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Review**

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Leading When You're Not in Charge PAGE 18

**What Effective
General Managers
Really Do**

by John P. Kotter

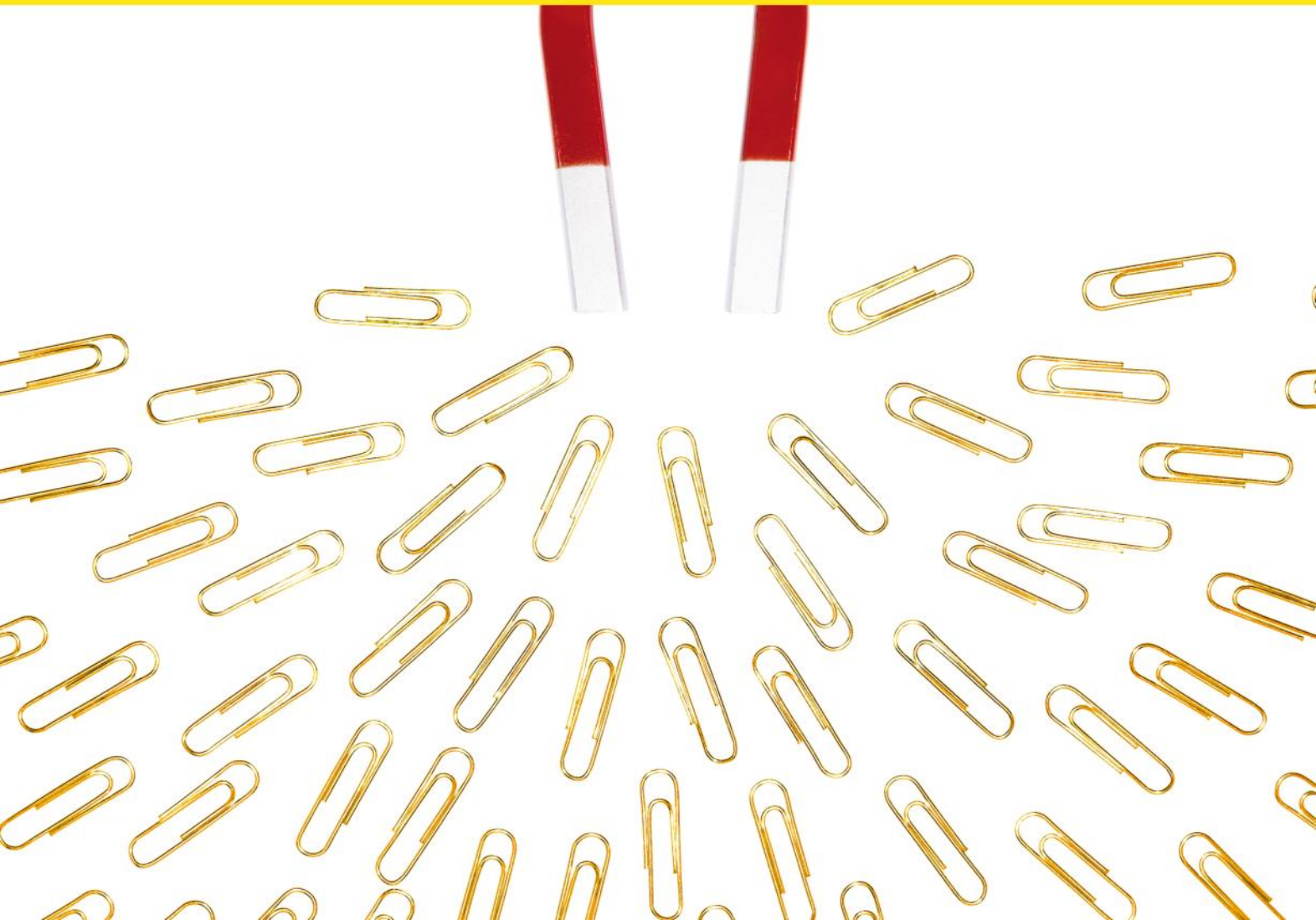
**Connect,
Then Lead**

by Amy J.C. Cuddy,
Matthew Kohut,
and John Neffinger

**Harnessing
the Science
of Persuasion**

by Robert B. Cialdini

INCREASE YOUR IMPACT: How to Lead Through Influence



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A Simple Smile Can Go a Long Way

WOULD YOU RATHER work for someone who barks orders at you, or a person who takes time to understand your position? When a colleague asks for your help on a project, are you more likely to say yes if she helped you in the past? The answers to those questions are obvious, but they nevertheless show that in today's collaborative work environments, you need a range of interpersonal skills to persuade people to help you get things accomplished.

The desire and ability to reciprocate, according to Robert B. Cialdini in "Harnessing the Science of Persuasion," constitute one of the six fundamental principles of persuasion. These principles appeal to deep human drives, such as wanting to be liked. Given that leaders must get things done through other people, including folks they may have no control over, it's important for them to build relationships and to develop, but not abuse, their powers of persuasion.

Warmth should be the foundation for these relationships, advise Amy J.C. Cuddy, Matthew Kohut, and John Neffinger in "Connect, Then Lead." That's because warmth facilitates the trust and openness—to ideas and information—that lay

the groundwork for positive forward movement. Something as simple as a smile may help someone relax and feel appreciated, and therefore able to hear what you're saying. Asserting authority right away, in contrast, may elicit fear, withdrawal, or other dysfunctional behavior. Confidence and competence, coupled with warmth and trust, are the winning combination.

In the HBR Classic "What Effective General Managers Really Do," John P. Kotter chronicles a day in the life of a successful GM. He appears to be frittering time away in casual conversations, yet he always has the agenda of things he wants to accomplish in the back of his mind. He uses many informal interactions not only to build and strengthen his network but also to have quick, pointed discussions that extend his influence beyond his formal chain of command. It turns out that rather than wasting time, the GM is actually using it quite wisely.

Some people are naturally charismatic, but for most of us the ability to influence others is a subtle skill that we develop one competency and one relationship at a time.

—The Editors



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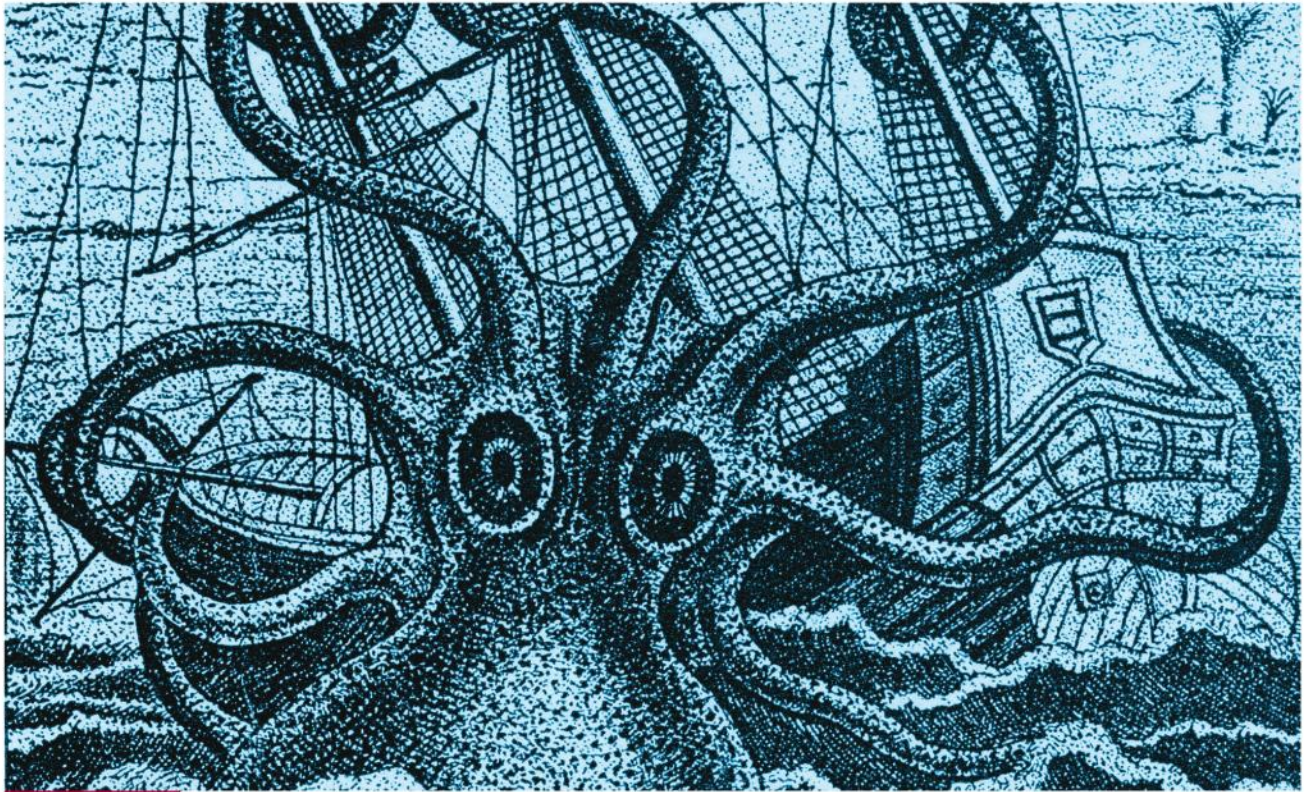
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LEADERSHIP

Office Politics Is Just Influence by Another Name

by Annie McKee

MOST OF US cringe when we think about office politics. It's a disgusting, immoral mess that we try to avoid. After all, who wants to participate in backstabbing, lying, cheating, blaming, sucking up, and playing people against one another? Or maybe you take a slightly less offensive view of office politics and see it as controlling agendas, building covert alliances, protecting access to key leaders, and holding "meetings before the meeting." No matter what your take, it's not surprising that honest people don't want to get involved.

But are politics at work inherently dirty?

The truth is that just being a member of an organization is a political act. In fact, to get things done, we must influence people at work all the time. And to influence others, we must have power, the real currency in workplaces. Most people want it. All of us need it. In healthy organizations, we acquire or are granted power by virtue of our ability to inspire and provide vision. We also get power because of what we can do for people. In companies that value people *and* results, we are granted power because we help create a vibrant climate and a resonant culture that is ripe with hope, enthusiasm, and a can-do spirit. In such companies power is used well—for the good of people and the enterprise.

Office politics is really just the art of influencing others so that we can get stuff done at work. Despite the bad rap that politics gets, successfully engaging in it requires us to develop useful skills. For example, research by Gerald Biberman, a professor at the University

of Scranton, found that those who engage in office politics are more likely to believe they can influence people and outcomes, which motivates them to get into the mix and try to get things done through others. At best, such confidence is grounded in self-awareness, self-management, and a desire to move people for the good of all. The combination of emotional intelligence and what the late great David McClelland called *socialized power* can result in influence strategies that make people enjoy pursuing common goals together.

Asghar, a writer with *Forbes* magazine, takes it a step further, arguing that office politics is the art of getting along with others and of putting yourself in positions where your work will be noticed. That's not bad—it's smart.

Engaging in politics, then, can be OK—unless, of course, your organization is toxic. If the politicians in your midst are Machiavellian types, you'll notice lots of lying for personal gain, self-aggrandizement, clever flattery, and people taking delight in crushing weaker team members and enemies. Research

else, every day, without thought of personal gain. Treat politics like the game it is, with all the seriousness and ethics it deserves.

Originally published on HBR.org
January 16, 2015

Annie McKee is a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the PennCLO Executive Doctoral Program. She is the author of *How to Be Happy at Work: The Power of Purpose, Hope, and Friendship* (Harvard Business Review Press, forthcoming); a coauthor, with Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, of *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2002); and a coauthor, with Richard Boyatzis and Frances Johnston, of *Becoming a Resonant Leader: Develop Your Emotional Intelligence, Renew Your Relationships, Sustain Your Effectiveness* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2008).

If all the good people stay out of the game, the Machiavellians and the narcissists win.

Linda Hill and Kent Lineback, the coauthors of *Being the Boss: The Three Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), argue that leaders should stop avoiding office politics. They note that people who actively steer clear of politics don't do what the best leaders always do—build strong, positive relationships that serve a purpose beyond simple friendship. My coauthors and I call these relationships “resonant.”

Resonant relationships are bonds we build when we truly see people and value them for who they are. These powerful relationships are grounded in empathy, authenticity, and mutual respect. In such relationships, we come to know what drives people and what they value—and can therefore inspire, motivate, and influence them in a way that makes them feel appreciated. People who avoid office politics miss out on all of this, as well as on receiving help, benefiting from mutual support, and even having fun. Rob

suggests that Machiavellian individuals tend to have lower emotional intelligence—particularly when it comes to empathy and recognizing emotions. They are destructive, self-centered horrors to work with. How can you protect yourself from these people? To start, use your social awareness skills to ferret them out. Don't be fooled by their flattery. Then, develop clever strategies for avoiding them or beating them at their own game, without becoming manipulative yourself.

We can't avoid politics, and we shouldn't, because if all the good people stay out of the game, the Machiavellians and the narcissists win. Worst of all, if you choose to opt out, you may be putting your relationships—and your ability to influence others—at risk.

So, get in the game. Be authentic, and claim your right to guide and inspire others. Broaden your group of friends at work. Learn what it takes in your organization to influence individuals and groups. Do something for somebody

Advice and Credibility Go Hand in Hand for Managers

by **David A. Garvin** and
Joshua D. Margolis

MANAGERS WHO seek and give advice effectively are also more likely to wield soft power, our research shows. But you risk damaging your reputation if your behavior has even a hint of inauthenticity—if you use counsel to curry favor, for instance, or to advance an agenda. So tread carefully. It takes a long time to build trust and political capital, but you can lose credibility very fast.

Consider this example. The head of a business unit—we'll call him Cal—was weighing three finalists for the open position of marketing VP, who would also report through a dotted line to the



corporate CMO. Cal had a clear favorite. To ensure that she got hired and came in with high-level support, he sought “advice” from his head of sales and the CMO. Cal began these conversations with open-ended questions: “What skills and capabilities do you think the position requires?” “Which of the candidates strikes you as best meeting those qualifications?” After listening, he asked more pointedly, “If you were in my shoes, which candidate would you choose?”

But each time the head of sales or the CMO spoke in favor of one of the other candidates, Cal responded critically, diminishing them relative to his favorite. As a result, his “advisers” felt they’d just been lobbied, not heard. Worse yet, they felt manipulated and misled. They had thought Cal was genuinely seeking their counsel, but they walked away distrusting him.

Although seeking advice when you make decisions can enhance your credibility and others’ trust in you—both crucial for increasing influence, effectiveness, and political support—you really have to want the advice when you ask for it. Otherwise, you’ll inadvertently train people to question your motives, which will damage your efforts to exercise influence in the future. That’s what happened with Cal. Both the sales head and

the CMO were guarded around him after it became clear he was looking for buy-in, not guidance.

Now consider this example about giving advice. An executive we’ll call Astrid was asked by a peer how to handle a direct report who always delivered results but alienated many of his colleagues in the process. After Astrid asked a few key questions (“What was at stake for the company?” “What was at stake for the peer?” “Were there any other folks who could step up and take on the work?”), she had a sense that her peer needed to do a better job managing his team (and his own insecurity) rather than transfer or fire the problematic direct report.

But instead of leaping to that conclusion, Astrid took a more nuanced approach. First she shared her understanding of the situation and the mistakes she might be tempted to make in her peer’s shoes. Then she offered a suggestion: “How about bringing the team together to say that the company is counting on everyone to work better together? That would help set the stage for a separate one-on-one conversation with your difficult employee. You could frame his development goal as a way of helping the team deliver on that larger mandate.” After sharing the rationale behind her advice, Astrid laid out two other options:

arranging for the direct report to transfer to another area or bringing in a seasoned supervisor to work closely with him.

Astrid’s peer responded with admiration and thanks. He felt heard, and he fully grasped the advice, appreciating both its wisdom and Astrid’s—all because she had shown empathy and offered alternatives alongside her proposed solution. Because Astrid had crafted her advice in such an open-ended fashion, her peer and others began to see her as “the person to go to with the tough stuff.”

Whether advice makes or breaks you politically has a lot to do with how pure your motives are for seeking it and how empathically you give it. Ironically, as a seeker or as an adviser, you stand to gain subtle, quiet influence by focusing less on securing power and more on opening yourself to others.

Originally published on HBR.org
January 13, 2015

David A. Garvin is the C. Roland Christensen Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. **Joshua D. Margolis** is a professor of business administration and the faculty chair of the Christensen Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard Business School.

If you don’t really want the advice you ask for, you’ll inadvertently train people to question your motives.



Getty Images



To Have Real Influence, Focus on a Great Outcome

by Mark Goulston and John Ullmen

FEW PEOPLE like to be pushed or sold hard into doing something. And few like to push or deliver a hard sell. But at the end of the day, or even the end of a conversation, you do have to move things forward. How do effective leaders get things done?

As part of the research for our book, John Ullmen, a lecturer at the UCLA Anderson School of Management, and I interviewed more than 100 people who “get things done” but aren’t pushy. When we asked them, “Who persuaded you to do something really important?” more than a few replied defensively, “*Nobody* persuaded me to do anything important!” When we switched tactics and asked, “Who positively influenced you to become the person you are?” they leaned back, smiled, took a deep breath of satisfaction, and replied, “Now that’s a different story!”

This helped us uncover a pattern of great influencers that follows four steps: (1) Go for great outcomes (the step we will discuss in this article). (2) Listen past your blind spots. (3) Engage them in “their there.” (4) When you’ve done enough, do more.

When people paint a picture of a great outcome, they’re not trying to “persuade people to do something important.” They’re trying to “positively influence them” to get them to a better place.

Take Jim Sinegal, the cofounder and former CEO of Costco, largely seen as the company’s heart and soul. Jim is very humble and doesn’t like to be given too much credit for his and Costco’s success. He often tells the story of how, as a recovering juvenile delinquent still headed in the wrong direction, he was working as a bagger at FedMart in San Diego. One day he was singled out by the legendary Sol Price, the founder of FedMart who is viewed as the father of the warehouse store concept. Sol saw beyond where Jim was, even beyond where he wanted to be, to where and who Jim could be. Focusing on that “great outcome” let Sol *influence* Jim whereas others had failed to persuade him. Sol’s dedication to customer value and treating employees with care lived on through Jim and is so ingrained in the Costco culture that those values remained beyond his stewardship as CEO.

Pete Linnett, who founded the Life Adjustment Team (LAT), produced a great outcome for me. I was a clinical psychiatrist and psychotherapist for more than 20 years before transitioning

to business consulting, executive coaching, and writing. For much of that time I was haunted by, and felt complicit in, the poor job the mental health, drug, and alcohol treatment systems did in preventing relapse and lessening recidivism. Practitioners are well-intentioned, caring individuals, but the system is flawed because the treatment is largely located near the practitioners rather than the patients. LAT prevents patients from relapsing by having the case managers go to where the patients live—taking them to doctor appointments, doing recreational activities, teaching them how to communicate better, even helping them learn to manage their money. LAT also works with patients' families to eliminate conflicts.

Switching to this method has produced not only a great outcome for my patients but also a great outcome for me. Finally, the monkey is off my back and I'm no longer haunted by the guilt of being party to such a flawed system. But if Pete had come to me and said, "Let me tell you why my method is better than the method you're currently using," he'd have instantly gotten my fur up—even though he was right. Instead, by starting with the great outcome—"What if it were possible to help more of your patients get healthy, and stay healthy?"—he made it easy for me to jump on his approach.

He wasn't trying to persuade me. He was trying to have a positive influence—and to improve my ability to have a positive influence, too.

Ask yourself what a great outcome would be for your people, your company, yourself. How can you use influence—instead of persuasion—to get there?

Originally published on HBR.org

February 5, 2013

Mark Goulston is a business psychiatrist, executive consultant, keynote speaker, and cofounder of Heartfelt Leadership. **John Ullmen** oversees MotivationRules.com and teaches at the UCLA Anderson School of Management. They are the coauthors of *Real Influence: Persuade Without Pushing and Gain Without Giving In* (Amacom, 2013).



Three Ways Leaders Make Emotional Connections

by **Scott Edinger**

WHEN I FIRST started working in the then-Big Six consulting firm Coopers & Lybrand, the partner I was assigned to, Chris Abramson, had an enormous scale of responsibility. Yet whenever I talked with him, which was not that often, he gave me his undivided attention. He talked with me about my goals and my development opportunities. He shared stories about life (both his and mine) outside the office. Even in our short conversations, in which he frequently was directing me to do something, he injected some kind of personal remark or comment.

