

Influencing Strategies and Tactics

What a waste if our newly honed Influencing skills are not pointing at 'what matters most'! In our time pressured and complex business lives some quiet disciplines to increase our chances of successfully shaping what is most substantial and significant, even before we 'walk in the room' can help to make all the difference.

Top tips

1. The number one tip is to take control of your activity over longer term time horizons so that a high percentage of your time is spent on making progress against these goals (rather than the quick fix of short term reactions to the agendas of others)..... Stephen Covey's 'Important, not Urgent' distinction
2. Find your habitual ways of using already familiar tools; Influencing Mapping, Influencing Process, Stakeholder Analysis, Meeting Planning
3. Be really clear on the 3-5 substantial Influence priorities you are focused on, make practical plans and communicate for alignment, including really understanding how these goals contribute to the agendas of your key stakeholders
4. Be willing to tell your story, what it means to you and others, why it matters. Connect it with others.
5. Underpinning this, be clear on your Passion and Purpose. How does 'what is most important to you' show up in what you do and how you do it?
6. Remember, a pattern of Pull-Push-Pull to help build commitment in others, or Push-Pull-Push when you seek their compliance.

Recent thinking

- Cialdini's (2009) extensive psychological research famously distils 6 key principles of Influence as
 1. Reciprocity (our urge to pay something back, return the favour...what can you give first?)
 2. Consistency (higher likelihood of carrying through a previously made commitment, however small.)
 3. Social Proof (people seeking safety in numbers, especially when 'rules' are uncertain, leads them to follow others)
 4. Liking (we know we are more influenced by people we like and trust)
 5. Authority (being swayed by our sense of duty or responsibility to people in more senior or expert positions)
 6. Scarcity (things being more attractive when we feel we can't, or might not be able to, have them)

How might you apply these principles to amplify your influence of the most important projects you're working on?

- Other researchers list consistent types of influencing tactics which can be summarised as Bargaining, Logical Persuasion, Aligning Visions/Agendas, Building Relationships/Trust/Friendliness, Sponsorship, Early Wins, Minimising Risk or Objections, Using Early Adopters, Providing Benefit Proof, Establishing Coalitions or Allies, Sanctions

- Rykrsmith (2011) distils these into 4 key tactics, namely Rational Persuasion, Inspirational Appeal, Consultation, Collaboration

Watch out for

- Being over-accommodating to the agendas and requests of others or overly short term in your planning so that you lose control of how you spend your time
- Assuming you 'can't' or 'shouldn't' without testing the water
- 'Winging it' as a habit or in the wrong situations
- The seduction of distractions (including email) and short lived satisfaction from too many easy/less important tasks
- Leaving it (too) late to involve key people so compromising their commitment or elevating risk of rejection/rework.
- Co-ercing or pressuring others and fooling yourself that you've influenced them.

Find out more...

- Yes! 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion (Goldstein et al 2007)
- Power and Influence beyond formal authority (Kotter 2008)
- The Tipping Point (Gladwell 2000)
- Influence, Science and Practice (Cialdini 2009)
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey 2004)

Blogs & Videos

- Secrets from the Science Persuasion (Cialdini&Martin) – short Youtube animation
- Effectively Influencing Up - ensuring your knowledge makes a difference (Goldsmith) - <http://www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com>
- Becoming a better influencer, the 4 most effective Influencing tactics (Eva Rykrsmith@quickbase.intuit.com)
- Taxonomy of 16 Influencing Tactics (Marwell and Schmitt) <http://www.workingpsychology.com>