

Influence and
persuasion are
important leadership
tools psychology
essay



Influence can have a major impact on a person's life by how well one is able to influence others and how others influence the individual. By using specific techniques and methods one can greatly increase their level of influence on others. The first step is to assess one's own level of influence to identify personal areas of weakness. The second step is learning and understanding the roots of power in the workplace. The third is learning the strategies of influence and learn the methods of influence and persuasion. The final step is implementing these strategies in life and work to influence others and avoid being influenced. This report is intended to motivate individual(s) to perfect a better understanding of influence and persuasion and be able to implement these facets in life.

Influence and persuasion are two of the most important skills required by successful leaders in the workplace today. A good working knowledge of influence and persuasion can help one person to change another's attitude, beliefs, or actions. This knowledge can also help one to avoid being influenced or persuaded by another. Influence and persuasion can be used in almost all aspects of daily life, whether dealing with family, buying something at a store, or performing tasks at work. Social influence can be found in any environment where multiple people exist or anywhere there is interaction between people. Understanding it is essential for prosperity. In many situations, social influence and persuasion can represent the difference between success and failure. To be successful, one must also understand the relationship between power and influence and how to use power and self-empowerment.

What is influence and persuasion? Influence investigates the causes of human change—whether that change is an attitude, behavior, or a belief. Inducing a change in behavior is called compliance. Inducing a change in attitude is called persuasion. Inducing a change in belief is called either education or propaganda—depending on one’s perspective³. Persuasion attempts to win “the heart and mind” of the target. Thus persuasion must induce attitude change, which entails affective (emotion-based) change. Although persuasion is more difficult to induce, its affects last longer because the target actually accepts and internalizes the advocacy³.

Knowing these definitions create a foundation for learning and implementing tactics for both influence and persuasion. An effective leader must be able to influence and persuade others. This can be done by understanding how to assess one’s own level of influence, finding sources of personal power, learning strategies of influencing and persuading people, and learning how to implement those strategies.

Assessing Your Level of Influence:

When assessing one’s ability to influence and persuade, a collection of data must be gathered about the different areas involved with both topics. The collection of data is typically through questionnaires, surveys, or quizzes regarding the subject matter. These methods garner the opinions and ideas of the individual. In order to practice these ideas a person must know and understand the tactics, strategies, and how to implement both into the workplace.

The information gathered consists of four main topics related to influence and persuasion. First, the individual needs to display information pertaining to gaining power. Gaining power can be in two forms: personal characteristics or positional characteristics. Personal characteristics explore topics like an individual's appearance, hygiene, or charisma in the workplace. Positional characteristics explore how an individual is perceived throughout the corporation. After gaining power in the workplace it is essential to evaluate how well does one exercise influence in the workplace.

Implementing influence in the workplace is crucial. It is vital to evaluate how well an individual avoids using threats and manipulation when trying to influence others. When influencing or persuading does the leader emphasize reason and factual information in their approach, instead of tactics that are opinioned based? Another related topic that would be helpful in assessing is, how well the leader uses rewards when implementing influence. Does the individual reward where needed, do they never use the reward system, or do they reward when it's not warranted?

Finally, the assessment chain of thought deals with the idea of increasing authority. When one tries to increase authority does the individual try to convince upper management that the idea or issue at hand will benefit or hinder the entire organization if it's not focused upon? While on the job how well is the person at stepping out of the normal realm of problems that deal with and taking on job tasks that go beyond their typical scope of work?

The four areas of assessment are valuable to determine what level an individual is able to persuade and influence others in the workplace. During

the assessment phase, an individual is examined about what their thoughts and ideas are on topics like gaining power, resisting influence, and how they exercise influence in the workplace.

Power in the Workplace:

Power in the workplace is the ability to influence others to do what you want them to do, when you want them to do it, and in the manner that is required. Power is directly related to control, especially in the work environment. For example, power can stem from an individual's charisma and skill set or the individual's position, can be exercised or not and directly or indirectly at a person's will.

There are two types of power: positional power (formal authority) and personal power (acquired authority). Sources of positional power are divided into four categories, formal authority, centrality, flexibility, and visibility. Formal authority is the power directly given to you by your position; reward and penalties: having the ability to give rewards or penalties to other people in an organization. Centrality is where everyone needs you to get their job done because you are central to the organization. Flexibility is having the ability to improvise and innovate in a position and visibility always visiting other members of the organization and always being seen.

Sources of personal power are also divided into categories of attraction, effort, expertise, and legitimacy. Attraction is having charisma or behavior that attracts other people to you. Effort describes when one constantly works to get ahead; giving consistent and hard work to do whatever it takes to get a task done. Expertise works related knowledge and through education or

other means that other people in the organization may not have. Lastly, legitimacy is having the work done be accepted by others so that everything the person does and the person himself is legitimate to the organization.

By following a few steps, a leader can greatly increase his/her power. These steps include: align your goals, ideals, and values, with that of the organization, develop a sense of obligation and accountability, encourage open communication with your co-workers, nurture creativity and innovation in your work environment, provide and welcome opportunities for personal development, demonstrate a high level of working knowledge and expertise, demonstrate trust and confidence in your co-workers, and give recognition to others for their work.