Abramson excelled in one of the most important—and most misunderstood—leadership skills: making an emotional connection.

Leadership has everything to do with how you relate to others and the quality and texture of those relationships. The higher up you go in an organization, the less important your technical skills become and the more your interpersonal skills matter. I've seen this confirmed in my work with hundreds of leaders and in reviews of 360-degree feedback data on thousands more.

The ability to make an emotional connection is so often misunderstood because it's not about being emotional or showing emotion. It's about making a human connection—one person to another. Chris Abramson connected on that level with me, with teams, with an entire office of more than 600 associates—to show us how important we all were to him and that there was more to our relationship than just the job at hand.

He was a natural, but the rest of us can also forge these kinds of connections in the following ways:

Give people your undivided attention. This sounds simple, but it's easy to forget. When I feel overloaded in the midst of ringing phones, e-mails by the hundreds, and a gazillion other things to do, I'll sometimes think about how

The higher up you go, the more your interpersonal skills matter.

Abramson unfailingly engaged with people in this way, and the energy he brought to and created in those interactions as a result. He made us want to do more because we didn't want to let him down.

Be aware that emotions are contagious. Research has shown that a person's mood can be affected even by three degrees of separation from people they don't even know. So imagine your impact in the workplace on those who report to you directly. Whether positive or negative, your emotional state has a significant influence on those you work with, especially when you're the boss. We all have our bad days, but we don't have to multiply their ill effects. If you're feeling particularly anxious or negative, quarantine yourself—do administrative tasks, avoid situations that might trigger even more stress, take the afternoon off (you may do more harm staying on the job). On the other hand, if you're feeling especially buoyant, spend more time with direct reports, go to more meetings, reach out to others in the organization. Use this time to your advantage and multiply your positive emotions.

Develop your sense of extraversion. Make no mistake, this is easier said than done, especially if you're an introvert. But if you're a leader, you simply must develop the ability to reach out to others, engage them in discussion, and actively provide feedback. You're the one who has to be out in front, taking the lead in developing these relationships. Even introverts can muster the energy to do these things and relate to others. (And then afterward, when you're exhausted, you can sit quietly with a book.)

As leaders, by definition we do our work through other people, and yet it's easy to lose sight of that, to focus on

the amount of work—the tasks, the output, the jobs to be completed. The irony is, the more you focus on the quality of those connections, the greater your quantity of output is likely to be.

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How to Influence Decision Makers

by Marshall Goldsmith

"THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE that I face at work is not managing my team—it is dealing with my boss and upper management. Any suggestions?"

Every decision in your company is made by the person who has the power to make that decision—not necessarily the "right" person, the "smartest" person, or the "best" person. If you can influence the key decision makers in your organization, you can make a positive difference. If you cannot influence them, you will make much less of a difference. Once you make peace with these facts, you will become more effective in influencing up.

The following suggestions do not come with a guarantee—when you don't

have the power to control outcomes, you won't always win. But they can improve your odds on successfully making a positive difference.

1. When presenting ideas to upper management, realize that it is your responsibility to sell—not their responsibility to buy. In many ways, influencing up is similar to selling products or services to external customers. They don't have to buy—you have to sell. Any good salesperson takes responsibility for achieving results. No one is impressed with salespeople who blame their customers for not buying their products. Although the importance of taking responsibility may seem obvious in external sales, an amazing number of people in large corporations spend countless hours blaming management for not buying their ideas. We can become disempowered when we focus on what others have done to make things wrong and not on what we can do to make things right.

2. Focus on contributing to the larger good—not just achieving your objectives. An effective salesperson would never say to a customer, "You need to buy this product, because if you don't, I won't achieve my objectives." Effective salespeople relate to the needs of the buyers, not to their own needs, in the same way that effective upward influencers relate to the larger needs of the organization, not just to the needs of their unit or team.

When influencing up, focus on the impact of the decision on the overall corporation. In most cases the needs of the unit and the needs of the corporation are directly connected. In some cases, they are not. Don't assume that your managers can automatically make the connection between the benefit to your unit and the benefit to the larger corporation.

3. Present a realistic cost-benefit analysis of your ideas—don't just sell benefits. Every organization has limited resources, time, and energy. The acceptance of your idea may well mean the rejection of another idea that someone else believes is wonderful. Be prepared to have a realistic discussion of the costs of

your idea. Acknowledge that something else may have to be sacrificed in order to have your idea implemented.

By getting ready for a pragmatic discussion of costs, you can prepare for objections to your idea before they occur. You can acknowledge the sacrifice someone else may have to make and point out how the benefits of your plan may outweigh the costs.

You may have spent years developing your functional or technical expertise. By making a small investment in learning to influence up, you can make a positive difference in the future of your organization.

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Marshall Goldsmith was recognized as the world's #1 Leadership Thinker and #1 Executive Coach by Thinkers50 2015. He is the author of 35 books, including *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful* (Hachette Books, 2007) and *Triggers: Creating Behavior That Lasts—Becoming the Person You Want to Be* (Crown Business, 2015).



How to Lead When You're Not in Charge

by **Gary Hamel** and
Polly LaBarre

FOR ALL the books written on leadership (thousands), individuals who have participated in leadership seminars (millions), and dollars invested in leadership development (billions), too many leadership experts still fail to distinguish between the practice of leadership and the exercise of bureaucratic power.

To engage in a conversation about leadership, you should assume you have no power—that you aren't “in charge”

Leaders are other-centered, not self-centered.

of anything and that you can't sanction those who are unwilling to do your bidding. If, given this starting point, you can mobilize others and accomplish amazing things, then you're a leader. If you can't, well, then you're a bureaucrat.

To gain a true leadership advantage, organizations must be filled with people who understand how to maximize their own ratio of “accomplishment over authority.” They must believe it's possible to do something big with a little dab of power. Think, for example, of Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia, the world's largest compendium of knowledge. None of the thousands of individuals who've contributed to Wikipedia report to Wales, and yet, as a “social architect,” he built a platform that energized and organized an extraordinary amount of human effort.

What, then, are the attributes of individuals who can inspire others and multiply their impact?

They are seers—individuals who are living in the future, who possess a compelling vision of “what could be.” As human beings, we're constantly looking forward, and we love to sign on with individuals who are already working on “the next big thing.”

They are contrarians—free of the shackles of conventional wisdom and eager to help others stage a jailbreak. It's exciting to be around these free-spirited thinkers who liberate us from the status quo and open our minds to new possibilities.

They are architects—adept at building systems that elicit contribution and facilitate collaboration. They leverage social technologies in ways that amplify dissident voices, coalesce communities of passion, and unleash the forces of change.

They are mentors—rather than hoarding power, they give it away. Like Mary Parker Follett, the early 20th-century management pioneer, they believe the primary job of a leader is to create more leaders. To this end, they coach, tutor, challenge, and encourage.

They are connectors—with a gift for spotting the “combinational chemistry” between ideas and individuals. They help others achieve their dreams by connecting them with sponsors, like-minded peers, and complementary resources.

They are bushwhackers—who clear the trail for new ideas and initiatives by chopping away at the undergrowth of bureaucracy. They're more committed to doing the right thing than to doing things right.

They are guardians—vigilant defenders of core values and enemies of expediency. Their unflinching commitment to a higher purpose inspires others and encourages them to stand tall for their beliefs.

They are citizens—true activists, their courage to challenge the status quo comes from their abiding commitment to doing as much good as possible for as many as possible. They are other-centered, not self-centered.

Critically, all these roles are rooted in the most potent and admirable human qualities—passion, curiosity, compassion, daring, generosity, accountability, and grit. These are the qualities that attract allies and amplify accomplishments. These are the DNA strands of 21st-century leadership. Only by strengthening them can we fully unleash the latent leadership talents that reside in every organization.

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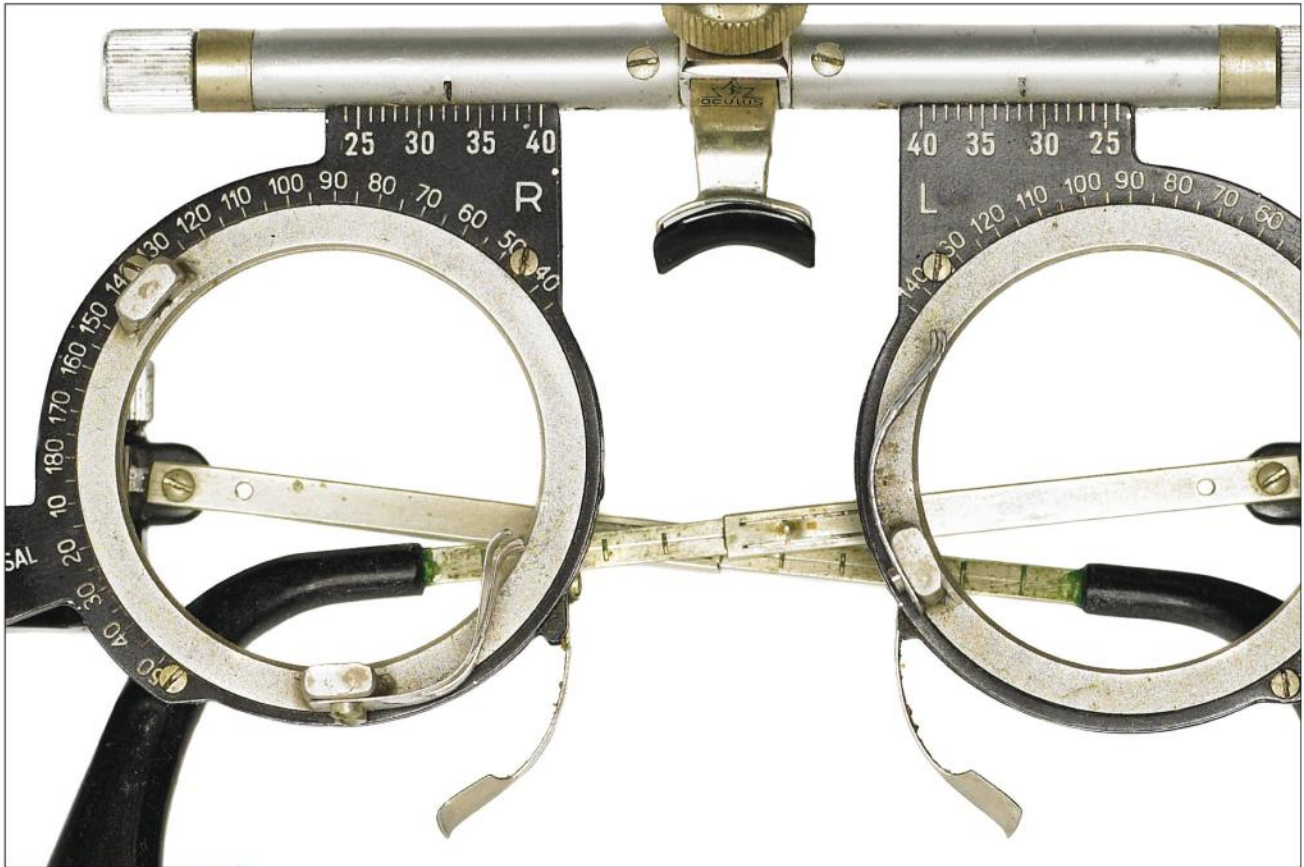


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COMMUNICATION

How to Really Understand Someone Else's Point of View

by Mark Goulston and John Ullmen

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL people strive for genuine buy-in and commitment—they don't rely on compliance techniques that secure only short-term persuasion. That was our conclusion after interviewing more than 100 highly respected influencers across many different industries and organizations for our book.

As noted in “To Have Real Influence, Focus on a Great Outcome” (page 15), these high-impact influencers follow a pattern of four steps: (1) Go for great outcomes. (2) Listen past your blind spots. (3) Engage others in “their there” (the step we will discuss in this article). (4) When you’ve done enough, do more.

To understand why the third step is so important, imagine that you’re at one end of a shopping mall—say, the northeast corner, by a café. Next, imagine that your friend is at the opposite end of the mall, next to a toy store, and you’re telling her how to get to where you are.

Now, picture yourself saying, “To get to where I am, start in the northeast corner by a café.” That doesn’t make sense, does it? Because that’s where you are, not where the other person is.

Yet that’s how we often try to persuade others—on our terms, from our assumptions, on the basis of our experiences. We present our case from our point of view. There’s a communication chasm between us and them, but

we're acting as if they're already on our side of the gap.

As with the shopping mall example, we err by starting with how we see things ("our here"). To help another person move, we need to start with how they see things ("their there").

One of our favorite examples involves Mike Critelli, the former CEO of the extraordinarily successful company Pitney Bowes. Critelli was one of the highly prestigious "good to great" CEOs featured in Jim Collins's seminal book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the*

Even more telling, they made the video after he was no longer in power.

When you practice these three ways of "getting" others—situational, personal, and solution oriented—you can understand who people are, what they're facing, and what they need to move forward. This is a powerful way to achieve great results while strengthening your relationships.

Remember, when you're trying to influence, don't start by trying to pull others into your here. Instead, go to their there by asking yourself:

- Am I getting who this person is?
- Am I getting this person's situation?
- Am I offering options and alternatives that will help this person move forward?
- Does this person get that I get it?

The positive effects of this effort may last for years to come.

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Focus on Winning Either Hearts or Minds

by Lisa Lai

WE'VE ALL HEARD the axiom that to persuade others effectively, we have to win both the hearts and the minds of our audience. For naturally persuasive (or overwhelmingly charismatic) people, this comes naturally. The rest of us have to cultivate the ability to persuade others. All too often, winning hearts and

"Often what motivates people are the little gestures, and a leader must listen for those."

For real influence we need to go from our here to their there. Then we can engage others in three specific ways:

Situational awareness—you get *it*. Show that you understand the opportunities and challenges your conversational counterpart is facing. Offer ideas that work in the person's there. When you've grasped their reality in a way that rings true, you'll hear comments like "You really get it!" or "You actually understand what I'm dealing with."

Personal awareness—you get *them*. Show that you understand your colleague's strengths, weaknesses, goals, hopes, priorities, needs, limitations, fears, and concerns. That way you demonstrate that you're willing to connect with them on a personal level. When you do this right, you'll hear people say things like "You really get me!" or "You actually understand where I'm coming from on this."

Solution awareness—you get *their path to progress*. Show your colleague a positive path that enables them to make progress on their own terms. Give them options and alternatives that empower them. Understand their situation and what's at stake for them personally, and then offer possibilities for making things better. All the while, help them think more clearly, feel better, and act smarter. When you succeed, you'll hear comments like "That could really work!" or "I see how that would help me."

Leap...and Others Don't (HarperBusiness, 2001).

One of Critelli's many strengths is the ability to engage his team on their terms to achieve high levels of performance and motivation. He said to us, "Very often what motivates people are the little gestures, and a leader must listen for those. It's about picking up on other things that are most meaningful to people."

For example, one employee had a passing conversation with Critelli about the challenges of adopting a child, pointing out that Pitney Bowes had an inadequate adoption benefit. A few weeks later, he and his wife received a letter from Critelli congratulating them on their new child—along with a check for the amount of the new adoption benefit the company had just started offering.

When Critelli retired, the Pitney Bowes employees put together a video in which they expressed their appreciation for his positive influence over the years. They all described ways that Critelli "got" them—personal connections and actions that accumulated over time into a reputation that attracted great people to the organization and motivated them to stay.

It's a moving set of testimonials. The fact that people openly expressed their appreciation and permanently captured it on video for open public viewing showcases Critelli's ability to "get" people on their own terms—to go to their there.

minds feels like a paradox. Why? People are complicated, and so are the problems we're solving. Trying to leverage both emotion and logic can actually make us less influential if we don't have a plan.

As a business adviser, I help leaders simplify their approach to persuasion by identifying which lever (winning hearts or winning minds) is most important in a particular circumstance to gain the trust of others and influence their perspective. In most situations, you'll use both tactics, but identifying up front which one is more likely to be the most compelling provides a strong foundation for your argument.

Winning Hearts

The art of persuading by winning hearts is about connecting people emotionally to your idea or position. In any persuasive dialogue, you must connect with others to some degree. However, this approach is highly effective in certain circumstances, such as:

- introducing a new idea and trying to pique interest
- gaining support for a decision that's already been made
- raising the bar on performance or commitment
- leading a team that is struggling with discord or conflict
- aligning with creative colleagues, such as those in design or marketing

The best method of persuasion in these situations is to connect with people on a personal level. This technique is often called a "hook." Use vivid descriptions and metaphors to draw others into your vision. Share personal stories and experiences to demonstrate that what you're suggesting is the right choice.

Let's say you're announcing a big reorganization to your team. Your message might go something like this:

I know this announcement may be unsettling for you. Changing any aspect of your work process while you're this

busy is challenging. But I am excited about this change, and let me tell you why. Our new organization has been designed specifically to address some of the challenges our teams have struggled with for years: conflicting priorities, lack of alignment on goals, and disjointed processes that get in the way of your success. Our teams will finally be not only in the same boat but also rowing in the same direction. The destination? Achieving our year-end results. Imagine how great it will feel when we hit our targets—when we crush the competition and claim the market share we deserve. Every one of you plays a key role in that victory. This new organization will make it easier for us to win, individually and as a team.

Make sure you highlight what's in it for them personally if they adopt your perspective or make a change. What fears can you address to build trust and cultivate a feeling of safety in supporting your position? What motivations can you tap into to create alignment? Where can you find common ground to unite viewpoints? You still need a logical, well-informed message, but you are at your most persuasive when you first appeal to the perspective, fear, or motivation of your audience.

You are at your most persuasive when you first appeal to your audience's perspective, fear, or motivation.



I've found that the most effective way to win others' hearts is to share why your idea is important and why *now* is the time to act, and then to highlight how it benefits the individual, the business, your clients, your partners, or the broader environment. Transparency and authenticity drive success here.

Your goal in winning hearts is to make whatever you have to say matter on a personal level. Of course, it also must make sense. This is where winning minds comes into play.

Winning Minds

The science of persuasion lies in winning minds with logical, well-articulated positioning and analysis in favor of your idea. If you're trying to persuade anyone of anything, you certainly need a logical argument to support your perspective. But sometimes this is particularly important to do well—and first. Winning minds is almost always the best option when you're:

- trying to change direction on something previously decided
- advocating for one choice over another in a decision-making process
- helping an overwhelmed team stop overanalyzing and see a situation clearly
- addressing a highly complex or technical set of problems
- asking analytical, financial, or executive types to agree with your perspective

To win the minds of others, carefully construct your message. Start by describing a situation everyone can agree is worth discussing, including both what it is and why it warrants attention. Establish common ground. Share your expertise and understanding of the issue at hand, highlighting analysis you've done or consultation with others. Provide proof to support your position in the form of data, research, expert opinions, and analysis. Discuss benefits in very tangible ways.

Here's an example of the type of message you should craft to win people over

with logic. Let's say you're suggesting a product change:

Today I'd like to talk with you about product A. We launched the product with the expectation that customers would embrace new self-service features, and in turn, we would lower our support costs, further strengthening our market position. Our strategy was, and still is, innovative and viable. That said, we've learned that customers like the new features, but our support costs haven't declined by 5% as expected. In fact, they've increased by 2% quarter over quarter as we trained customers on how to use the new features. The team has an enhancement that will allow us to provide customers with even more self-service features while lowering our support costs over time. A cross-functional team has analyzed outcomes and assessed our risk to be low. Early indications of our ROI suggest that we'll show margin improvement exceeding our original plan within 12 months by implementing three key changes to the product. If we gain approval for this plan today, we will have this enhancement to market in 90 days with a net-positive effect on our financials by year-end.

To get your framing right, imagine that you're a trial attorney offering your opening argument and proceeding to make your case. To do it well, you must put yourself in the mind of your jury. What do they believe to be true today that you intend to challenge? What did they want to do before talking with you that you now want them to revisit? Is history informing their current judgment, and if so, how can you challenge it effectively? How do they measure success, and does your proposal support their success or put it at risk? What concerns will they have, and how can you address them in advance?

