

# Influencing Others

Build Trust with your colleagues.

In our opinion, influence is achieved through trust. When a person trusts you they will be far more open to being influenced by you. Trust is built from being unknown to known and the impact of repeated honesty and dependability.



Trust is dented or destroyed in a moment by things such as dishonesty, inaccuracies and selfishness. So, be honest and be the real authentic you! Trying to promote yourself as someone you are not will eventually fail you as we can't help but return to our true self.

Try this "Best Friend" activity with yourself and see what you find.

1. Think of a person in your life who you go to when you need to discuss something really important.
2. Ask yourself, why is it that you go to that person and what attributes do they have that make me trust them completely?
3. How many people in work do I have that relationship with?
4. How do I increase that trust relationship with others?
5. What do I need to do, and what do they need to do for me?

Conversely

6. Think of anyone in your life that you do not trust
7. What reasons do you have for not trusting them?
8. If you once trusted them and now you don't, what was it that broke that trust?
9. If you could go back in time, what would you have them do differently (and why)?

Lastly

10. Is it possible that your own behaviour to others have caused them to distrust you, or doubted you or your motives, or that you made them fear you?
11. If you answer yes to any of these, or other such questions, what can you do to repair that?
12. Lastly, if you have things to fix, go and chat to that person in number 1 above and see what their thoughts are to help your thinking.

Think of things from your own perspective. Why do you trust some people and not others? What could you and others do to help remedy this?

If, as stated above, influence is most often achieved through trust, then it stands to reason that we must get to know those we hope to influence as much as possible before we can build that trust and deal with any potential barriers. Emotional Intelligence, especially Social Awareness, is a **must have** ingredient in the world of influencing others.

Regardless of your position in comparison to the positions of your colleagues, if you want a healthy and influential working relationship, you're going to have to cultivate trust. The easiest way to do that is to be open and honest, no matter what. State your opinions, disclose your apprehensions, and don't keep secrets. It's as simple as that. And "that" means using Social Awareness to its fullest. (Remember Johari's window).

## Unconscious bias

Another aspect you need to consider around influencing others and trust is unconscious bias.



We need to understand that our brains are not neutral when making decisions. Our brains process thousands of decisions every day, and as we grow in experience, the brain refers back to previous decisions and *preferences*! So if we have had a preference due to an experience, our brain will opt for the easy route and this may well result in a decision being made using an unconscious bias we are not even aware of. Here are two such examples.

The **halo effect** is a type of hidden bias, specifically a mental bias. The halo effect happens when you judge a person's qualities by other unrelated qualities. For example:



- a. When two companies have merged and are operating as one merged organisation, a person from your previous company may be viewed as preferred or better than someone from the other company, simply because you worked with them previously. An inherited trust works unconsciously within you which creates an unconscious bias for those who were from your old company.
- b. A smartly dressed colleague might be judged to be more competent than a less smartly dressed colleague wearing a t-shirt.
- c. As an example, as an interviewer for a job browses through the list of candidates that they will be talking with that day, they notice that one of them is from their hometown. This would most often ignite a favourable outlook towards that candidate for no other reason than where they were born.

The **horn(s) effect** is based on negative traits and therefore is the opposite of the halo effect. For example:



- a. Flipping "a" above, this time the person from the other company is seen as not as good or trusted compared to a person with whom they have worked previously.
- b. Knowing that a person supports a football club which is the arch enemy of your own can lead to the horn effect.
- c. In more recent times, where Covid-19 was deemed to have come from China, some people viewed anyone from China less favourably and treated them poorly.

## Listen to Others

Influencing others is a two-way street. Think back to the best friend activity above and you'll see that trust is built from the exchange of thoughts, ideas and beliefs. This can only be achieved when both people, or a team, are listening and respecting each other's communication.

To attain this level of communication we must work hard to ensure everyone has a voice and most importantly, believes and feels that they are able to say what they truly think or feel. Take time to respect and acknowledge everybody's opinion, and let people know that you value them.

As this takes hold, we form an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and common focus. This is a powerful situation to be in and we must work to keep this feeling within the people or team so that we are continually fostering all that is good for the greater good, not for our own personal objectives.



## Cultivate Reliability Through Consistency

We must nurture relationships and help people's expectations of us to become that of a trusted and respectable colleague. Any faltering in how we communicate or any dip in our dependency will lessen the trust and good feeling we have built.



We go back to the same hairdresser, barber, dentist or garage because we trust them, and we have only come to trust them because their work has been good **consistently**.

If you're consistently motivated by the same principles, people will trust that your ideas are solid and reliable as an extension, and that will make it easier to get people on your side. Consistency is especially important when you're in a lower position, since it demonstrates a degree of dedication. Inconsistency is the fastest way to ruin your reputation.

## Be Assertive Through Passion

When we want to influence others, it is not enough to simply have a good idea or vision, we must show our passion and belief in what we say.

At LaPD Solutions we talk about Fires and Wires. The wires are the facts, figures, graphs and the idea itself, but deliver all of that with a passion and belief about your thinking and people will feel that and buy in with their head and heart.



Assertiveness is good, it shows your belief in what you are talking about. But remember, assertiveness is not ours alone and we must remember that each person has the right to say what they think, and the right to disagree with others as well.

We may not agree with someone else's point of view, but we must be good enough to respect that they have their own beliefs to which they are as entitled to hold as we are.

## Flexibility

While you need to be assertive, you must also be willing to be flexible, after all, on occasions we will need to compromise to make the deal. If we are not flexible then we risk appearing



stubborn or even as possibly arrogant, and that will damage the trust between ourselves and others and therefore the influence we have with them too. Life and business change constantly, and we must be flexible enough to move with it, otherwise our business will carry on regardless and move without us!

Stay rigid in your beliefs when someone contradicts you but work with them to find a mutually acceptable solution. When people believe you to be consistent in your beliefs and actions, but also open to compromise, they'll be far more likely to listen to you even if they are somewhat inflexible themselves.

## Be Authentic

*"of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine"* - (Dictionary.com)

Only you **truly** know you! Even then, some of our self-awareness is incomplete and we need others to help us uncover that.

If we are not true to our own values and beliefs, we will end up becoming stressed, experiencing inner conflict (more stress), and represent ourselves inconsistently (see above = even more stress).

So be you. Our personality goes a long way when we need to influence others. Respect your own beliefs and morals and values and share them publicly politely and respectably. So when you stand up for what you believe in your colleagues will know why you are behaving this way, they will get "you"! Now, I admit, some people may not like this if they are a little shallow or have little emotional intelligence or are just soaked in their own importance. But in the long term, this is how all employees should be and their senior leadership team should be leading the way by doing the same.



*"Hiding the real you is like stealing from yourself"*

(Mac Macdonald - 2017)

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