Another aspect of power that a leader should remember is the ethics involved in the implementation of power. It is crucial to remember that the goals of the organization come before individual goals. Also, power should not be used to intimidate or coerce people into doing tasks.

Strategies for Influence and Persuasion:

Many scientists and psychologists have studied the areas of influence and persuasion and have found many “ sections, disciplines, tactics, clusters,” and other descriptive words for the different items people have found. The strategies of discussion are the three types of influence, techniques for handling people, and lastly the continuum of influence. Across the board, there are three generally accepted types of persuasion.

The first is Retribution, or command, which is forcing others to do what one

says by means of intimidation or coercion¹. Retribution is usually based
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around formal authority. A manager can threaten his/her employee directly to do a task or be fired. He/She can also indirectly force an employee to do something because of consequences at work by not following a superior. Advantages include quick and direct action by subordinates. Disadvantages include loss of creativity, resentment, and need for greater threats in the future.

The second is Reciprocity, which is helping others want to do what one says through bargaining or ingratiation¹. In this method, the main object is to satisfy the interests of both parties, even if you have to give something up. This is usually used when both parties have the same level of power. Advantages include low resentment and no requirement for justification. Disadvantages of this method include expectations of rewards or gifts to do work and it makes people feel that anything is open for negotiation.

The third is Reason, which is showing others that it makes sense to do what you say though presenting facts or appealing to values and goals¹. This method is the most powerful used most frequently in the work place. Leaders use this by trying to suggest and convince the other party they are right. Advantages includes the need for surveillance being enhanced. Disadvantages include the time it takes to develop trust and requires both parties having similar values and goals.

Another strategy for gaining power and influencing people is described in Dale Carnegie's, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. He discusses the fundamental techniques in handling people. The first technique is to not criticize, condemn, or complain to the person. For example, if a manager

wants an employee to perform a particular task he/ she should not condemn the subordinate for doing the task incorrectly, perhaps the instructions were unclear. According to Carnegie, instead of condemning people, try to understand them. Try to figure out why the employee does what he/ she do.

The second technique described is to give sincere appreciation. People want to feel appreciated and recognized for what they accomplish. There are several ways to recognize a person through rewards whether monetary or non-monetary, verbal affirmation, or perhaps, find out how the employee prefers to be rewarded. Carnegie states that the big secret in dealing with people is to make them want to do what you ask. This concept is easier said than done because people have a tendency to forget the power of influence and appreciation.

The influence of an alliance is often greater than the sum of the influence of individual allies. In building an alliance, you strengthen your power base and increase the force of your proposals through a network of supporters.

Discreetly build the alliance through a series of one-on-one contacts, letting prospective allies know that you need their support and possibly mentioning who else is on board. Ensure that prospective allies agree with your purpose or at least have something to gain by helping to achieve it. Alliance can be hard to form. They require time and energy to maintain. However, members of successful alliances tend to be more receptive to future alliances.

Appealing to Friendship

Appealing to friendship (asking for assistance based on friendship or membership in a group) relies on the natural human tendency to help

friends. We are inclined to grant the request of people we feel similar to. This tactic is powerful but it is hard for some people to use and can damage relationship if overused.

Appealing to values

Appealing to values is a way to influence people based on their values, feelings, and emotions. You make such an appeal by conveying a strong vision (of excellence, achievement, etc.) or by presenting your case with enthusiasm and conviction: We can achieve our goals if we believe in ourselves and set our own standards higher than anyone expects us to. This tactic can be highly influential and it can reach a large number of people at once. It's good for stimulating extraordinary efforts. However, it takes great skill to do it.

Consulting

Consulting is influencing through collaboration- inviting the prospective participants to contribute to the approach, concept, proposal, or strategy. When people contribute to the plan, they feel some ownership of it and are more committed to it. You can use consulting by asking for someone's advice on solving a problem and then asking or encouraging them to implement their recommendations. This form of consulting is especially effective when senior people use it with more junior people.

Exchanging is trading something of value for the support or cooperation of others. In other words, it is negotiating as a form of influence. You ask a person to do something for you and offer an incentive: If you will support my

reorganization proposal during the next meeting, I will work over the weekend on your financial analysis and have the figures for you on Monday.

Legitimizing is using authority to influence. Authority includes customs, laws, organizational rules and procedures, regulations, traditions, and various symbols of authority (uniforms and badges as well as formal dress). You can also legitimize by citing higher authorities. Legitimizing is the easiest form of influence if you have role power. It can result in quick compliance. But it can also appear heavy-handed and will not work with people who resist authority.

Stating is possibly the simplest influence tactics of all. It means, simply, saying what you want or what you think. Gain cooperation by making polite but a direct statement of what you want or what while asserting your position with confidence. " Please review and sign this travel request". Remember to leave no room for negotiation or refusal. Avoid tentative phrases like I think, I feel, I was hoping you would, if you don't mind, etc. don't phrase your statement as a question (would you mind, don't you agree, can I ask you, etc.). Resist the urge to be overly polite or apologetic. Clearly stating your needs, wishes or intentions helps to eliminate misunderstanding.