To win minds, you have to do your homework. Often you have just one chance to influence others. Put yourself

in their position, and do the work to prepare. If possible, you'll also want to relate your proposal to what matters personally using the tactics outlined in the section on winning hearts.

Putting It All Together

The paradox of persuasion doesn't have to get in the way of influencing others effectively. Giving equal weight to emotion and logic can make you less convincing, so pay careful attention to your audience and the task at hand. Identify your strongest position given the circumstances. Is it most important to appeal to people's hearts or minds? Be thoughtful, and prepare with intention. Learn the right methods, and before long you'll be winning both hearts and minds with ease.

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Why the Gettysburg Address Is Still a Great Case Study in Persuasion

by **Tim David**

APRIL 9, 2015, marked the 150th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War, which began on April 12, 1861. It was just a month after the inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln. He had not won a majority vote—far from it. He'd won only about 40% of the popular vote, and some states didn't even put him on the ballot. He scraped together a victory thanks

only to a very close four-way race. But despite this unlikely beginning during turbulent times, Lincoln went on to become one of the country's most revered presidents and one of its best orators. His best-known speech, the Gettysburg Address, is often studied for its rhetoric, and deservedly so—gems of psychological persuasion are hidden throughout.

In the first sentence alone—"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"—Lincoln delivers four distinct psychological strategies designed to persuade and influence his audience.

Tell a story. Stories can be powerfully persuasive. In this case, Lincoln's now-iconic opening is a little more specific than the standard "once upon a time," but these first words signal to the audience that a narrative is coming.

Many studies attest to the power of story. Deborah Small at the University of Pennsylvania created two different versions of a marketing pamphlet designed to raise money for a charity. One version was laden with statistical data about the problems facing children in Africa; the other featured a story about Rokia, an impoverished girl in the area. Participants were given one of the two pamphlets to evaluate, as well as five \$1 bills to donate as much or as little as they would like to a charity that promised to help those children in Africa. Those who had received the statistics-laden pamphlet donated an average of \$1.43, but those who had received the story pamphlet donated nearly double, an average of \$2.38.

The bottom line: If you need to be more persuasive in the boardroom, in the classroom, or from the podium, a simple story will greatly increase your chances of moving your listeners to action.

Begin from a place of agreement. Although he had to go back 87 years, Lincoln eventually found something that his entire audience could agree on. Words like "liberty" and phrases like "all men are created equal" are pulled directly from a document that Americans—then

and now—revere like no other, the Declaration of Independence. To nod your head in agreement at those words is nearly compulsory.

It is crucial to get people to say yes to little things if you want them to say yes to bigger things later. So start by acknowledging your agreements.

Use the word "our." Lincoln used first-person plural personal pronouns like "we" and "our" throughout his two-minute speech. They helped develop rapport and created a sense of togetherness. But some surprising research suggests that these types of pronouns also increased Lincoln's status in the minds of his audience.

James Pennebaker, the Centennial Liberal Arts Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, studies how people use words—more specifically, how they use function words (such as pronouns and articles). His findings are startling and nearly universal. In his book *The Secret Life of Pronouns: What Our Words Say About Us* (Bloomsbury Press, 2011), he writes, "In any interaction between two people, the person with the higher status uses fewer I-words. [They also] use first-person plural pronouns (we, us, our) at much higher rates than those lower in status."

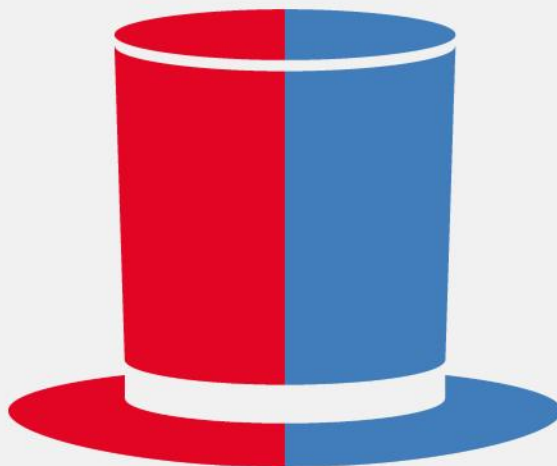
Is it possible that by using "our" early on and peppering the rest of his speech with even more "we" words, Lincoln was more effective at positioning himself as

a person of status and confidence? Did this technique, combined with the inherent authority of the presidency, make the rest of his words more credible and compelling? Or were the words simply the evidence of his title and position? Whether intuitive or intentional, it's clear that Lincoln stayed away from "I" words and leaned heavily toward "we" words, captivating his audience on a subconscious level.

To improve your status and positioning, try removing as many "I" words as you can from your e-mails and face-to-face interactions and replace them with "we" words.

Articulate a compelling reason. In the 1970s the Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer discovered that saying the word "because" when asking for something increases your persuasive power from 60% to 93%—even if you don't have an actual reason. Unfortunately, that really works only for tiny, relatively unimportant decisions, such as whether you want to allow someone to cut in line ahead of you. Lincoln was dealing with a line being cut across a country. It couldn't possibly work with something really significant, could it?

Lincoln used something I discuss in my book called "Advanced Because Techniques," or "ABT." Although he doesn't state the word "because" directly, the entire sentence (the entire speech, even) could be summed up in the word



A simple story will greatly increase your chances of moving your listeners to action.

“because.” After all, it answers the question “Why?”

Why? “The proposition that all men are created equal.”

Why? “To see whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”

Why? “For those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.”

Why? “For us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they have thus far so nobly carried on.”

Why? “[So] that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

People need reasons to do things, and Lincoln gave them more than one. His compelling list of hidden “because” etched the moment not just into the memories of those gathered but right into the very fabric of America.

Figure out what motivates your employees, and when they need a pick-me-up, remind them of those reasons. Stop pointing to the company mission statement. The only reasons that consistently work are people’s own internal reasons. If your goal is to motivate employees (or children, or students, and so on), then it’s your responsibility to find out what those reasons are.

Lincoln became a great public speaker not only because he knew the right words to say but also because he had a deep knowledge of precisely how they were going to affect his audience and compel them to action. He understood his audience’s perspective. To become great communicators in business and in life, we too must step beyond our own thoughts, feelings, and desires and master the art of using words that resonate with other people’s perspectives.

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Tim David spent eight years as a professional magician and has a unique perspective on psychology and influence. He is now

a speaker, blogger, and podcast host and author of *Magic Words: The Science and Secrets Behind Seven Words That Motivate, Engage, and Influence* (Prentice Hall Press, 2014).



When Your Influence Is Ineffective

by **Chris Musselwhite** and
Tammie Plouffe

HAVE YOU ever thought about the tactics you use to influence others? While there are many different influencing styles, most people default to using the same tactics every time. In today’s collaborative organizations, you must be able to understand and comfortably use a variety of styles—as well as recognize when a particular method is ineffective.

No influencing style is inherently bad, but some styles don’t work in certain situations. To influence others successfully, you must fully consider the specific situation you are in. If you focus only on the desired outcome, you may achieve what you want in the short term, but you may do long-term damage to your reputation and to the organization. You risk creating an atmosphere of distrust, where people stop listening to you and the potential for innovation or progress is diminished.

It’s tricky to recognize when the style you are using isn’t working, given that the same argument or presentation can be “heard” differently by different people. You will need enough interpersonal insight to accurately judge how your appeal is being perceived.

From our research we’ve identified five distinct influencing styles. Consider each one and the situations in which they are unproductive.

Rationalizing—using logic, facts, and reasoning to present your ideas. This style can be ineffective when it makes

others feel overwhelmed, that their perspectives are not being heard, or that the influencer values data more than their feelings. This can happen when the influencer repeats the same factual argument, ignores value-based solutions, or fails to consider the emotions or feelings of others. These behaviors can be perceived as competitive or self-serving and may generate a competitive response.

Asserting—relying on your personal confidence, rules, law, and authority to pressure others and insisting that your ideas are considered even when others disagree. This style generally won’t work when people feel stressed—especially when the statements come across as aggressive, heavy-handed, or unreasonably demanding. This can lead to resistance or resentment, accompanied by passive-aggressive or negative behavior, which can result in compliance rather than commitment. In other words, people may say they agree with the influencer, but when the time comes for action, they may not behave the way the influencer had in mind. The asserting style is especially ineffective when the person is influencing up or when collaboration is needed.

Most people default to using the same tactics every time.

Negotiating—looking for compromises and making concessions in order to reach an outcome that satisfies your greater interest. This method is being used poorly when people become confused about the influencer’s key position. That can happen when the influencer negotiates too much, loses sight of the bigger picture, or gives up something that is seemingly critical to their long-term strategic interest. When the influencer gives in to the demands or needs of other stakeholders to avoid conflict, they may communicate that they are

less concerned about an issue than they really are. When the influencer is in an inferior position or there is nothing to exchange, the negotiating style is especially questionable.

Inspiring—encouraging others toward your position by communicating a sense of shared mission and exciting possibility, often through stories and metaphors. This style doesn't work when people feel misled, especially when trust is lacking from the start. This can happen when people are persuaded toward a common ground, only to discover none exists. Others may assume that the influencer has a hidden agenda or an overall lack of transparency. This erodes trust, causes suspicion, and undercuts the influencer's future credibility.

Bridging—relying on reciprocity, engaging superior support, consulting with others, building coalitions, and using personal relationships to get people to agree with your position. This approach is unproductive when the influencer uses what they know about the stakeholders' interests during the influencing process such that the stakeholders feel manipulated. Instead of attracting people to their position, the influencer may be arousing suspicion about their motives. That can happen when there is too little common ground or open conflict at the outset. The influencer may be perceived as self-serving or insincere about the interests of other stakeholders. More so, when bridging includes a push for collaboration when the prerequisites or time doesn't allow it, distrust within the organization may take root.

If you don't take the time to learn about the different influencing styles and notice the situations around you, you limit your personal effectiveness in the short term, and may even harm your organization in the long run.

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Signs That You're Being a Pushover

by Amy Jen Su

IF COLLABORATION is key to succeeding in organizations today, doesn't it pay to "play nice" in the sandbox? You have to get along with others to get things done, right? Yes, this is true—to a degree. You want to be a cooperative colleague, but you don't want to be seen as an ineffective pushover. Persuading others matters as much as getting along with them.

Rocking the boat or standing your ground may be hard for you, but always being the one who's persuaded rather than the one doing the influencing has real implications for your work and your career. Here are signs that you've taken being the good guy or gal too far:

- You kick yourself after the fact for not speaking up in a meeting. You realize your point of view on something only after the discussion is over.
- You blame your colleagues for not giving anyone the chance to get a word in edgewise.
- You feel overwhelmed and pulled in multiple directions, especially as e-mails and requests for work or input come in.
- Your calendar is full with back-to-back meetings and no time to focus on yourself or critical priorities.
- Your peers get promoted before you.

Chances are that if you're feeling these things, other people are noticing as well. When coaching people who often tend to give in, this is what I typically hear from those around them.

Their direct reports say: *I really appreciate how much he cares, but it's frustrating that he doesn't advocate for me or our team.*

Senior managers say: *I can always count on her when we're in a bind, but honestly I'm not sure she has what it takes to lead and make the tough calls. I don't know that I'll ever see her as a peer.*

Their peers say: *He puts on this nice-guy veneer, but he seems pretty passive-aggressive. He agrees to something in a meeting and then later you find out he's waffling.*

If this is you, how do you turn things around? Can you be yourself while also becoming less easily persuaded? Can you put your own stake in the ground more often? Here are some suggestions.

Take greater ownership. Rather than changing who you are, tap into a greater sense of responsibility to the business and those around you. Too often, we assume that it's someone else's job to weigh in and shape key decisions. Instead, assume that it's yours. Don't be afraid to step on toes. There is usually plenty of room at the table for ideas and input. Let go of being an order taker. Rather than waiting to be told what to execute or standing on the sidelines, get on top of the key issues affecting the company or your team, develop a recommendation, and share it with others.

Prepare ahead of time. Because you are more easily swayed by the opinions of others, spend time in advance of critical meetings to decide what you think. Ask yourself: What are the top three ideas about the topic to be discussed? Write down your beliefs and convictions so that you are clear in your thinking and can access your ideas more quickly. Think of this like a mental filing cabinet—you are taking an extra step ahead of time to pull out the file you need rather than scrambling around in your mind during the discussion. Of course, when you're in the meeting, don't be so wedded to your ideas that you are inflexible.

Listen to others' ideas, and use your beliefs to build off theirs.

Increase your ability to advocate.

You may be a natural in building rapport and connecting with others, but standing your ground requires flexing a whole different set of muscles. Learn how to advocate for your perspective more effectively. Frame your messages so that people immediately understand why they should care and how your idea ties in to the bigger picture. Speak in tight bullet points (rather than circling around your viewpoint) so that you are crisp, articulate, and clear. Once you've made your point, invite others to weigh in to further refine your idea. You don't have to be a pit bull to be an effective advocate. In fact, coupling your good guy or gal demeanor with a sharp approach to communications will make you even more effective at persuasion.

Hold your ground. Part of making and advocating for your point is holding your ground. When others are challenging you, you might start to feel knocked off-center or backed into a corner. You may be tempted to give in to their perspective, but that will only relieve that anxious feeling temporarily. Ask yourself: Is guilt, a desire to be liked, or a fear of rocking the boat tugging you away from your own convictions?

If colleagues start to push, dominate, or interrupt, let them finish, but don't drop your idea. Loop back to your point. Or, if you need to, use a nonverbal cue, such as putting your hand up to signal you are not done speaking. You could also say, "Hang on a minute. I'd like to finish this thought." Stack the

odds in your favor. Go to the room in advance, and take a seat that is more in the flow of the conversation than on the sidelines.

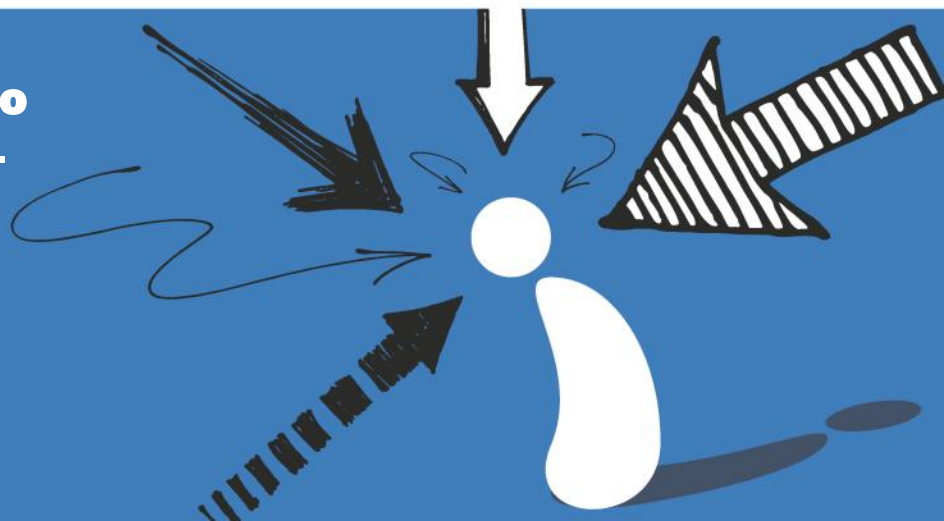
Learn to say no graciously. If you are easily persuaded by others, chances are that it shows up on your calendar. How often are you being persuaded to attend a meeting or change your schedule to accommodate the needs of others? Never say yes or no in the moment. Buy yourself time to make a thoughtful decision rather than saying yes out of habit. Acknowledge the request, and if you need to say no, offer other alternatives. Watch out for phrases your colleagues know can easily persuade you, such as "I'm really stressing right now" or "This is urgent for me." Your job is not to rescue or take on others' problems. Offer your counsel, but be careful of always being the one who gives in.

Being less easily persuaded won't make you appear bullheaded or unpleasant to work with. Quite the opposite. By standing your ground and becoming more influential yourself, you do better by your team and the business and increase the overall respect and confidence others have in you.

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Assume it's your job to shape key decisions—not someone else's.





A Guide to Winning Support for Your New Idea or Project

by Rebecca Knight

YOU'VE GOT AN IDEA for something that will improve your company's bottom line or make it a better place to work. Nice going. Now for the hard part: How do you get people on board? How do you get funding? And what should you do if your idea doesn't catch on?

What the Experts Say

In an ideal world, you'd come up with a genius new idea, tell your coworkers about it, and they'd immediately grasp its brilliance. Your boss would love it—and you—and give you the resources you need to execute it. But that's not reality.

"It's very hard to start a new initiative," says John Butman, the author of *Breaking Out: How to Build Influence in a World of Competing Ideas* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013). "It's hard to get people to listen to your idea, understand your idea, and take action."

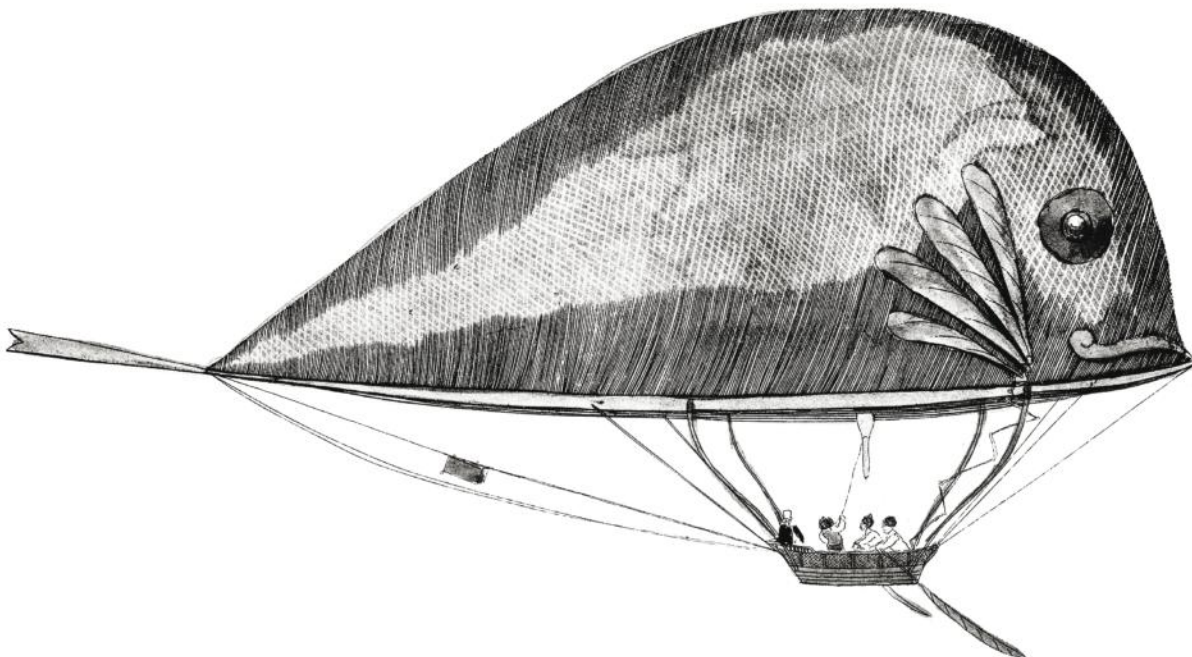
It may be difficult, but it's also a vital skill to master. "Organizations need to keep changing, adapting, and innovating," Butman says. "If they don't, they stagnate and disappear." But it's not only the success of your company that's at stake, says Susan Ashford, a professor of management and organization at University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. The ability to get new initiatives off the ground is also critical to your career. "You want to stand out, be visible, and get noticed as a leader," she says. "And one of the ways to do this is by suggesting change ideas and implementing them." Here are some pointers on how to get your idea moving.

Understand what's motivating you.

Before you breathe a word about your idea to a colleague, you must "think

through your motives," advises Butman. Ask yourself two questions: Why am I doing this? and What do I hope to accomplish? You need to be able to express your motives in a way that's relatable and compelling to others, says Butman. "If the initiative seems like something that will only make you more successful, give you more exposure, or help you get a better job," people will be skeptical. "It must benefit more than just you. Otherwise you're going to run into trouble."

Think small. Next, you must pinpoint your idea "by making it as specific and small as it can possibly be," Butman says. Decide precisely where you want to focus. If your new initiative involves, say, improving employee health, zero in on a particular goal, such as reducing employees' back pain or helping workers quit smoking. This exercise helps you "articulate the issue" you're trying to address and explain why your initiative "offers a possible solution," says Ashford. Your colleagues are more likely to respond to specific initiatives than lofty, ambiguous goals.



