



Influencing Others

Build Trust with your colleagues.

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



Trust is dented or destroyed immediately by 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 selves.

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

1. Think of a person in your life whom you go to when you need to discuss something really important.
2. Ask yourself why you go to that person and what attributes they have that make you trust them completely.
3. How many people at 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 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 behaviour towards others has caused them to distrust you, or doubt you or your motives, or that you made them fear you?
11. If you answer yes to any of these or other such questions, how can you repair that?
12. Lastly, if you have things to fix, go and chat with that person in number 1 above and see what their thoughts are to help your thinking.
13. Think of things from your perspective. Why do you trust some people and not others? What could you and others do to help remedy this?

If influence is most often achieved through trust, then it stands to reason that we must get to know them and deal with any potential barriers if we hope to build that trust. Emotional Intelligence, especially Social Awareness, is a must-have ingredient in influencing others.

Regardless of your position in comparison to the positions of your colleagues, if you want a healthy and influential working relationship, you will 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

Unconscious bias is another aspect you must consider around influencing others and trust.



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 had a preference due to a previous experience, our brain would opt for the easy route, which may result in a decision using an unconscious bias we are unaware of. Here are two such examples.

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

- When two companies have merged and operate as one 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, creating an unconscious bias for those from your old company.
- A smartly dressed colleague might be judged more competent than a less smartly dressed colleague wearing a t-shirt.
- For example, as an interviewer for a job browses through the list of candidates they will be talking with that day, they notice that one of them is from their hometown. This would 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 is the opposite of the halo effect. For example:

- Flipping "a" above, this time, the person from the other company is seen as not as good or trusted compared to someone with whom they have worked previously.
- Knowing that a person supports a football club that is your club's archenemy can lead to the horn effect.
- Where COVID-19 was deemed to have come from China, some people viewed anyone from China less favourably and treated them poorly.
- Wars can change how we feel about people; for some, it can cause them to hate anyone of another nationality. Regardless of anything, those poor people are fiercely hated and wrongly painted the same.



Listen to Others

Influencing others is a two-way street. Think back to the best friend activity above; you'll see that trust is built from exchanging honest thoughts, ideas and beliefs. This can only be achieved when people or a team listen and respect each other's communication.

Flexibility

While you must be assertive, you must also be flexible; after all, we must compromise to make the deal. If we are flexible, we avoid appearing stubborn or arrogant, which will damage the trust between ourselves and others and, therefore, our influence on them.



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 are consistent in your thoughts and actions but also open to compromise, they'll be far more likely to listen to you, even if they are somewhat inflexible.

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 will need the honesty of others to help us attain that.



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

So be you. Our personality goes a long way when we need to influence others. Respect your own beliefs, morals, and values and share them publicly, politely, and respectably. So, when you stand up for your beliefs, your colleagues will know why you behave this way, and they will get "you"!

Now, I admit, some people may not like this if they are a bit shallow, 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 leaders should lead the way by doing the same.



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