers is defined by a lack of positional power over them. Therefore, influence with peers is exceptionally important since it is the only way to gain any control over their actions. To gain influence over peers, workers should create reciprocal credits and build a network of support.

Because of the principle of reciprocity, anything that one person does for someone else automatically creates a credit that can be cashed in at a later date for a return favor. Keeping an eye out for opportunities to provide assistance such as sharing resources, giving expert advice, acting as an intermediary, being accommodative with scheduling, or simply showing appreciation lets workers take advantage of their own resources to create reciprocal credits with their peers. Workers can also identify peers who depend on them for resources, support, or information, since these people represent great opportunities to provide favors that will be returned in the future.

If you need help in negotiating with a difficult yet important client, you might ask for help from a person who prides herself on her negotiating skill. By asking the favor, you, in effect, recognize that person's special talent, as if saying "I came to you for help because you're such a good negotiator."

In certain cases, giving a favor to someone can actually make the giver more likely to provide more favors to that person in the future. This "favor effect" is most common when the giver is proud of the service or information he provides, and the person who requested the favor effectively compliments this ability by asking for it in the first place. With careful handling, influence can be built by requesting favors in this way.

Building a network of support provides strength in numbers and a pool of resources that people can use to strengthen their influence. Participation in this network through actively giving favors increases its effectiveness by generating reciprocal credits and expanding its scope, so steps like volunteering for special projects, interacting regularly with peers, and forming a "community of interest" around important

topics are good tactics for building influence among peers.

Peer influence, or peer pressure, is a familiar way of exerting influence, and it can be applied in the workplace to encourage certain behaviors. Setting a good example for a team sends a strong message that can change the conduct of people that a person might not have any direct power over. To gain the greatest effect from this approach, make the actions visible through company media or programs rewarding the desired behavior.

INFLUENCING YOUR BOSS

Since direct supervisors play the lead role in determining a person's work environment and advancement opportunities, anyone who holds influence over their boss will have much more control over their overall satisfaction and value at work. The basis for influence with a superior is a relationship where the boss sees the subordinate as trustworthy, likeable, valuable for their information and abilities, reliable, and hard working. In addition,

the subordinate's reasoning must be persuasive to the superior, and the superior should have a sense of obligation toward their subordinate for favors given in the past.

Building trust with a superior is essential to gaining influence over them. Managers rely on their subordinates to get things done and keep them informed with accurate, timely, and complete information. Responsible behavior will be rewarded with trust, while things like withholding bad news or circumventing the chain of command will destroy that trust.

Managers have priorities, goals, and worries that they deal with every day, and learning what these are through meetings and direct face time is a key to developing influence with them. Focusing on matters that are most important to a superior makes it easy to find ways to help them out, while at the same time making it easier to avoid stumbling into ideas and subjects that they prefer not to discuss.

Adapting to supervisors' management styles can improve a subordinate's working relationship with

their boss, thereby putting them in a better position to exert influence. Some common elements to work styles are:

- **Information Preferences:** The specific information that supervisors want to be kept updated about, like budget consideration and project progress.
- **Information Format:** How managers prefer to have information given to them, whether it be face-to-face or through written reports.
- **Time Demands:** The amount of time a supervisor is able to spend with their subordinates.
- **Decision Making:** The process by which managers make decisions. Generally, it involves several steps, and subordinates who recognize each one will have an opportunity to contribute to every part of the process.

At the same time, be wary of making any of several common mistakes that will weaken the influence a subordinate has over their boss. Some classic examples are habitually bargaining with or trying to upstage a superior, as well as shamelessly self-promoting and failing to check in.

THE ETHICS OF INFLUENCE

Like any power, influence can be put to both good and immoral uses, and is subject to the same set of ethical guidelines that determine acceptable and unacceptable workplace behavior. Judging the ethics of a given behavior is best accomplished by separately examining its ends and means for ethicality. Is the action self-serving or beneficial to all parties? Does it mislead or withhold information from people or are all the facts evenly represented? Will it benefit or damage co-workers, customers, and the company? If either the ends or the means of a course of action fails to meet the criteria for ethical workplace behavior, it should be avoided or modified; although unethical behavior can lead to short-term victories, the long-term damage that it does to an immoral person's reputation will severely lower their influence in the workplace.



FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 2 hours, 112 pages

Increase Your Influence at Work is a playbook for people at any level in a company looking to gain more control over their work and achieve success. With separate chapters describing the foundations, tactics, application, and ethics of workplace influence, the authors provide a complete and detailed guide that addresses influence from many perspectives. Each chapter is divided into discrete sections that include graphics, real world examples, and checkpoints that encourage the reader to stop and apply the information to their own situation. At the end of each chapter, a review quiz ensures that leaders understand the section's key points. The book is best read cover to cover, since the opening chapters lay out foundational information that later chapters build upon.

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