Gather feedback. Test the waters for your idea by using what Butman refers to as “the cocktail party test.” When you find yourself with colleagues who might be interested in your initiative—whether they are close coworkers or people from an entirely different department or division—broach your idea in an informal way. “Present your idea by saying something like, ‘I’ve been thinking about this’ or ‘What would you think of this?’” suggests Butman. Then, listen carefully to what people tell you. “You want questions. You want opposing viewpoints. You want pushback,” he says. The goal is to get to a place that no matter what anybody throws at you, you have a response. “Be sure to integrate their feedback into your game plan,” adds Ashford. “It’s a process of iteration and figuring out” what works.

Shape your story for the audience. Strategize how you’ll sell your initiative to different groups of colleagues and higher-ups. “Think about the language you’ll use for each of your audiences,” says Ashford. You must be seen as credible when you’re talking about the financial implications of your initiative to the finance group, for instance. “You need to be able to talk about your idea succinctly and vividly and in a solutions-oriented way,” she adds. After all, “if you’re in an elevator with a decision maker, you have only so much time to talk and you can’t very well shoot your PowerPoint slides up on the walls.” And bear in mind that everyone has different learning styles. According to Butman, “You can’t expect to write a white paper and slap it on people’s desks.” For this reason, it’s important to vary your messaging with something written, something spoken, something visual, and perhaps even something tangible. Butman recommends using a personal story to provide context. “Give people some idea of how you came up with the idea and why it’s meaningful to you as a human being.” Ashford agrees that your presentation should not just contain data but should have visual appeal as well.

Sell, sell, sell. Selling your idea is “not a singular event—it’s a campaign,” according to Ashford. “You must do a lot of watercooler talk with different kinds of people.” Getting people to nod their heads in agreement is the first step, but to spark excitement and secure funding, you need to inspire. “You want to trigger people’s emotions as well as their rational selves,” she says. Your aim is to “reduce resistance, bring people on board, and band allies and resources together.” You should be “closing the deal all the time,” adds Butman. “When you talk about it, you want people getting a little bit more of the idea and signing on to it a little bit more each time.” The goal, he says, is “internal virality” through “incremental agreement.” One word to the wise: When you’re trying to get others on board, don’t use the word “new.” “That’s the language of marketing,” says Butman. Colleagues need to be able to understand your idea in the context of the company’s past measures. “People often think their initiative has to be newer than new, but really it should be between 80% and 90% old—not radically new, but incrementally so.”

“Think about what’s good for all, not just what will let you shine.”

Propose a pilot. Ashford suggests proposing a trial run. It could be in the spirit of “Let’s not worry about making this change wholesale—let’s try a pilot,” she says. “It reduces the perceived risk” of implementing something big and new. Pilots give people a chance to test out the idea. “And they can also create data that changes minds.” If you don’t have the power to allocate budget to a pilot, you must sell harder to those who do. “Organizations have limited time, attention, and money,” says Ashford. Don’t lose sight of the fact that you’re constantly

“competing against other people’s ideas” and other people’s doggedness. “If you and your allies really care about something, you must sell it”; a pilot is often a cost-effective way to do that.

Don’t get discouraged. Even when it seems as if you’re constantly running into roadblocks and your initiative may never get off the ground, don’t be deterred. “Sometimes an idea catches on right away, and sometimes it takes decades to take hold,” says Butman. Persistence is key. But this does not mean persistence at all costs. Make sure you’re incorporating people’s feedback—both the good ideas and the potential sticking points—to your pitch. “Give up your desire for credit and control, and let people help you,” says Butman. It all gets back to your motives, says Ashford. “You need to care about the idea, not about getting credit for the idea. Think about what’s good for all, not just what will let you shine. Trust the universe” that you will get credit when it’s due.

Principles to Remember Do

- Make your idea as specific as possible and emphasize how it offers a clear solution to a targeted problem
- Adapt your sales pitch to the audience
- Suggest a pilot of your plan—trials are less risky and less expensive

Don’t

- Insist on getting credit for the initiative—colleagues are less likely to support your idea if they sense you’re in it only for yourself
- Forget to solicit feedback from your colleagues
- Give up if your idea doesn’t immediately gain traction—change sometimes takes longer than you’d like 🍷

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What Effective General Managers **Really Do**

They chat about hobbies, hold spur-of-the-moment meetings, and seek out people far from their chain of command—all to combat the uncertainty and resistance inherent in their work.

by John P. Kotter

HERE IS A DESCRIPTION of a typical day in the life of a successful executive, in this case the president of an investment management firm.

7:35AM Michael Richardson arrives at work after a short commute, unpacks his briefcase, gets some coffee, and begins a to-do list for the day.

7:40 Jerry Bradshaw arrives at his office, which is right next to Richardson's. One of Bradshaw's duties is to act as an assistant to Richardson.

7:45 Bradshaw and Richardson converse about a number of topics. Richardson shows Bradshaw some pictures he recently took at his summer home.

8:00 They talk about a schedule and priorities for the day. In the process, they touch on a dozen different subjects relating to customers and employees.

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November–December 1982

Getty Images



- 8:20** Frank Wilson, another subordinate, drops in. He asks a few questions about a personnel problem and then joins in the ongoing discussion, which is straightforward, rapid, and occasionally punctuated with humor.
- 8:30** Fred Holly, the chair of the firm and Richardson's boss, stops in and joins in the conversation. He asks about an appointment scheduled for 11 o'clock and brings up a few other topics as well.
- 8:40** Richardson leaves to get more coffee. Bradshaw, Holly, and Wilson continue their conversation.
- 8:42** Richardson comes back. A subordinate of a subordinate stops in and says hello. The others leave.
- 8:43** Bradshaw drops off a report, hands Richardson instructions that go with it, and leaves.
- 8:45** Joan Swanson, Richardson's secretary, arrives. They discuss her new apartment and arrangements for a meeting later in the morning.
- 8:49** Richardson gets a phone call from a subordinate who is returning a call from the day before. They talk primarily about the subject of the report Richardson just received.
- 8:55** He leaves his office and goes to a regular morning meeting that one of his subordinates runs. About 30 people attend. Richardson reads during the meeting.
- 9:09** The meeting ends. Richardson stops one of the people there and talks to him briefly.
- 9:15** He walks over to the office of one of his subordinates, who is corporate counsel. Richardson's boss, Holly, is there, too. They discuss a phone call the lawyer just received. The three talk about possible responses to

the problem. As before, the exchange is quick and includes some humor.

- 9:30** Richardson goes back to his office for a meeting with the vice chair of another company (a potential customer and supplier). One other person, a liaison to that company and a subordinate's subordinate, also attends. The discussion is cordial and covers many topics, from the company's products to U.S. foreign relations.
- 9:50** The visitor and the subordinate's subordinate leave. He opens the adjoining door to Bradshaw's office and asks a question.
- 9:52** Swanson comes in with five items of business.
- 9:55** Bradshaw drops in, asks a question about a customer, and then leaves.
- 9:58** Wilson and one of his people arrive. He gives Richardson a memo and then the three talk about an important legal problem. Wilson doesn't like a decision that Richardson has tentatively made and urges him to reconsider. The discussion goes back and forth for 20 minutes until they agree on the next action and schedule it for 9 o'clock the next day.
- 10:35** They leave. Richardson looks over papers on his desk and then picks one up and calls Holly's secretary regarding the minutes of the last board meeting. He asks her to make a few corrections.
- 10:41** Swanson comes in with a card for a friend who is sick. Richardson writes a note to go with the card.
- 10:50** He gets a brief phone call, then goes back to the papers on his desk.
- 11:03** His boss stops in. Before Richardson and Holly can begin to talk, Richardson gets another call. After the call, he tells Swanson that someone didn't get a letter he sent and asks her to send another.
- 11:05** Holly brings up a couple of issues, and then Bradshaw comes in. The three start talking about Jerry Phillips, whose work has become a problem. Bradshaw leads the conversation, telling the others what he has done during the last few days regarding the problem. Richardson and Holly ask questions. After a while, Richardson begins to take notes. The exchange, as before, is rapid and straightforward. They try to define the problem, and they outline possible next steps. Richardson lets the discussion roam away from and back to the topic again and again. Finally, they agree on the next step.
- noon** Richardson orders lunch for himself and Bradshaw. Bradshaw comes in and goes over a dozen items.
- Wilson stops by to say that he has already followed up on their earlier conversation.
- 12:10** A staff person stops by with some calculations Richardson had requested. He thanks her and they have a brief, amicable conversation.
- 12:20** Lunch arrives. Richardson and Bradshaw eat in the conference room. Over lunch, they pursue business and nonbusiness subjects, laughing often at each other's humor. They end the lunch talking about a potential major customer.
- 1:15** Back in Richardson's office, they continue the discussion about the customer. Bradshaw gets a pad, and they go over in detail a presentation to the customer. Bradshaw leaves.
- 1:40** Working at his desk, Richardson looks over a new marketing brochure.
- 1:50** Bradshaw comes in again; he and Richardson go over another dozen details regarding the presentation to the potential customer. Bradshaw leaves.
- 1:55** Jerry Thomas, another of Richardson's subordinates, comes in. He has scheduled for the afternoon some key performance appraisals, which he and Richardson will hold in Richardson's office. They talk briefly about how they will handle each appraisal.
- 2:00** Fred Jacobs (a subordinate of Thomas) joins them. Thomas runs the meeting. He goes over Jacobs's bonus for the year and the reason for it. Then the three of them talk about Jacobs's role in the upcoming year. They generally agree, and Jacobs leaves.
- 2:30** Jane Kimble comes in. The appraisal follows the same format. Richardson asks a lot of questions and praises Kimble at times. The meeting ends on a friendly note of agreement.
- 3:00** George Houston comes in; the appraisal format is repeated.
- 3:30** When Houston leaves, Richardson and Thomas talk briefly about how well they have accomplished their objectives in the meetings. Then they talk briefly about some of Thomas's other subordinates. Thomas leaves.
- 3:45** Richardson gets a short phone call. Swanson and Bradshaw come in with a list of requests.
- 3:50** Richardson receives a call from Jerry Phillips. He gets his notes from the 11 o'clock meeting about Phillips. They go back and forth on the phone talking about lost business, unhappy subordinates, who did what to whom, and what should be done now. It is a long,

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

General managers (GMs) with highly structured workdays and rigid schedules close off channels—such as chatting in hallways and calling impromptu meetings—that would otherwise provide vital information and valuable relationships. Unplanned and unstructured activities help GMs address two critical challenges: figuring out what to do and winning widespread cooperation. The key tools for meeting these challenges are flexible agendas and broad networks of relationships. With flexible agendas, GMs capitalize on unanticipated opportunities that emerge in day-to-day events. With broad networks, GMs can use impromptu encounters to exert influence far beyond their chain of command.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Effective GMs rely on agenda setting and network building to achieve their goals.

Agendas comprise activities that accomplish multiple goals, are consistent with all other corporate goals and plans, and are within the GM's power to implement. These agendas address the GM's long-, medium-, and short-term responsibilities. They include a broad range of financial, product, market, and organizational issues.

Networks extend up, down, and laterally to include everyone on whom the GM depends. He or she creates an environment in which network members work on the manager's agenda and cooperate for the greater good.

Effective GMs use direct and indirect influence to get networks to respond to their agendas.

EXAMPLES OF DIRECT INFLUENCE

- Asking or suggesting that someone do something
- Persuading someone to act in a way that supports the agenda
- Negotiating a trade
- Coercing

EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT INFLUENCE

- Staging a meeting or other event
- Convincing a network member to approach a non-network member
- Requesting several network members to take actions that influence others

All effective GMs get things done using these methods. The very best GMs mobilize more people to do more things through a wider variety of "reactive" behaviors: days not planned in much detail and filled with short, seemingly disjointed conversations. A chance hallway encounter with a member of the network that lasts two minutes can accomplish as much, if not more than, an arranged meeting that would require 15–30 minutes. Impromptu conversations are highly productive only when the GM has his or her agenda clearly in mind, and network relationships firmly in place.

Top managers can boost their GMs' effectiveness if they

- fill GM slots with candidates who know the organization and its people well. These individuals will more quickly develop a strong agenda and network.
- don't overemphasize the formal tools and simplistic situations of some management training courses. In particular, it's best to avoid time-management programs predicated on rigid scheduling.
- do not overload a new GM with a lot of specific assignments during the first three to six months. Instead, allow him or her time for collecting information, establishing relationships, and setting basic direction.
- minimize required participation in the organization's formal planning systems that focuses on rigid number crunching. Instead, encourage the new GM to focus on long-range strategic thinking and network building.

circular, and sometimes emotional conversation. By the end, Phillips is agreeing with Richardson on the next step and thanking him.

- 4:55** Bradshaw, Wilson, and Holly all step in. Each is following upon different issues that were discussed earlier in the day. Richardson briefly tells them of his conversation with Phillips. Bradshaw and Holly leave.
- 5:10** Richardson and Wilson have a light conversation about three or four items.
- 5:20** Jerry Thomas stops in. He describes a new personnel problem, and the three of them discuss it. More and more humor enters the conversation. They agree on an action to take.
- 5:30** Richardson begins to pack his briefcase. Five people briefly stop by, one or two at a time.
- 5:45** He leaves the office.

Basis of the Study

Between 1976 and 1981, I studied 15 successful general managers in nine corporations. I examined what their jobs entailed, who they were, where they had come from, how they behaved, and how these factors varied in different corporate and industry settings. The participants all had some profit-center and multifunctional responsibility. They were located in cities across the United States. They were involved in a broad range of industries, including banking, consulting, tire and rubber manufacturing, television, mechanical equipment manufacturing, newspapers, copiers, investment management, and consumer products. The businesses they were responsible for ranged from doing only \$1 million in sales to more than \$1 billion. On average, the executives were 47 years old. All were male. Most were paid well over \$200,000 in 1982 dollars.

Data collection involved three visits to each GM over 6 to 12 months. Each time, I interviewed them for at least 5 hours, and I observed their daily routines for about 35 hours. I also interviewed their key coworkers. The GMs filled out questionnaires and gave me documents such as business plans, appointment diaries, and annual reports.

I measured the performance of the GMs by combining hard and soft indices. The former included measures of revenue and profit growth, both in an absolute sense and compared with plans. The latter included opinions of people who worked with the GMs (including bosses, subordinates, and peers) as well as, when possible, industry analysts. Using this method, I judged most of the GMs to be doing a “very good” job. A few were rated “excellent” and a few “good/fair.”

In many ways, Richardson’s day is typical for a general manager. The daily behavior of the successful GMs I have studied generally conforms to the following patterns:

1. **They spend most of their time with others.** The average general manager spends only 25% of his working time alone, and that time is spent largely at home, on airplanes, or while commuting. Few spend less than 70% of their time with others, and some spend up to 90% of their work time this way.
2. **They spend time with many people in addition to their direct subordinates and their bosses.** They regularly see people who may appear to be unimportant outsiders.
3. **The breadth of topics in their discussions is extremely wide.** GMs do not limit their focus to planning, business strategy, staffing, and other top-management concerns. They discuss virtually anything and everything even remotely associated with their businesses.
4. **GMs ask a lot of questions.** In a half-hour conversation, some will ask literally hundreds of them.
5. **During conversations, GMs rarely seem to make “big” decisions.**
6. **Their discussions usually contain a fair amount of joking and often concern topics that are not related to work.** The humor is often about others in the organization or industry. Nonwork discussions are usually about people’s families and hobbies.
7. **In more than a few of these encounters, the issue discussed is relatively unimportant to the business or organization.** GMs regularly engage in activities that even they regard as a waste of time.
8. **In these encounters, the executives rarely give orders in a traditional sense.**
9. **Nevertheless, GMs often attempt to influence others.** Instead of telling people what to do, however, they ask, request, cajole, persuade, and even intimidate.
10. **GMs often react to others’ initiatives; much of the typical GM’s day is unplanned.** Even GMs who have a heavy schedule of planned meetings end up spending a lot of time on topics that are not on the official agenda.
11. **GMs spend most of their time with others in short, disjointed conversations.** Discussions of a single question or issue rarely last more than ten minutes. It is not at all unusual for a general manager to cover ten unrelated topics in a five-minute conversation.
12. **They work long hours.** The average GM I have studied works just under 60 hours per week. Although GMs can do some of their work at home, while commuting to work, or while traveling, they spend most of their time at their places of work.

A Typical GM's Agenda

	Short Term 0 to 1 year	Medium Term 1 to 5 years	Long Term 5 to 20 years
KEY ISSUES	A detailed list of objectives for the quarter and the year in all financial areas.	A fairly specific set of goals for sales, income, and ROI for the next five years.	A vague notion of revenues or ROI desired in 10 to 20 years.
Financial			
Product and Market	A set of general objectives and plans aimed at such things as the market share for various products and the inventory levels of various lines.	Some goals and plans for growing the business, such as “introduce three new products before 1985,” and “explore acquisition possibilities in the communications industry.”	Only a vague notion of what kind of business (products and markets) the GM wants to develop.
Organizational	A list of items, such as “find a replacement for Smith soon,” and “get Jones to commit himself to an aggressive set of five-year objectives.”	A short list of items, such as “by 1983 we will need a major reorganization,” and “find a replacement for Corey by 1984.”	A vague notion about the type of company GM wants and the caliber of management that will be needed.

The behavior Richardson demonstrates throughout his day is consistent with other studies of managerial behavior, especially those of high-level managers. Nevertheless, as Henry Mintzberg has pointed out, this behavior is hard to reconcile, on the surface at least, with traditional notions of what top managers do (or should do).¹ It is hard to fit the behavior into categories like planning, organizing, controlling, directing, or staffing. The implication is that such behavior is not appropriate for top managers. But effective executives carry out their planning and organizing in just such a hit-or-miss way.

How Effective Executives Approach Their Jobs

To understand why effective GMs behave as they do, it is essential first to recognize two fundamental challenges and dilemmas found in most of their jobs:

- figuring out what to do despite uncertainty and an enormous amount of potentially relevant information;
- getting things done through a large and diverse group of people despite having little direct control over most of them.

These are severe challenges with powerful implications for the traditional management functions of planning, staffing, or-

ganizing, directing, and controlling. To tackle those challenges, effective general managers rely on agenda setting and network building. The best ones aggressively seek information (including bad news), skillfully ask questions, and seek out programs and projects that can help accomplish multiple objectives.

Agenda Setting. During their first six months to a year in a new job, GMs usually spend a considerable amount of time establishing their agendas; they devote less time to updating them later on. Effective executives develop agendas that are made up of loosely connected goals and plans that address their long-, medium-, and short-term responsibilities. The agendas usually address a broad range of financial, product, market, and organizational issues. They include both vague and specific items. (See the exhibit “A Typical GM’s Agenda.”)

Although most corporations today have formal planning processes that produce written plans, GMs’ agendas always include goals, priorities, strategies, and plans that are not in those documents. This is not to say that formal plans and GMs’ agendas are incompatible, but they differ in at least three important ways.

First, the formal plans tend to be written mostly in terms of detailed financial numbers. GMs’ agendas tend to be less

detailed in financial objectives and more detailed in strategies and plans for the business or the organization. Second, formal plans usually focus entirely on the short and moderate run (3 months to 5 years), whereas GMs' agendas tend to focus on a broader time frame, which includes the immediate future (1 to 30 days) and the longer run (5 to 20 years). Finally, the formal plans tend to be explicit, rigorous, and logical, especially regarding how various financial items fit together. GMs' agendas often contain lists of goals or plans that are not explicitly connected.

Executives begin the process of developing their agendas immediately after starting their jobs, if not before. They use their knowledge of the businesses and organizations involved along with new information that they receive each day to quickly develop a rough agenda—typically, a loosely connected and incomplete set of objectives, along with a few specific strategies and plans. Then over time, as they gather more information, they complete and connect the agendas.

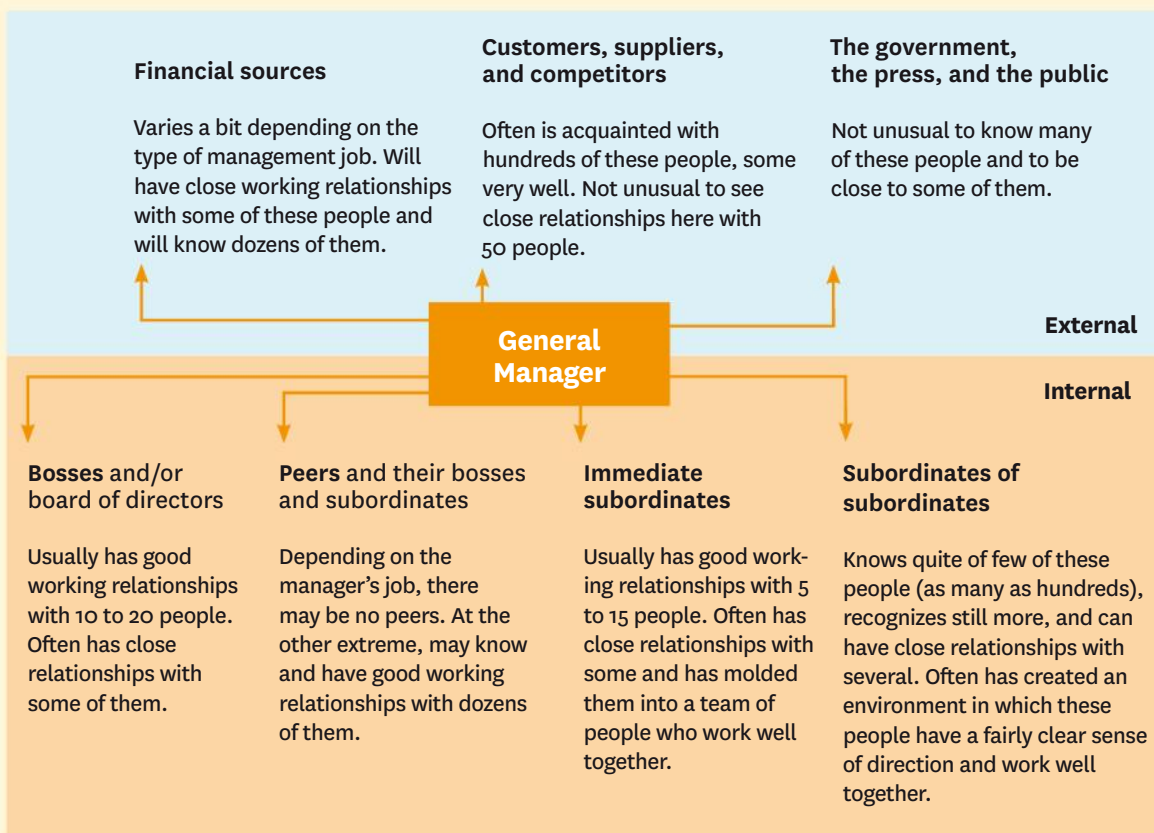
In gathering information to set their agendas, effective GMs rely more on discussions with others than on books,

magazines, or reports. These people tend to be individuals with whom they have relationships, not necessarily people in “appropriate” jobs or functions (such as people in the planning function). In this way, they obtain information continually, not just at planning meetings. And they do so by using their current knowledge of the business and organization and of management in general to help them direct their questioning, not by asking broad or general questions.

Having acquired the necessary information, GMs make agenda-setting decisions both consciously (or analytically) and unconsciously (or intuitively) in a process that is largely internal. Indeed, important agenda-setting decisions are often not observable. In selecting specific activities to include on their agendas, GMs look for those that accomplish multiple goals, are consistent with all other goals and plans, and are within their power to implement. Projects and programs that seem important and logical but do not meet those criteria tend to be discarded or at least resisted.

Network Building. In addition to setting agendas, effective GMs allocate significant time and effort to developing a

A General Manager's Network



network of cooperative relationships among the people they feel are needed to satisfy their emerging agendas. This activity is generally most intense during the first months in a job. After that, GMs' attention shifts toward using their networks to implement and to help update the agendas.

Network-building activity is aimed at much more than just direct subordinates. GMs develop cooperative relationships with and among peers, outsiders, their bosses' boss, and their subordinates' subordinates. Indeed, they develop relationships with (and sometimes among) any and all of the hundreds or even thousands of people on whom they feel in some way dependent. Just as they create an agenda that is different from, although generally consistent with, formal plans, they also create a network that is different from, but generally consistent with, the formal organizational structure. (See the exhibit "A General Manager's Network.")

The nature of their relationships varies significantly, and GMs use numerous methods to develop them. They try to make others feel legitimately obliged to them by doing favors or by stressing their formal relationships. They act in ways that encourage others to identify with them. They carefully nurture their professional reputations. They even maneuver to make others feel that they are particularly dependent on them for resources, career advancement, or other support.

In addition to developing relationships with existing personnel, effective GMs also often shape their networks by moving, hiring, and firing subordinates. In a similar way, they also change suppliers or bankers, lobby to get different people into peer positions, and even restructure their boards. And they try to create an environment—in terms of norms and values—in which people are willing to work hard on the GM's agenda and cooperate for the greater good. Although executives sometimes try to create such an environment among peers, bosses, or outsiders, they do so most often among their subordinates.

Execution: Getting Networks to Implement Agendas

GMs often call on virtually their entire network of relationships to help implement their agendas. I have seen GMs call on peers, corporate staff, subordinates reporting three or four levels below them, bosses reporting two or three levels above them, suppliers and customers, and even competitors to help them get something done.

In each case, the basic pattern was the same. The GM was trying to get some action on items in his agenda that he felt would not be accomplished without his intervention. And he chose the people and his approach with an eye toward achieving multiple objectives without disturbing important relationships in the network.

GMs often influence people by simply asking or suggesting that they do something, knowing that because of their relationship, he or she will comply. In some cases, depending on the issue involved and the nature of the relationship, GMs

also use their knowledge and information to help persuade people to act in a way that supports their agenda. Under other circumstances, they will use resources available to them to negotiate a trade. And occasionally, they resort to intimidation and coercion.

Effective GMs also often use their networks to exert indirect influence on people. In some cases, GMs will convince one person who is in the GM's network to get a second, who is not, to take some needed action. More indirectly still, GMs will sometimes approach a number of different people, requesting them to take actions that would then shape events that influence other individuals. Perhaps the most common example of exerting indirect influence involves staging a meeting or some other event.

GMs achieve much of their indirect influence through symbolic methods, such as meetings, language, and stories about the organization.

GMs achieve much of their more indirect influence through symbolic methods. They use meetings, language, stories about the organization, even architecture, in order to get some message across indirectly.

All effective GMs seem to get things done with these methods, but the best performers tend to mobilize more people to get more things done, and do so using a wider range of tactics to influence people. "Excellent" performers ask, encourage, cajole, praise, reward, demand, manipulate, and generally motivate others with great skill in face-to-face situations. They also rely more on indirect influence than do the "good" managers, who tend to apply a narrower range of techniques with less finesse.

How the Job Determines Behavior

Most of the visible patterns in daily behavior seem to be direct consequences of the way GMs approach their jobs, and thus consequences of the nature of the job itself and the type of people involved.

Spending most of their time with others (pattern 1) seems to be a natural consequence of the GM's overall approach to the job and the central role the network of relationships plays. Likewise, because the network tends to include all those the GM depends on, it is hardly surprising to find the GM spending time with many others besides a boss and direct subordinates

(pattern 2). And because the agenda tends to include items related to all the long-, medium-, and short-run responsibilities associated with the job, it is to be expected that the breadth of topics covered in daily conversations will be very wide (pattern 3).

Other patterns are direct consequences of the agenda-setting approach employed by GMs. As we saw earlier, agenda setting involves gathering information on a continual basis from network members, usually by asking questions. That GMs ask a lot of questions (pattern 4) follows directly. With the information in hand, we saw that GMs create largely unwritten agendas. Hence, major agenda-setting decisions are often invisible: they are made in the GM's mind (pattern 5).

We also saw that network building involves the use of a wide range of interpersonal tactics. Since humor and non-work discussions can be used as effective tools for building relationships and maintaining them under stressful conditions, we should not be surprised to find these tools used often (pattern 6). Because maintaining relationships requires GMs to deal with issues that other people feel are important (regardless of their centrality to the business), it is also not surprising to find that they spend time on issues that seem unimportant to them (pattern 7).

GMs implement their agendas by using a wide variety of direct and indirect influence methods. Giving orders is only one of many methods. Under these circumstances, one would expect to find them rarely ordering others (pattern 8) but spending a lot of time trying to influence people (pattern 9).

The Efficiency of Seemingly Inefficient Behavior

Of all the patterns visible in daily behavior, perhaps the two most difficult to appreciate are that the executives do not plan their days in much detail but instead react (pattern 10), and that conversations are short and disjointed (pattern 11). On the surface at least, such behavior seems particularly unmanagerial. Yet these patterns are possibly the most important and efficient of all.

The following is an example of the effectiveness and efficiency of "reactive" behavior. On his way to a meeting, a GM bumped into a staff member who did not report to him. Using this two-minute opportunity, he asked two questions and received the information he needed, reinforced their good relationship by sincerely complimenting the staff member on something he had recently done, and got the staff member to agree to do something that the GM needed done.

The agenda in his mind guided the executive through this encounter, prompting him to ask important questions and to request a needed action. And his relationship with this member of his network allowed him to get the cooperation he needed very quickly. Had he tried to plan this encounter in advance, he would have had to set up and attend a meeting, which would have taken at least 15 to 30 minutes—much more time than the chance encounter. And if he had not already had a good relationship with the person, the meeting may have taken even longer or been ineffective.

Why "Wasting" Time Is More Important Than Ever

This article grew out of a perplexing inconsistency I observed between the textbook definition of management and how real managers acted on the job. Back in the 1970s, many business school textbooks claimed that managers operated within a highly structured environment, planning their days carefully, for instance, and sharing information in a linear fashion according to a command-and-control hierarchy. But my research strongly suggested that real managers—especially successful ones—actually operated quite differently. They rarely planned their days, often punctuating them with short, unorchestrated, and even personal chats with people outside their formal chain of command. "What Effective General Managers Really Do" sought to describe that behavior and explain why it worked so well.

Rereading this article nearly 20 years later, I'm struck that it never mentions the word "leadership." Nevertheless, a good deal of what the people described in the article were doing, especially the most effective ones, was exactly that. The language I used in this article reflects the era. We didn't differentiate management from leadership, an important distinction now. Leaders look beyond the manager's operating plans. Leaders

look both outside and inside; managers do mostly the latter. Leaders communicate obsessively. All of this can be seen in the article, yet the word "leadership" is missing.

The article's ideas about time management continue to make sense in 1999, perhaps even more so than they did in 1982. Back then, the typical general manager worked fewer than 60 hours a week. Today executives often put in many more hours as they try to build their companies' competitiveness. Time-management experts still tell managers to compose lists of priorities and to limit the number of people they see. However, the successful ones I watched rarely did so. They "wasted" time walking down corridors, engaging in seemingly random chats with seemingly random people, all the while promoting their agendas and building their networks with far less effort than if they'd scheduled meetings along a formal chain of command. These behaviors were once valuable simply for getting work done well. But in today's intense business environment, they may be essential to prevent executive burnout and promote long-term competitive advantage.

Similarly, agendas and networks allow GMs to engage in short and disjointed—but extremely efficient—conversations. Consider the following dialogue, taken from a day in the life of John Thompson, a division manager in a financial services corporation. It includes three of Thompson's subordinates, Phil Dodge, Jud Smith, and Laura Turner, as well as his colleague Bob Lawrence.

Thompson: What about Potter?

Dodge: He's okay.

Smith: Don't forget about Chicago.

Dodge: Oh yeah. [Makes a note to himself.]

Thompson: Okay. Then what about next week?

Dodge: We're set.

Thompson: Good. By the way, how is Ted doing?

Smith: Better. He got back from the hospital on Tuesday.

Phyllis says he looks good.

Thompson: That's good to hear. I hope he doesn't have a relapse.

Dodge: I'll see you this afternoon. [Leaves the room.]

Thompson: Okay. [To Smith.] Are we all set for now?

Smith: Yeah. [He gets up and starts to leave.]

Lawrence: [Steps into the doorway from the hall and speaks to Thompson.] Have you seen the April numbers yet?

Thompson: No, have you?

Lawrence: Yes, five minutes ago. They're good except for CD, which is off by 5%.

Thompson: That's better than I expected.

Smith: I bet George is happy.

Thompson: [Laughing.] If he is, he won't be after I talk to him.

[Turner sticks her head through the doorway and tells him Bill Larson is on the phone.]

Thompson: I'll take it. Will you ask George to stop by later? [The others leave and he picks up the phone.] "Bill, good morning, how are you?...Yeah....Is that right?... No, don't worry about it. I think about a million and a half. Yeah.... Okay....Yeah, Sally enjoyed the other night, too. Thanks again. Okay. Bye.

Lawrence: [Steps back into the office.] What do you think about the Gerald proposal?

Thompson: I don't like it. It doesn't fit with what we've promised corporate or Hines."

Lawrence: Yeah, that's what I thought, too. What is Jerry going to do about it?

Thompson: I haven't talked to him yet. [He turns to the phone and dials.] Let's see if he's in.

This dialogue may seem chaotic to an outsider, but only because an outsider does not share the business or organizational knowledge these managers have and does not know Thompson's agenda. More important, beyond being not chaotic, these conversations are in fact amazingly efficient. In less than two minutes, Thompson accomplished all of the following:

- He learned that Mike Potter agreed to help with a problem loan. That problem, if not resolved successfully, could have

seriously hurt Thompson's plan to increase the division's business in a certain area.

- He found out that one of his managers would call someone in Chicago in reference to that loan.
- He found out that the plans for next week about that loan were all set. They included two internal meetings and a talk with the client.
- He learned that Ted Jenkins was feeling better after an operation. Jenkins works for Thompson and is an important part of his plans for the direction of the division over the next two years.
- He found out that division income for April was on budget except in one area, which reduced pressure on him to focus on monthly income and to divert attention from an effort to build revenues in that area.
- He initiated a meeting with George Masolia to talk about the April figures. Thompson had been considering various alternatives for the CD product line, which he felt must get on budget to support his overall thrust for the division.
- He provided some information (as a favor) to Bill Larson, a peer in another part of the bank. Larson had been helpful to Thompson in the past and was in a position to be helpful in the future.
- He initiated a call to Jerry Wilkins, one of his subordinates, to find out his reaction to a proposal from another division that would affect Thompson's division. He was concerned that the proposal could interfere with the division's five-year revenue goals.

Agendas and networks allow GMs to engage in short and disjointed—but extremely efficient—conversations.

In a general sense, John Thompson and most of the other effective GMs I have known are, as Tom Peters has put it, "adept at grasping and taking advantage of each item in the random succession of time and issue fragments that crowd his day." That seems to be particularly true for the best performers. Their agendas allow them to react in an opportunistic (and highly efficient) way to the flow of events around them, all the while knowing that they are doing so within some broader and more rational framework. The networks allow terse (and very efficient) conversations to happen. Together, the agenda and networks allow GMs to achieve the efficiency they need to cope with very demanding jobs in fewer than 60 hours per week through daily behavior patterns that on the surface can look unmanagerial.

What Should Top Managers Do?

What are the implications? First and foremost, putting someone in a GM job who does not already know the business or the people involved, simply because he or she is a successful “professional manager,” is risky. Unless the business is easy to learn, it will be very difficult for the new general manager to learn enough, fast enough, to develop a good agenda. And unless the situation involves only a few people, it will be difficult to build a strong network fast enough to implement the agenda.

Especially for large and complex businesses, this condition suggests that “growing” one’s own executives should be a high priority. Many companies today say that developing their own executives is important, but in light of the booming executive search business, one has to conclude that either they are not trying hard or their efforts simply are not succeeding.

Second, management training courses, offered both in universities and in corporations, probably overemphasize formal tools, unambiguous problems, and situations that deal simplistically with human relationships.

Some of the time-management programs currently in vogue are a good example of the problem. Based on simplistic conceptions about the nature of managerial work, these programs instruct managers to stop letting people and problems “interrupt” their daily work. They often tell potential executives that short and disjointed conversations are ineffective. They advise managers to discipline themselves not to let “irrelevant” people and topics into their schedules. Similarly, training programs that emphasize formal quantitative tools operate on the assumption that such tools are central to effective performance. All evidence suggests that while these tools are sometimes relevant, they are hardly central.

Third, people who are new in general management positions can probably be gotten up to speed more effectively than is the norm today. Initially, a new GM usually needs to spend a considerable amount of time collecting information, establishing relationships, selecting a basic direction for his or her area of responsibilities, and developing a supporting organization. During the first three to six months on the job, demands from superiors to accomplish specific tasks or to work on pet projects—anything that significantly diverts attention away from agenda setting and network building—can be counterproductive.

In a positive sense, those who oversee general managers can probably be most helpful initially if they are sensitive to where the new executive is likely to have problems and try to help him or her in those areas. Such areas are often quite predictable. For example, if people have spent their careers going up the ladder in one function and have been promoted into the general manager’s job in an autonomous division (a common occurrence, especially in manufacturing organizations), they will likely have difficulties with agenda setting because they lack detailed knowledge about the other functions in the division.

On the other hand, if people have spent most of their early careers in professional, staff, or assistant jobs and are promoted into a general manager’s job where they suddenly have responsibility for hundreds or thousands of people, they will probably have great difficulty at first building a network. They don’t have many relationships to begin with, and they are not used to spending time developing a large network.

Finally, the formal planning systems within which many GMs must operate probably hinder effective performance. A good planning system should help a general manager create an intelligent agenda and a strong network. It should encourage the GM to think strategically, to consider both the long and the short term and, regardless of the time frame, to take into account financial, product, market, and organizational issues. Furthermore, it should be a flexible tool so that, depending on what kind of environment among subordinates is desired, he or she can use the planning system to help achieve the goals.

Unfortunately, many of the planning systems used by corporations do nothing of the sort. Instead, they impose a rigid “number crunching” requirement on GMs that often does not require much strategic or long-range thinking in agenda setting and that can make network building and maintenance needlessly difficult by creating unnecessary stress among people. Indeed, some systems seem to do nothing but generate paper, often a lot of it, and distract executives from doing those things that are really important. ▀

John P. Kotter is the Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus, at the Harvard Business School and the chairman of Kotter International. This article was adapted from his book *The General Managers* (Free Press, 1982).

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

What Leaders Really Do by John P. Kotter

HBR, December 2001

Product no. R0111F

Kotter’s article, first published in 1990, examines the distinctions between management and leadership. Management is about coping with complexity, while leadership is about coping with change—and both are necessary for success in business.

The Manager’s Job: Folklore and Fact

by Henry Mintzberg

HBR, March–April 1990

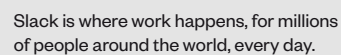
Product no. 5429

Originally published in July–August 1975 and republished as an HBR Classic, this article describes what managers actually do, including the various roles involved in managerial work and the skills required to carry them out.



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Connect, Then Lead

To exert influence, you must balance competence with warmth.

by Amy J.C. Cuddy, Matthew Kohut,
and John Neffinger

IS IT BETTER to be loved or feared?

Niccolò Machiavelli pondered that timeless conundrum 500 years ago and hedged his bets. “It may be answered that one should wish to be both,” he acknowledged, “but because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved.”

Now behavioral science is weighing in with research showing that Machiavelli had it partly right: When we judge others—especially our leaders—we look first at two characteristics: how lovable they are (their warmth, communion, or trustworthiness) and how fearsome they are (their strength, agency, or competence). Although there is some disagreement about the proper labels for the traits, researchers agree that they are the two primary dimensions of social judgment.

Why are these traits so important? Because they answer two critical questions: “What are this person’s intentions toward me?” and “Is he or she capable of acting on those intentions?” Together, these assessments underlie our emotional and behavioral reactions to other people, groups, and even brands and companies. Research by one of us, Amy Cuddy, and colleagues Susan Fiske, of Princeton, and Peter Glick, of Lawrence

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Jessica Snow



University, shows that people judged to be competent but lacking in warmth often elicit envy in others, an emotion involving both respect and resentment that cuts both ways. When we respect someone, we want to cooperate or affiliate ourselves with him or her, but resentment can make that person vulnerable to harsh reprisal (think of disgraced Tyco CEO Dennis Kozlowski, whose extravagance made him an unsympathetic public figure). On the other hand, people judged as warm but incompetent tend to elicit pity, which also involves a mix of emotions: Compassion moves us to help those we pity, but our lack of respect leads us ultimately to neglect them (think of workers who become marginalized as they near retirement or of an employee with outmoded skills in a rapidly evolving industry).

Leaders tend to emphasize their strength, but that's exactly the wrong approach.

To be sure, we notice plenty of other traits in people, but they're nowhere near as influential as warmth and strength. Indeed, insights from the field of psychology show that these two dimensions account for more than 90% of the variance in our positive or negative impressions we form of the people around us.

So which is better, being lovable or being strong? Most leaders today tend to emphasize their strength, competence, and credentials in the workplace, but that is exactly the wrong approach. Leaders who project strength before establishing trust run the risk of eliciting fear, and along with it a host of dysfunctional behaviors. Fear can undermine cognitive potential, creativity, and problem solving and cause employees to get stuck and even disengage. It's a "hot" emotion, with long-lasting effects. It burns into our memory in a way that cooler emotions don't. Research by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman drives this point home: In a study of 51,836 leaders, only 27 of them were rated in the bottom quartile in terms of likability and in the top quartile in terms of overall leadership effectiveness—in other words, the chances that a manager who is strongly disliked will be considered a good leader are only about one in 2,000.

A growing body of research suggests that the way to influence—and to lead—is to begin with warmth. Warmth is the conduit of influence: It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas. Even a few small nonverbal signals—a nod, a smile, an open gesture—can show people that you're pleased to be in their company and attentive to their concerns.

Prioritizing warmth helps you connect immediately with those around you, demonstrating that you hear them, understand them, and can be trusted by them.

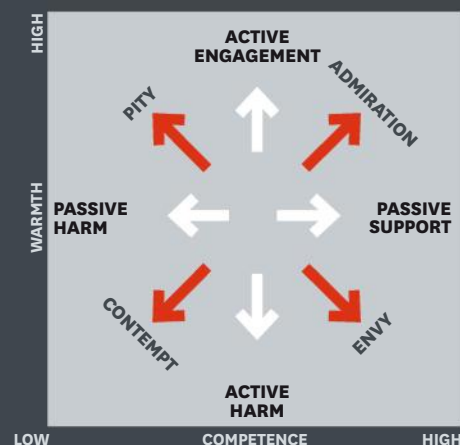
When Strength Comes First

Most of us work hard to demonstrate our competence. We want to see ourselves as strong—and want others to see us the same way. We focus on warding off challenges to our strength and providing abundant evidence of competence. We feel compelled to demonstrate that we're up to the job by striving to present the most innovative ideas in meetings, being the first to tackle a challenge, and working the longest hours. We're sure of our own intentions and thus don't feel the need to prove that we're trustworthy—despite the fact that evidence of trustworthiness is the first thing we look for in others.

Organizational psychologists Andrea Abele, of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, and Bogdan Wojciszke, of the University of Gdańsk, have documented this phenomenon across a variety of settings. In one experiment, when asked to choose between training programs focusing on competence-related skills (such as time management) and warmth-related

HOW WILL PEOPLE REACT TO YOUR STYLE?

Research by Amy Cuddy, Susan Fiske, and Peter Glick suggests that the way others perceive your levels of warmth and competence determines the emotions you'll elicit and your ability to influence a situation. For example, if you're highly competent but show only moderate warmth, you'll get people to go along with you, but you won't earn their true engagement and support. And if you show no warmth, beware of those who may try to derail your efforts—and maybe your career.



ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

ones (providing social support, for instance), most participants opted for competence-based training for themselves but soft-skills training for others. In another experiment, in which participants were asked to describe an event that shaped their self-image, most told stories about themselves that emphasized their own competence and self-determination (“I passed my pilot’s license test on the first try”), whereas when they described a similar event for someone else, they focused on that person’s warmth and generosity (“My friend tutored his neighbor’s child in math and refused to accept any payment”).

But putting competence first undermines leadership: Without a foundation of trust, people in the organization may comply outwardly with a leader’s wishes, but they’re much less likely to conform privately—to adopt the values, culture, and mission of the organization in a sincere, lasting way. Workplaces lacking in trust often have a culture of “every employee for himself,” in which people feel that they must be vigilant about protecting their interests. Employees can become reluctant to help others because they’re unsure of whether their efforts will be reciprocated or recognized. The result: Shared organizational resources fall victim to the tragedy of the commons.

When Warmth Comes First

Although most of us strive to demonstrate our strength, warmth contributes significantly more to others’ evaluations of us—and it’s judged before competence. Princeton social psychologist Alex Todorov and colleagues study the cognitive and neural mechanisms that drive our “spontaneous trait inferences”—the snap judgments we make when briefly looking at faces. Their research shows that when making those judgments, people consistently pick up on warmth faster than on competence. This preference for warmth holds true in other areas as well. In a study led by Oscar Ybarra, of the University of Michigan, participants playing a word game identified warmth-related words (such as “friendly”) significantly faster than competence-related ones (such as “skillful”).

Behavioral economists, for their part, have shown that judgments of trustworthiness generally lead to significantly higher economic gains. For example, Mascha van ’t Wout, of Brown University, and Alan Sanfey, of the University of Arizona, asked subjects to determine how an endowment should be allocated. Players invested more money, with no guarantee of return, in partners whom they perceived to be more trustworthy on the basis of a glance at their faces.

In management settings, trust increases information sharing, openness, fluidity, and cooperation. If coworkers can be trusted to do the right thing and live up to their commitments, planning, coordination, and execution are much easier. Trust also facilitates the exchange and acceptance of ideas—it allows people to hear others’ message—and boosts the quantity and quality of the ideas that are produced within an organization. Most important, trust provides the opportunity to change people’s attitudes and beliefs, not just their outward behavior.

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

THE PROBLEM

Typically, leaders emphasize their strength or competence in the workplace, which can alienate colleagues and direct reports.

THE ARGUMENT

Decades of sociology and psychology research show that by first focusing on displaying warmth—and then blending in demonstrations of competence—leaders will find a clearer path to influence.

THE LESSONS

This is difficult to do but not impossible, depending on your chemical and dispositional makeup. The authors offer specific guidelines on how to project warmth and strength in various situations.

That’s the sweet spot when it comes to influence and the ability to get people to fully accept your message.

The Happy Warrior

The best way to gain influence is to combine warmth and strength—as difficult as Machiavelli says that may be to do. The traits can actually be mutually reinforcing: Feeling a sense of personal strength helps us to be more open, less threatened, and less threatening in stressful situations. When we feel confident and calm, we project authenticity and warmth.

Understanding a little bit about our chemical makeup can shed some light on how this works. The neuropeptides oxytocin and arginine vasopressin, for instance, have been linked to our ability to form human attachments, to feel and express warmth, and to behave altruistically. Recent research also suggests that across the animal kingdom feelings of strength and power have close ties to two hormones: testosterone (associated with assertiveness, reduced fear, and willingness to compete and take risks) and cortisol (associated with stress and stress reactivity).

One study, by Jennifer Lerner, Gary Sherman, Amy Cuddy, and colleagues, brought hundreds of people participating in Harvard executive-education programs into the lab and compared their levels of cortisol with the average levels of the general population. The leaders reported less stress and anxiety than did the general population, and their physiology backed

Why Warmth Trumps Strength

The primacy of warmth manifests in many interrelated ways that powerfully underscore the importance of connecting with people before trying to lead them.

The Need to Affiliate

People have a need to be included, to feel a sense of belonging. In fact, some psychologists would argue that the drive to affiliate ranks among our primary needs as humans. Experiments by neuroscientist Naomi Eisenberger and colleagues suggest that the need is so strong that when we are ostracized—even by virtual strangers—we experience pain that is akin to strong physical pain.

“Us” Versus “Them”

In recent decades, few areas have received as much attention from social psychology researchers as group dynamics—and for good reason: The preference for the groups to which one belongs is so strong that even under extreme conditions—such as knowing that membership in a group was randomly assigned and that the groups themselves are arbitrary—people consistently prefer fellow group members to nonmembers. As a leader, you must make sure you’re a part of the key groups in your organization. In fact, you want to be the aspirational member of the group, the chosen representative of the group. As soon as you become one of “them”—the management, the leadership—you begin to lose people.

The Desire to Be Understood

People deeply desire to be heard and seen. Sadly, as important as perspective-taking is to good leadership, being in a position of power decreases people’s understanding of others’ points of view. When we have power over others, our ability to see them as individuals diminishes. So leaders need to consciously and consistently make the effort to imagine walking in the shoes of the people they are leading.

that up: Their cortisol levels were significantly lower. Moreover, the higher their rank and the more subordinates they managed, the lower their cortisol level. Why? Most likely because the leaders had a heightened sense of control—a psychological factor known to have a powerful stress-buffering effect. According to research by Pranjal Mehta, of the University of Oregon, and Robert Josephs, of the University of Texas, the most effective leaders, regardless of gender, have a unique physiological profile, with relatively high testosterone and relatively low cortisol.

Such leaders face troubles without being troubled. Their behavior is not relaxed, but they are relaxed emotionally. They’re often viewed as “happy warriors,” and the effect of their demeanor on those around them is compelling. Happy warriors reassure us that whatever challenges we may face, things will work out in the end. Ann Richards, the former governor of Texas, played the happy warrior by pairing her assertiveness and authority with a big smile and a quick wit that made it clear she did not let the rough-and-tumble of politics get her down.

During crises, these are the people who are able to keep that influence conduit open and may even expand it. Most people hate uncertainty, but they tolerate it much better when they can look to a leader who they believe has their back and is calm, clearheaded, and courageous. These are the people we trust. These are the people we listen to.

There are physical exercises that can help to summon self-confidence—and even alter your body’s chemistry to be more like that of a happy warrior. Dana Carney, Amy Cuddy, and Andy Yap suggest that people adopt “power poses” associated with dominance and strength across the animal kingdom. These postures are open, expansive, and space-occupying (imagine Wonder Woman and Superman standing tall with their hands on their hips and feet spread apart). By adopting these postures for just two minutes prior to social encounters, their research shows, participants significantly increased their testosterone and decreased their cortisol levels.

Bear in mind that the signals we send can be ambiguous—we can see someone’s reaction to our presence, but we may not be sure exactly what the person is reacting to. We may feel a leader’s warmth but remain unsure whether it is directed at us; we sense her strength but need reassurance that it is squarely aimed at the shared challenge we face. And, as we noted earlier, judgments are often made quickly, on the basis of nonverbal cues. Especially when facing a high-pressure situation, it is useful for leaders to go through a brief warm-up routine beforehand to get in the right state of mind, practicing and adopting an attitude that will help them project positive nonverbal signals. We refer to this approach as “inside-out,” in contrast to the “outside-in” strategy of trying to consciously execute specific nonverbal behaviors in the moment. Think of the difference between method acting and classical acting: In method acting, the actor experiences the emotions of the character and naturally produces an authentic performance, whereas in classical acting,

actors learn to exercise precise control of their nonverbal signals. Generally speaking, an inside-out approach is more effective.

There are many tactics for projecting warmth and competence, and these can be dialed up or down as needed. Two of us, John Neffinger and Matt Kohut, work with leaders from many walks of life in mastering both nonverbal and verbal cues. Let's look now at some best practices.

Before people decide what they think of your message, they decide what they think of you.

How to Project Warmth

Efforts to appear warm and trustworthy by consciously controlling your nonverbal signals can backfire: All too often, you'll come off as wooden and inauthentic instead. Here are ways to avoid that trap.

Find the right level. When people want to project warmth, they sometimes amp up the enthusiasm in their voice, increasing their volume and dynamic range to convey delight. That can be effective in the right setting, but if those around you have done nothing in particular to earn your adulation, they'll assume either that you're faking it or that you fawn over everyone indiscriminately.

A better way to create vocal warmth is to speak with lower pitch and volume, as you would if you were comforting a friend. Aim for a tone that suggests that you're leveling with people—that you're sharing the straight scoop, with no pretense or emotional adornment. In doing so, you signal that you trust those you're talking with to handle things the right way. You might even occasionally share a personal story—one that feels private but not inappropriate—in a confiding tone of voice to demonstrate that you're being forthcoming and open. Suppose, for instance, that you want to establish a bond with new employees you're meeting for the first time. You might offer something personal right off the bat, such as recalling how you felt at a similar point in your career. That's often enough to set a congenial tone.

Validate feelings. Before people decide what they think of your message, they decide what they think of *you*. If you show your employees that you hold roughly the same worldview they do, you demonstrate not only empathy but, in their eyes, common sense—the ultimate qualification for being listened to. So if you want colleagues to listen and agree with you, first agree with them.

Imagine, for instance, that your company is undergoing a major reorganization and your group is feeling deep anxiety over what the change could mean—for quality, innovation, job security. Acknowledge people's fear and concerns when you speak to them, whether in formal meetings or during water-cooler chats. Look them in the eye and say, "I know everybody's feeling a lot of uncertainty right now, and it's unsettling." People will respect you for addressing the elephant in the room and will be more open to hearing what you have to say.

Smile—and mean it. When we smile sincerely, the warmth becomes self-reinforcing: Feeling happy makes us smile, and smiling makes us happy. This facial feedback is also contagious. We tend to mirror one another's nonverbal expressions and emotions, so when we see someone beaming and emanating genuine warmth, we can't resist smiling ourselves.

Warmth is not easy to fake, of course, and a polite smile fools no one. To project warmth, you have to genuinely feel it. A natural smile, for instance, involves not only the muscles around the mouth but also those around the eyes—the crow's feet.

So how do you produce a natural smile? Find some reason to feel happy wherever you may be, even if you have to resort to laughing at your predicament. Introverts in social settings can single out one person to focus on. This can help you channel the sense of comfort you feel with close friends or family.

For example, KNP worked with a manager who was having trouble connecting with her employees. Having come up through the ranks as a highly analytic engineer, she projected competence and determination, but not much warmth. We noticed, however, that when she talked about where she grew up and what she learned about life from the tight-knit community in her neighborhood, her demeanor relaxed and she smiled broadly. By including a brief anecdote about her upbringing when she kicked off a meeting or made a presentation, she was able to show her colleagues a warm and relatable side of herself.

One thing to avoid: smiling with your eyebrows raised at anyone over the age of five. This suggests that you are overly eager to please and be liked. It also signals anxiety, which, like warmth, is contagious. It will cost you much more in strength than you will gain in warmth.

How to Project Strength

Strength or competence can be established by virtue of the position you hold, your reputation, and your actual performance. But your presence, or demeanor, always counts, too. The way you carry yourself doesn't establish your skill level, of course, but it is taken as strong evidence of your attitude—how serious you are and how determined to tackle a challenge—and that is an important component of overall strength. The trick is to cultivate a demeanor of strength without seeming menacing.

Feel in command. Warmth may be harder to fake, but confidence is harder to talk yourself into. Feeling like an impostor—that you don't belong in the position you're in and are going to

Are You Projecting Warmth?

How you present yourself in workplace settings matters a great deal in terms of how you're perceived by others. Even if you're not feeling particularly warm, practicing these approaches and using them in formal and informal situations can help clear your path to influence.

WARM



When standing, balance your weight primarily on one hip to avoid appearing rigid or tense.

Tilt your head slightly and keep your hands open and welcoming.

COLD



Avoid standing with your chin pointed down.

Don't pivot your body away from the person you're engaging with.

Avoid closed-hand positions and cutting motions.

be “found out”—is very common. But self-doubt completely undermines your ability to project confidence, enthusiasm, and passion, the qualities that make up presence. In fact, if you see yourself as an impostor, others will, too. Feeling in command and confident is about connecting with yourself. And when we are connected with ourselves, it is much easier to connect with others.

Holding your body in certain ways, as we discussed above, can help. Although we refer to these postures as power poses, they don't increase your dominance over others. They're about personal power—your agency and ability to self-regulate. Recent research led by Dacher Keltner, of the University of Cali-

fornia, Berkeley, shows that feeling powerful in this way allows you to shed the fears and inhibitions that can prevent you from bringing your fullest, most authentic and enthusiastic self to a high-stakes professional situation, such as a pitch to investors or a speech to an influential audience.

Stand up straight. It is hard to overstate the importance of good posture in projecting authority and an intention to be taken seriously. As Maya Angelou wrote, “Stand up straight and realize who you are, that you tower over your circumstances.” Good posture does not mean the exaggerated chest-out pose known in the military as standing at attention, or raising one's chin up high. It just means reaching your full height, using your muscles to straighten the S-curve in your spine rather than slouching. It sounds trivial, but maximizing the physical space your body takes up makes a substantial difference in how your audience reacts to you, regardless of your height.

Get ahold of yourself. When you move, move deliberately and precisely to a specific spot rather than casting your limbs about loose-jointedly. And when you are finished moving, be still. Twitching, fidgeting, or other visual static sends the signal that you're not in control. Stillness demonstrates calm. Combine that with good posture, and you'll achieve what's known as poise, which telegraphs equilibrium and stability, important aspects of credible leadership presence.

Standing tall is an especially good way to project strength because it doesn't interfere with warmth in the way that other signals of strength—cutting gestures, a furrowed brow, an elevated chin—often do. People who instruct their children to stand up straight and smile are on to something: This simple combination is perhaps the best way to project strength and warmth simultaneously.

IF YOU WANT to effectively lead others, you have to get the warmth-competence dynamic right. Projecting both traits

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

Be Yourself, but Carefully by Lisa Rosh and Lynn Offermann

HBR, October 2013
Product no. R1310J

The authors examine common mistakes that executives make in trying to be authentic. They offer a five-step plan for moving toward more-effective self-disclosure and include a tool to help you assess when and when not to share.



More Reading
@ HBR.org

Why People Follow the Leader: The Power of Transference

by Michael Maccoby
HBR, September 2004
Product no. R0409E

Followers are a crucial part of the leadership equation, with their own motivations and powerful drives. Maccoby explores the Freudian concept of “transference”—relating to a leader as some important person from the past, such as a parent or a sibling—an understanding of which can yield great insight into organizational behavior.

WARM



Lean inward in a nonaggressive manner to signal interest and engagement.

Place your hands comfortably on your knees or rest them on the table.

Aim for body language that feels professional but relaxed.

COLD



Try not to angle your body away from the person you're engaging.

Crossing your arms indicates coldness and a lack of receptivity.

Avoid sitting "at attention" or in an aggressive posture.

at once is difficult, but the two can be mutually reinforcing—and the rewards substantial. Earning the trust and appreciation of those around you feels good. Feeling in command of a situation does, too. Doing both lets you influence people more effectively.

The strategies we suggest may seem awkward at first, but they will soon create a positive feedback loop. Being calm and confident creates space to be warm, open, and appreciative, to choose to act in ways that reflect and express your values and

priorities. Once you establish your warmth, your strength is received as a welcome reassurance. Your leadership becomes not a threat but a gift. ♥


Amy J.C. Cuddy is an associate professor of business administration at Harvard Business School. **Matthew Kohut** and **John Neffinger** are the coauthors of *Compelling People: The Hidden Qualities That Make Us Influential* (Hudson Street Press, August 2013) and cofounders of KNP Communications. **HBR Reprint R1307C**



"For the plaintiff in this case, your honor, the product's bold assertion—'easy-opening lid'—was a cruel and vicious lie."

The Network Secrets of **Great Change Agents**

by Julie Battilana and Tiziana Casciaro



CHANGE IS HARD, especially in a large organization. Numerous studies have shown that employees tend instinctively to oppose change initiatives because they disrupt established power structures and ways of getting things done. However, some leaders do succeed—often spectacularly—at transforming their workplaces. What makes them able to exert this sort of influence when the vast majority can't? So many organizations are contemplating turnarounds, restructurings, and strategic shifts these days that it's essential to understand what successful change agents do differently. We set out to gain that insight by focusing on organizations in which size, complexity, and tradition make it exceptionally difficult to achieve reform.

There is perhaps no better example than the UK's National Health Service. Established in 1946, the NHS is an enormous, government-run institution that employs more than a million people in hundreds of units and divisions with deeply rooted, bureaucratic, hierarchical systems. Yet, like other organizations, the NHS has many times attempted to improve the quality, reliability, effectiveness, and value of its services. A recent effort spawned hundreds of initiatives. For each one, a clinical manager—that is, a manager with a background in health care, such as a doctor or a nurse—was responsible for implementation in his or her workplace.

Originally published in
July–August 2013

Jessica Snow



In tracking 68 of these initiatives for one year after their inception, we discovered some striking predictors of change agents' success. The short story is that their personal networks—their relationships with colleagues—were critical. More specifically, we found that:

1. Change agents who were central in the organization's informal network had a clear advantage, regardless of their position in the formal hierarchy.

2. People who bridged disconnected groups and individuals were more effective at implementing dramatic reforms, while those with cohesive networks were better at instituting minor changes.

3. Being close to “fence-sitters,” who were ambivalent about a change, was always beneficial. But close relationships with resisters were a double-edged sword: Such ties helped change agents push through minor initiatives but hindered major change attempts.

We've seen evidence of these phenomena at work in a variety of organizations and industries, from law firms and consultancies to manufacturers and software companies. These three network “secrets” can be useful for any

manager, in any position, trying to effect change in his or her organization.

You Can't Do It Without the Network

Formal authority is, of course, an important source of influence. Previous research has shown how difficult it is for people at the bottom of a typical organization chart—complete with multiple functional groups, hierarchical levels, and prescribed reporting lines—to drive change. But most scholars and practitioners now also recognize the importance of the informal influence that can come from organizational networks. The exhibit on the next page shows both types of relationships among the employees in a unit of a large company. In any group, formal structure and informal networks coexist, each influencing how people get their jobs done. But when it comes to change agents, our study shows that network centrality is critical to success, whether you're a middle manager or a high-ranking boss.

Consider John, one of the NHS change agents we studied. He wanted to set up a nurse-led preoperative assessment service that would free up time for the doctors who previously

led the assessments, reduce canceled operations (and costs), and improve patient care. Although John was a senior doctor, near the top of the hospital's formal hierarchy, he had joined the organization less than a year earlier and was not yet well connected internally. As he started talking to other doctors and to nurses about the change, he encountered a lot of resistance. He was about to give up when Carol, a well-respected nurse, offered to help. She had much less seniority than John, but many colleagues relied on her advice about navigating hospital politics. She knew many of the people whose support John needed, and she eventually converted them to the change.

Another example comes from Gustaf, an equity partner at a U.S. law firm, and Penny, his associate. Gustaf was trying to create a client-file transfer system to ensure continuity in client service during lawyers' absences. But his seniority was no help in getting other lawyers to support the initiative; they balked at the added coordination the system required. That all changed when Penny took on the project. Because colleagues frequently sought her out for advice and respected her judgment, making her central to the company's informal network, she quickly succeeded in persuading people to adopt the new system. She reached out to stakeholders individually, with both substantive

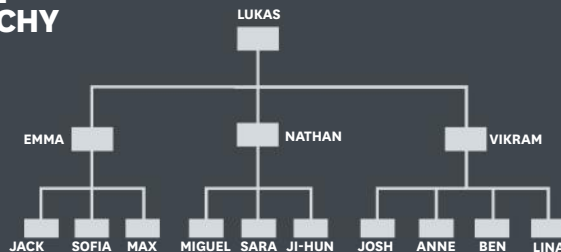
and personal arguments. Because they liked her and saw her as knowledgeable and authentic, they listened to her.

It's no shock that centrally positioned people like Carol and Penny make successful change agents; we know that informal connections give people access to information, knowledge, opportunities, and personal support, and thus the ability to mobilize others. But we were surprised in our research by how little formal authority mattered relative to network centrality; among the middle and senior managers we studied, high rank did not improve the odds that their changes would be adopted. That's not to say hierarchy isn't important—in most organizations it is. But our findings indicate that people at any level who wish to exert influence as change agents should be central to the organization's informal network.

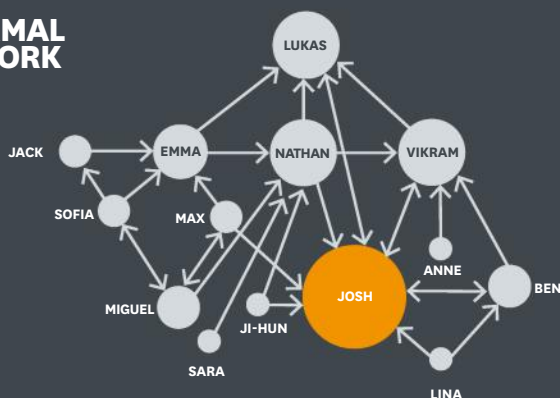
The Shape of Your Network Matters

Network position matters. But so does network type. In a *cohesive network*, the people you are connected to are connected to one another. This can be advantageous because social cohesion leads to high levels of trust and support. Information and ideas are corroborated through multiple channels, maximizing understanding, so it's easier to coordinate the group. And people are more likely to be consistent in their

FORMAL HIERARCHY



INFORMAL NETWORK



In the formal hierarchy of one unit in a large company, Lukas holds the most senior position, while Josh is at the bottom of the pyramid. But, as the informal network diagram shows, many people seek Josh out for advice, making him more central to the network than Lukas and thus highly influential.

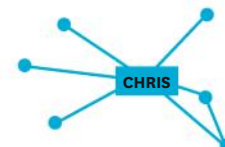
COHESIVE NETWORK

The people in your network are connected to one another. This builds trust and mutual support, facilitating communication and coordination.



BRIDGING NETWORK

Your network contacts are *not* connected to one another. You are the bridge between disparate individuals and groups, giving you control over what, when, and how you communicate with them.



ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

words and deeds since they know that discrepancies will be spotted. In a *bridging network*, by contrast, you are connected to people who aren't connected to one another. There are benefits to that, too, because you get access to novel information and knowledge instead of hearing the same things over and over again. You control when and how you pass information along. And you can adapt your message for different people in the network because they're unlikely to talk to one another.

Which type of network is better for implementing change? The answer is an academic's favorite: It depends. It depends on how much the change causes the organization to diverge from its institutional norms or traditional ways of getting work done and how much resistance it generates as a result.

Consider, for instance, an NHS attempt to transfer some responsibility for patient discharge from doctors to nurses. This is a *divergent change*: It violates the deeply entrenched role division that gives doctors full authority over such decisions. In the legal profession, a divergent change might be to use a measure other than billable hours to determine compensation. In academia, it might involve the elimination of tenure. Such changes require dramatic shifts in values and practices that have been taken for granted. A *nondivergent change* builds on rather than disrupts existing norms and practices. Many of the NHS initiatives we studied were nondivergent in that they aimed to give even more power to doctors—for example, by putting them in charge of new quality-control systems.

A cohesive network works well when the change is not particularly divergent. Most people in the change agent's network will trust his or her intentions. Those who are harder to convince will be pressured by others in the network to cooperate and will probably give in because the change is not too disruptive. But for more-dramatic transformations, a bridging network works better—first, because unconnected resisters are less likely to form a coalition and second, because the change agent can vary the timing and framing of messages for different contacts, highlighting issues that speak to individuals' needs and goals.

Consider, for instance, an NHS nurse who implemented the change in discharge decision authority, described above, in her hospital. She explained how her connections to managers, other nurses, and doctors helped her tailor and time her appeals for each constituency:

"I first met with the management of the hospital to secure their support. I insisted that nurse-led discharge would help us reduce waiting times for patients, which was one of the key targets that the government had set. I then focused on nurses. I wanted them to understand how important it was to increase their voice in the hospital and to demonstrate how they could contribute to the organizational agenda. Once I had their full support, I turned to doctors. I expected that they would stamp their feet and dig their heels in. To overcome their resistance, I insisted that the new discharge process would reduce their

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

THE QUESTION

Large organizations—and the people working in them—tend to resist change. Yet some people are remarkably successful at leading transformation efforts. What makes them so effective?

THE RESEARCH

An in-depth analysis of change initiatives at the UK's National Health Service revealed that the likelihood of adoption often depended on three characteristics of change agents' networks of informal relationships.

THE FINDINGS

Change agents were more successful in the following situations:

- when they were central in the informal network, regardless of their position in the formal hierarchy;
- when the nature of their network (either bridging or cohesive) matched the type of change they were pursuing; and
- when they had close relationships with fence-sitters, or people ambivalent about the change.

workload, thereby enabling them to focus on complex cases and ensure quicker patient turnover."

By contrast, another nurse, who led the same initiative at her hospital, admitted that she was handicapped by her cohesive network: Instead of supporting her, the key stakeholders she knew quickly joined forces against the effort. She never overcame their resistance.

The cases of two NHS managers, both of whom had to convince colleagues of the merits of a new computerized booking system (a nondivergent change), are also telling. Martin, who had a cohesive network, succeeded in just a few months because his contacts trusted him and one another, even if they were initially reluctant to make the switch. But Robert, whose bridging network meant that his key contacts weren't connected to one another, struggled for more than six months to build support.

We've observed these patterns in other organizations and industries. Sanjay, the CTO of a software company, wanted his R&D department to embrace open innovation and collaborate with outside groups rather than work strictly in-house, as it had always done. Since joining the company four years earlier, Sanjay had developed relationships with people in various siloed departments. His bridging network allowed him to tailor his proposal to each audience. For the CFO, he emphasized

lower product development costs; for the VP of sales, the ability to reduce development time and adapt more quickly to client needs; for the marketing director, the resources that could flow into his department; for his own team, a chance to outsource some R&D and focus only on the most enriching projects.

Change agents must be sure that the shape of their networks suits the type of change they want to pursue. If there's a mismatch, they can enlist people with not just the right skills and competencies but also the right kind of network to act on their behalf. We have seen executives use this approach very successfully by appointing a change initiative "cochair" whose relationships offer a better fit.

Keep Fence-Sitters Close and Beware of Resisters

We know from past research that identifying influential people who can convert others is crucial for successful change. Organizations generally include three types of people who can enable

or block an initiative: *endorsers*, who are positive about the change; *resisters*, who take a purely negative view; and *fence-sitters*, who see both potential benefits and potential drawbacks.

Which of these people should change agents be close to—that is, share a personal relationship built on mutual trust, liking, and a sense of social obligation? Should they follow the old adage "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer"? Or focus, as politicians often do, on the swing voters, assuming that the resisters are a lost cause? These questions are important; change initiatives deplete both energy and time, so you have to choose your battles.

Again, our research indicates that the answers often depend on the type of change. We found that being close to endorsers has no impact on the success of either divergent or nondivergent change. Of course, identifying champions and enlisting their help is absolutely crucial to your success. But deepening your relationships with them will not make them more engaged and effective. If people like a new idea, they will help enable it whether they are close to you or not. Several NHS change agents we interviewed were surprised to see doctors and nurses they hardly knew become advocates purely because they believed in the initiative.

With fence-sitters, the opposite is true. Being personally close to them can tip their influence in your favor no matter the type of change—they see not only drawbacks but also benefits, and they will be reluctant to disappoint a friend.

As for resisters, there is no universal rule. Again, it depends on how divergent the change is and the intensity of the opposition to it. Because resistance is not always overt or even conscious, change agents must watch closely and infer people's attitudes. For nondivergent initiatives, close relationships with resisters present an opportunity: Their sense of social obligation may cause them to rethink the issue. But in the case of divergent change, resisters typically perceive a significant threat and are much less susceptible to social pressure. It's also important to note that the relationship works both ways: Change agents might be reluctant to pursue an initiative that's opposed by people they trust. They might decide that the emotional cost is too high.

An NHS clinical manager who failed in her effort to transfer responsibility for a rehabilitation unit from a physician to a physiotherapist—a divergent change—described her feelings this way: "Some of my colleagues with whom I had worked for a long time continued to oppose the project. Mary, whom I've known forever, thought that it was not a good idea. It was a bit hard on me."

By contrast, a doctor who launched the same initiative in her organization did not try to convert resisters but instead focused on fence-sitters. This strategy was effective. As one of her initially ambivalent colleagues explained, "She came to me early on and asked me to support her. I know her well, and I like her. I could not be one of the people who would prevent her from succeeding."

Diagnose Your Network

How central am I in my organization's informal network?

Ask yourself: "Do people come to me for work-related advice?" When colleagues rely on you, it signals that they trust you and respect your competence, wisdom, and influence.

Do I have a cohesive or a bridging network?

Ask yourself: "Are my network contacts connected to one another?" You may not be able to answer this question with 100% accuracy, but it is worth investigating. Your network type can affect your success.

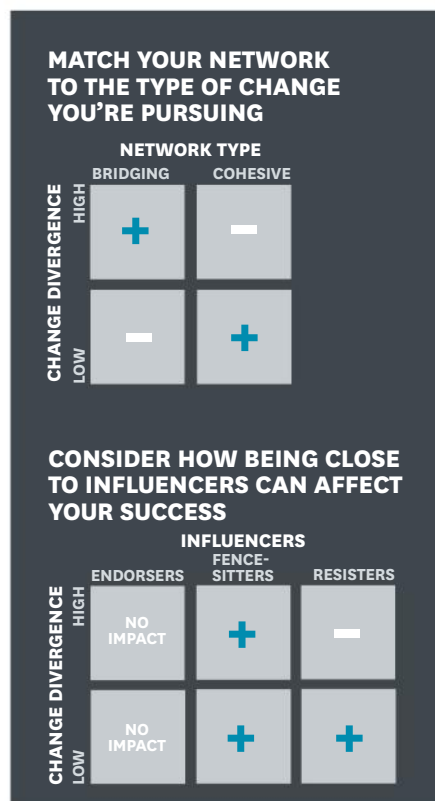
Which influential fence-sitters and resisters am I close to?

Ask yourself: "Who in my network is ambivalent about a proposed change and who is strongly opposed to it?" If it's not obvious where your contacts stand, use the OAR principle—observe, analyze, record—to sort them into groups. Pay attention to how people behave; ask questions, both direct and indirect, to gauge their sentiments; and keep a mental record of your observations. Research shows that managers can learn to map the networks around them—and network insight is, in itself, a source of power.

Similarly, John, a member of the operating committee of a boutique investment bank, initiated a rebalancing of traditional end-of-year compensation with a deferred component that linked pay to longer-term performance—a particularly divergent change in small banks that rely on annual bonus schemes to attract talent. His close relationships with several fence-sitters enabled him to turn them into proponents. He also heard out the resisters in his network. But having concluded that the change was needed, he maintained his focus by keeping them at a distance until the new system had the green light.

The important point is to be mindful of your relationships with influencers. Being close to endorsers certainly won't hurt, but it won't make them more engaged, either. Fence-sitters can always help, so make time to take them out to lunch, express an authentic interest in their opinions, and find similarities with them in order to build goodwill and common purpose. Handle resisters with care: If you're pursuing a disruptive initiative, you probably won't change their mind—but they might change yours. By all means, hear them out in order to understand their opposition; the change you're pursuing may in fact be wrong-headed. But if you're still convinced of its importance, keep resisters at arm's length.

ALL THREE OF OUR FINDINGS underscore the importance of networks in influencing change. First, formal authority may give you the illusion of power, but informal networks always matter, whether you are the boss or a middle manager. Second, think about what kind of network you have—or your appointed change agent has—and make sure it matches the type of change you're after. A bridging network helps drive divergent change; a cohesive network is preferable for non-



divergent change. Third, always identify and cultivate fence-sitters, but handle resisters on a case-by-case basis. We saw clear evidence that these three network factors dramatically improved NHS managers' odds of successfully implementing all kinds of reforms. We believe they can do the same for change agents in a wide variety of organizations. ♥

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

How Leaders Create and Use Networks
by Herminia Ibarra and Mark Hunter
HBR, January 2007
Product no. R0701C
Drawing on their study of 30 emerging leaders, the authors outline three forms of networking: *operational*, for cultivating stronger ties with colleagues; *personal*, for finding ways to advance through kindred spirits outside your firm; and *strategic*, for uncovering new opportunities for your company.

BOOK

HBR Guide to Networking
Harvard Business Review Press, 2012
Product no. 11738E
To build relationships with real value, it's important to be yourself and connect selectively. This guide provides the tools and confidence you need to launch your ideas, draw on others' expertise, scope out opportunities, and land coveted roles.



More Reading
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Our findings are based on in-depth studies of 68 change initiatives over 12 months at the UK's National Health Service (NHS). We began by mapping the formal rank and informal networks of the middle and senior clinical managers spearheading the changes. Data on their demographics, position, and professional trajectories came from their curriculum vitae and NHS human resource records, while informal network data came from surveys, field visits, and interviews with them and their colleagues. We then gathered data about the content and adoption rates of the initiatives through field visits, interviews, telephone surveys conducted 12 months after implementation, and qualitative assessments from colleagues who had either collaborated with the change agents or observed them in the workplace.

Julie Battilana is a professor of business administration in the Organizational Behavior unit at Harvard Business School and the Alan L. Gleitsman Professor of Social Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School. **Tiziana Casciaro** is an associate professor of organizational behavior and the professor of leadership development at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

HBR Reprint R1307D



Managing Authenticity: The Paradox of Great Leadership

To attract followers, a leader has to be many things to many people. The trick is to pull that off while remaining true to yourself.

by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones

LEADERSHIP DEMANDS the expression of an authentic self. Try to lead like someone else—say, Jack Welch, Richard Branson, or Michael Dell—and you will fail. Employees will not follow a CEO who invests little of himself in his leadership behaviors. People want to be led by someone “real.” This is partly a reaction to the turbulent times we live in. It is also a response to the public’s widespread disenchantment with politicians and businesspeople. We all suspect that we’re being duped.

Our growing dissatisfaction with sleek, ersatz, airbrushed leadership is what makes authenticity such a desirable quality in today’s corporations—a quality that, unfortunately, is in short supply. Leaders and followers both associate authenticity with sincerity, honesty, and integrity. It’s the real thing—the attribute that uniquely defines great leaders.

But while the expression of an authentic self is necessary for great leadership, the concept of authenticity is often misunderstood, not least by leaders themselves. They often assume that authenticity is an innate quality—that a person is either authentic or not. In fact, authenticity is a quality that others must attribute to you. No leader can look into a mirror and say, “I am authentic.” A person cannot be authentic on his or her own.

Originally published in December 2005

Authenticity is largely defined by what other people see in you and, as such, can to a great extent be controlled by you. If authenticity were purely an innate quality, there would be little you could do to manage it and, therefore, little you could do to make yourself more effective as a leader.

Indeed, managers who exercise no control over the expression of their authentic selves get into trouble very quickly when they move into leadership roles. Consider Bill, a manager in a large utility company in Pittsburgh. Bill started out as a trainee electrician, but senior management at the company swiftly spotted his talent. The HR department persuaded Bill to go to

They are like chameleons, capable of adapting to the demands of the situations they face and the people they lead, yet they do not lose their identities in the process. Authentic leaders remain focused on where they are going but never lose sight of where they came from. Highly attuned to their environments, they rely on an intuition born of formative, sometimes harsh experiences to understand the expectations and concerns of the people they seek to influence. They retain their distinctiveness as individuals, yet they know how to win acceptance in strong corporate and social cultures and how to use elements of those cultures as a basis for radical change.

No leader can look into a mirror and say, “I am authentic.” A person cannot be authentic on his or her own.

university, from which he graduated with a good degree. Afterward, he was warmly welcomed back to his job. His work at the utility company often involved managing projects, and he became adept at assembling and leading teams. His technical abilities and his honesty were his biggest leadership attributes.

Things started to unravel when Bill moved to the head office and became an adviser to some of the most senior executives in the company. HR suggested to Bill that this new job would be good preparation for a major leadership position back on the front lines. But the head office was political, and Bill found that his straight talk hit many wrong notes. He started to get feedback that he didn't fully understand the complexity of situations and that he should develop better skills for influencing others. Bill tried to curb his directness, but he could never mimic his superiors' politically savvy behaviors. He started to lose his way. He alternated between indecision, while he tried to understand the office politics, and sudden bursts of outright aggression as he struggled with his old forthrightness. He began to seriously doubt his abilities.

Bill is still at the utility company, but he will not progress further there. Most of you have probably met more than one failed leader like Bill in your organizations. His story illustrates perfectly how difficult it is for leaders to find a balance between expressing their personalities and managing those of the people they aspire to lead or at least influence. Yet the ability to strike that balance—and to preserve one's authenticity in the process—is precisely what distinguishes great leaders from other executives. The challenge of great leadership is exactly that of managing one's authenticity, paradoxical though it undoubtedly sounds.

Let us be absolutely clear: Authenticity is not the product of pure manipulation. It accurately reflects aspects of the leader's inner self, so it can't be an act. But great leaders seem to know which personality traits they should reveal to whom and when.

In the following pages, we'll explore the qualities of authentic leadership, drawing on our five years of research as well as our work consulting to leaders at all levels of organizations in diverse industries. To illustrate our points, we will recount some of the experiences and reflections of the authentic leaders we have known and studied. We don't pretend to have the final word on the subject, of course. Artists, philosophers, and social scientists have debated the concept of authenticity for centuries, and it would be foolish for us to imagine that this discussion could be synthesized by us or anyone else. Nonetheless, we believe that our reflections will contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the expression of self and the exercise of leadership. Leaders who know how to manage their authenticity will be all the more effective for it, better able to both energize and retain loyal followers.

Managing the Perception

Establishing your authenticity as a leader is a two-part challenge. First, you have to ensure that your words are consistent with your deeds; otherwise, followers will never accept you as authentic. Everyone acknowledges and understands the need for consistency when establishing authenticity, but a great leader does a lot more than just pay lip service to it. He will live it every moment of the day. Indeed, it's not an exaggeration to say that a great leader is obsessive about embodying his beliefs.

Consider the case of John Latham, who was until recently the head teacher of an award-winning state school in the United Kingdom. Latham was passionate about creating an academic institution where students, teachers, and administrators respected one another and their environment. As at any school, litter and graffiti were major issues. So who picked up the trash and scrubbed the walls? Latham did. If you visited the school at break times, you would probably have found Latham

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

on the grounds picking up litter rather than in his office behind a desk. “It’s the simple, mundane things that matter,” he told us, “and I personally fix many of them before day is done.” This kind of demonstrated personal commitment to a few basic principles is essential to authentic leadership.

But it is not enough just to practice what you preach. To get people to follow you, you also have to get them to relate to you. So the second challenge of authentic leadership is finding common ground with the people you seek to recruit as followers. This means you will have to present different faces to different audiences, a requirement that many people find hard to square with authenticity. But, as Shakespeare recognized long ago, “All the world’s a stage...and one man in his time plays many parts.” Such role playing doesn’t have to be fake or insincere. That’s not to say it’s easy—far from it. As we’ve pointed out, people instinctively recognize fraudulent behavior. If a leader is playing a role that isn’t a true expression of his authentic self, followers will sooner or later feel like they’ve been tricked. And once that impression is out there, it’s hard for a leader to recover.

Nestlé CEO Peter Brabeck-Letmathe explicitly recognizes that the very different roles he plays as a leader must be true expressions of his personality. The cover of one of Nestlé’s annual reports depicts him sitting in the Swiss mountains wearing climbing clothes. But in the pages of *The Nestlé Leadership and Management Principles*, he is dressed in a dark suit and standing outside corporate headquarters. As he explains, “I wanted to use the image of the mountaineer because water and the environment are emotional issues for many people. But the photo is not artificial. That’s what I wear on weekends. I’m a climber. In the mountaineering picture, it’s a human being talking. In the [other picture], I am talking for the institution. The photographs are different, but they both capture something essential about me.”

A long-successful music industry executive we’ll call Dick is also a careful communicator of his multiple selves. Dick is from the Caribbean, and on many occasions in the rough-and-tumble of the music business, we have seen him switch from corporate-speak to an island patois liberally sprinkled with expletives. He is absolutely at home in the cutthroat environment that recording artists and their agents operate in. But, at the same time, Dick’s parents are affluent, well-established members of Caribbean society, and, on the occasions that require it, Dick can play up this aspect of himself to create a rapport with the media moguls and celebrities with whom he must also deal. All these facets of his personality ring true; his skill is in deciding which to reveal to whom and when.

If a leader is playing a role that isn’t a true expression of his authentic self, followers will sooner or later feel like they’ve been tricked.

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

To overcome widespread disenchantment with politicians and businesspeople today, effective leaders must establish and manage their authentic selves.

- Practice what you preach: Demonstrate commitment to your beliefs.
- Find common ground with the people you seek to recruit as followers. This requires matching certain facets of your personality to the people and environment you wish to influence. The skill is in learning what to reveal to whom and when.
- Stay true to your roots and create just enough distance to seem attractive and special—without appearing aloof.

By preserving your distinctiveness as an individual while simultaneously winning acceptance in corporate and social cultures, you can energize and retain loyal followers who will help you pursue your goals.

Playing multiple roles usually demands a lot of thought and work. “Before I go into a situation, I try to understand what it is [people] will be thinking. I prepare what I am going to say and who I am going to be in that context,” explains Jean Tomlin, former HR director at Marks & Spencer and one of the most influential black businesswomen in Britain. “I want to be me, but I am channeling parts of me to context. What you get is a segment of me. It is not a fabrication or a facade—just the bits that are relevant for that situation.”

Let’s look more closely at just what makes it possible for Brabeck-Letmathe, Tomlin, and executives like them to present fragments of themselves—without seeming inauthentic.

Know Yourself and Others

It goes almost without saying that the exercise of leadership is complex and requires both skills and practice. Over time, and through various life experiences, a leader develops an extensive repertoire of roles, which can make her seem very different to different people in different situations. Indeed, if a leader doesn’t acquire this complexity, she will be able to recruit as

followers only those people with whom she already shares some common ground.

But it is one thing to develop this complexity and another thing entirely to wield it effectively. Using your complex self (or, rather, selves) requires a degree of *self-knowledge* and the willingness and ability to share that self-knowledge with others, what we call *self-disclosure*. This is not to say that authentic leaders spend a lot of time exploring their inner lives through meditation or therapy. They may be profoundly self-aware and essentially authentic (in the sense that we are giving the term here), but not because of contemplation or analysis; they are not characters in some Woody Allen film. Few authentic leaders will even be conscious that they are engaged in self-expression and self-disclosure, which is probably why they are so hard to imitate.

So how do authentic leaders acquire these attributes? The relative simplicity of their goals often helps. A great leader is usually trying to accomplish no more than three or four big goals at a time. He is unwavering about these goals; he doesn't question them any more than he questions himself. That's be-

cause the goals are usually connected in some way to one or another of the leader's authentic selves. His pursuit of the goals, and the way he communicates them to followers, is intense—which naturally promotes the kind of self-disclosure we are talking about and educates him further about his various selves.

“What you get is a segment of me—just the bits that are relevant for that situation.”

We have also found that great leaders keep close to them people who will give them honest feedback. As Roche Pharmaceuticals head Bill Burns told us, “You have to keep your feet on the ground when others want to put you on a pedestal. After a

Establishing Your Authenticity

There's no one right way to establish and manage your authenticity. But there are conscious steps you can take to help others perceive you as an authentic leader. Some of these steps entail building up knowledge about your true self; some involve learning more about others.

Get to know yourself and your origins better by:

- **Exploring your autobiography.** Familiarize yourself with your identity anchors—the people, places, and events that shaped you. Share these discoveries with others who have had similar experiences.
- **Returning to your roots.** Take a holiday with old friends. Spend time away from the normal trappings of the office.
- **Avoiding comfort zones.** Step out of your routines, seek new adventures, and take some risks.
- **Getting honest feedback.** Ask for 360-degree feedback from close colleagues, friends, family, and so on.

Get to know others better by:

- **Building a rich picture of your environment.** Don't view others as one-dimensional; find out about people's backgrounds, biographies, families, and obsessions.
- **Removing barriers between yourself and others.** Selectively show a weakness or vulnerability that reveals your approachability to your direct reports, assistants, secretaries, and so on.
- **Empathizing passionately with your people.** Care deeply about the work your people do.

- **Letting others know what's unique (and authentic) about them.** Give people feedback that acknowledges and validates their origins.

Connect to the organizational context better by:

- **Getting the distance right.** Be wary of creating the wrong first impressions. Use both your sense of self and your understanding of your origins to connect with, or to separate yourself from, others.
- **Sharpening your social antennae.** Seek out foreign assignments and other experiences to help you detect the subtle social clues that may spell the difference between your success and failure in attracting followers.
- **Honoring deeply held values and social mores.** You are unlikely to make connections by riding roughshod over other cultures' strongly held beliefs.
- **Developing your resilience.** You will inevitably experience setbacks when you expose yourself to new contexts and cultures. Prepare yourself by learning about and understanding your own values.

while on a pedestal, you stop hearing the truth. It's filtered by the henchmen, and they read you so well they know what you want to hear. You end up as the queen bee in the hive, with no relationships with the worker bees. My wife and secretary are fully empowered, if they ever see me getting a bit uppity, to give me a thumping great hit over the head."

As consultants, we often have been called in to do precisely that for senior executives, acting both as priests and spies as we try to make leaders more open to truths about themselves and their relationships with others. This does not necessarily mean helping these leaders develop more of what psychologist Dan Goleman calls emotional intelligence; rather, it means helping them to sharpen their skills in disclosing the emotional intelligence they already have so they can give better performances for their followers.

Consider an executive we'll call Josh, the CEO of one of the world's largest TV production companies for the past ten years. When we first met him, Josh was one of the early innovators in the field of documentary TV. Over the years, as he moved up the corporate ladder, he matured into a highly knowledgeable and effective executive who, in the process, became rather serious—even distant and austere—in the eyes of some of his employees. These perceptions were weakening his ability to attract and retain followers, so we coached Josh to return to the mischievous sense of humor that he had displayed more readily earlier in his career. He has an amazing sense of comic timing, which he has learned to use to devastating effect to disarm opponents and delight his followers. At a recent retirement celebration, for example, people expected him to deliver a rather sober speech concerning the departing senior executive. Instead, they were treated to a comic tour de force, which thrilled the retiring executive and stunned Josh's followers, none of whom would have guessed their boss was so funny. Josh's ability to use humor is an especially important attribute in the entertainment business, and his reputation as a leader has benefited accordingly.

Besides possessing self-knowledge and skills in self-disclosure, great leaders have to be able to recognize which aspects of their authentic selves particular groups of followers are looking for. Most great leaders have highly developed social antennae: They use a complex mix of cognitive and observational skills to recognize what followers are consciously—and unconsciously—signaling to them.

The good news is that while some people seem to be born with these discernment skills, others can, in fact, learn them. We have found that individuals who have had a great deal of



mobility early in their lives possess these skills to a higher degree than those who have stayed mostly in one place. It's no coincidence that many CEOs start out in sales and that most senior executives in multinational companies have gone on multiple foreign postings. Exposure to a wide range of experiences during a manager's formative years enhances her ability to read and empathize with different people and situations.

Experiences outside of an individual's comfort zone can also sharpen her social awareness. Marks & Spencer's Jean Tomlin, for example, developed her social skills during her journey to establish credibility as a black businesswoman operating in an environment dominated by white males. And Nestlé's Peter Brabeck-Letmathe learned much from his stint in the military

Leaders may be profoundly self-aware and essentially authentic but not because of contemplation or analysis; they are not characters in some Woody Allen film.

at age 17. The living conditions and treatment were barely tolerable, and several of his fellow soldiers attempted suicide. Brabeck-Letmathe survived by observing his superior officers very closely; the better he anticipated their behavior, the easier it was to stay out of their way.

It is important for leaders to recognize that people frame their backgrounds in different ways and that there are differences among and within cultures. The salient characteristics that people use to define themselves include gender, class, race, status, and geography. And these may be expressed in

Albert Einstein once said, “I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university.”

Use Where You Come From

By the time a manager rises to a senior leadership position, he may seem like—and, indeed, may well be—a very different person than he was at the start of his journey. But despite any role playing that goes on, the leader’s authenticity is still closely linked to his origins. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines “authenticity,” in part, as “of undisputed origin.” As a result, we think it is fair to say that no leader will ever succeed in establishing his authenticity unless he can effectively manage his relationship with his past and his followers’ connections to their roots.

Authentic leaders use their personal histories to establish common ground with their followers. The desire to establish his bona fides with his employees as a regular, approachable guy probably explains why Niall FitzGerald, a former cochairman at Unilever, speaks often and with insight about his Irish heritage and the influence of his mother on both his moral and political worldviews. Similarly, Antony Burgmans, a current chairman at Unilever, obstinately remains the Dutch countryman—as demonstrated in his dress, even in his walk—despite his elevated status. In both cases, these executives are comfortable displaying something of their origins, in a very different context, in order to connect with their followers.

Pride in one’s roots, however, needs to be carefully handled. An organization whose CEO trumpets his heritage may well be intimidating or offensive to employees—and customers—who hail from elsewhere. This is one reason that so many authentic leaders work to stay curious and open to their followers’ origins. We have worked for many years with a senior executive at a U.S. chemicals company. When he meets new team members, he always begins the conversations with the same question: “Tell me, how did you come to be the kind of guy you are now?” He has an almost insatiable interest in the complex factors that reveal where his direct reports come from because he understands that they (and the organization) will be more likely to succeed if they feel comfortable with their origins.

many ways—through dress, speech, food, and even in different styles of walking. Given these variables, we should be cautious about making simple generalizations about status and societies, though we can draw some comparisons. For instance, some societies focus more on people’s *ascribed status*—attributes that are perceived as innate to particular individuals. Others focus more on people’s *achieved status*—attributes and roles that individuals attain through their own endeavors. At the most general level, American society places great emphasis on achieved status; the belief that where you’re going outweighs where you’ve been lies close to the heart of the American dream. This is not to say that American society always acts according to this belief. Many commentators worry that the growing gap between rich and poor in the United States will decrease the prospects of social mobility for many. Even so, the idea that you will get your chance remains strong.

In other societies, elite status remains relatively fixed. For example, the French business elite comprises individuals educated in the *grand écoles*—often from all the same rather privileged backgrounds. In Asian societies, especially in China, family and geography remain highly relevant to people’s understanding of their origins.

The variability of social status has important implications for leaders. The relative fluidity of American society, with an avowed emphasis on aspirations, is reflected in followers’ attitudes toward their leaders. The Yale-educated Yankee aristocrat George W. Bush, for example, can pose as a regular guy from Texas and be believed because Americans, unlike Europeans, will accept that he can transform himself, and they will respect his aspiration to do so. That kind of metamorphosis simply wouldn’t seem authentic in Britain; to the working-class voter, once an aristocrat, always an aristocrat.

Authentic leaders are comfortable in their skin; they know where they come from and who they are, and they know how to use their backgrounds to build a rapport with followers. Authentic leaders are not threatened by people with other origins;

they welcome them. They are sensitive in communicating their origins and are aware of the differences in cultural attitudes toward their backgrounds. As Albert Einstein once said, “I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbageman or the president of the university.” That statement reflects not only Einstein’s comfort with himself but also with the more open society he chose to live in.

Conform—But Only Just Enough

When picking which aspects of themselves to reveal, and to whom, authentic leaders must judge just how much they need to conform to social and organizational norms. The challenge for these executives is to create just enough distance from the norms so followers will perceive the leaders as special and attractive. It’s a very fine judgment call: Too much conformity can render leaders ineffective; too little can isolate them.

Graham, a dynamic sales guy in a fast-moving, Boston-based consumer goods business that we advise, provides a good illustration of what happens when a leader conforms too much. He was, and is, a very effective salesman, albeit in an old-fashioned, in-your-face kind of way. Some people found him brash. We thought he was very bright but a little too forthright for the rather polite culture in which he worked. We urged his managers to give him a chance to grow, though, feeling that his high-energy leadership style could help bring about some much-needed change in the organization.

The expression of one’s authentic self is a complicated and contrived act.

Graham moved from sales to marketing, then briefly into a production role at a factory, and then back into a senior marketing role. We were amazed and disappointed at the transformation in him when we saw him again. He spoke in nuanced phrases, and he carefully weighed his opinions before expressing them. He defended the status quo, remarking that our proposed change agenda for the organization was “a little simplistic.” He even told us that he preferred the quiet corridors of headquarters to the hurly-burly of the marketplace. Graham had attempted to fit in to the dominant culture. Instead, he had merely conformed—and lost the chance to be an effective change leader.

At the other end of the spectrum, Disney’s former president, Michael Ovitz, provides a cautionary tale about not conforming enough. As his boss, Michael Eisner, told Britain’s *Telegraph* newspaper: “He started to rub people the wrong way. He was

A Man for All Seasons

Critics of British Prime Minister Tony Blair often contend that because of his desire to maximize his personal appeal, Blair moves between different, contradictory selves, lacking any central personal beliefs. We would argue, however, that Blair’s winning ways stem not from sacrificing himself on the altar of electability but rather from his consummate skill in managing his authenticity. His behavior in a single dramatic week in early July 2005 exemplified how well he does this.

The week began with the Bob Geldof- and Bono-inspired Live 8 pop concert, an event to raise awareness about poverty in Africa. That was followed by Blair’s trip to Singapore to lobby the International Olympic Committee, during which he danced a gleeful jig in public when the UK bid to land the 2012 Summer Games was successful. Also that week, he attended the G8 summit in Scotland, where he was able to make headway in addressing some of his most passionate concerns. Then Blair was urgently called back to London because of the terrorist bombings there.

In each of these instances, Blair played different roles to attract followers in different ways. Yet despite the different behaviors he exhibited, Blair was able to communicate a core self; he always connected powerfully with his known personal passions—for pop music, sport, the elimination of poverty in Africa, and the defeat of terrorism. Indeed, his performance that week wrung praise even from his critics. As Andrew Rawnsley wrote in the *Observer*, “People turn admiring when they observe [Blair’s] capacity to read, articulate, and mould critical political moments.”

controversial, and it got worse as things went on....We’d all take a bus [at the corporate retreat] and he had a limousine; a special driver. Everyone had a walkie-talkie, and you heard [people] saying, ‘Who was this guy, and why was he demanding this?’ It was a bad vibe, let’s put it that way.” Ovitz lasted 14 months at Disney.

Authentic leaders know how to strike a balance between their distinctiveness and the cultures in which they operate. They do not immediately seek out head-on confrontations because they recognize that their survival as leaders (and, by extension, the survival of their initiatives) requires a measured introduction to, and adaptation of, the organization’s established business networks and social relationships. To influence

others, authentic leaders must first gain at least minimal acceptance as members of their organizations.

Perhaps the best example we've seen of this was the case of an executive we'll call Miyako, one of the first female finance directors in a Japanese company. Miyako was an outstanding leader. She helped the company modernize its accounting practices, brought in new talent, and succeeded in breaking up the cozy male cabal at the top. But even as she broke new ground, Miyako was careful to play the role expected of a Japanese woman in social settings. Her situation highlights the universal challenge that women face in establishing themselves as authentic leaders: Unless female leaders acknowledge and validate some of the prevailing organizational norms surrounding gender roles, they will find it hard to obtain acceptance from male followers.

In complex organizations, leaders can select the specific norms and elements they want to be identified with and those they need to reject. Greg Dyke, former director general of the BBC, one of the world's largest media organizations, understands very well how to play different organizational norms against one another. When he took over at the BBC in January 2000, employees across the organization were unhappy. Shortly after coming into the job, Dyke began poking his nose into offices and studios to understand the staffers' situation better. The more visits he made, the more he came to see that he could win broad acceptance for the major changes he needed to introduce by appealing to the organization's rank and file.

To that end, Dyke began phasing out the cars and chauffeurs that had been assigned to each member of his executive board.

The program producers and support staffers were pleased by this move: In an organization with a strong egalitarian aspiration, the long line of expensive black cars parked outside headquarters had been a source of irritation—even alienation—for many staffers. Dyke also cut the large budget spent on outside consultants—in one year, it went from £22 million to £3 million—symbolizing the faith the director general had in the people already inside the organization. He was implicitly saying, “I know we have the talent here.”

But it wasn't enough to identify with people near the bottom of the hierarchy. Unlike a typical CEO, Dyke needed the approval of the BBC's very powerful board of governors as well as its chairman at the time, the patrician Sir Christopher Bland. To win their acceptance, Dyke had to show respect for their established mores even while he was appealing to the anti-establishment instincts of most of his employees. For a while, he proved quite adept at managing this relationship. In public, at least, he always addressed Sir Christopher and the other governors in formal language. He was also careful to rein in his own iconoclastic instincts. He moderated his language, dressed more formally than was his normal taste, and publicly emphasized those of his interests (notably museums and science education) that appealed most to the board. In the end, however, the political machinations of the BBC overwhelmed even Dyke, and he was forced to resign.

AUTHENTICITY HAS OFTEN been thought of as the opposite of artifice—something that is straightforward, sincere, and uncomplicated. But that conception of authenticity is not only simplistic, it is also wrongheaded. Managers who assume that their authenticity stems from an uncontrolled expression of their inner selves will never become authentic leaders. Great leaders understand that their reputation for authenticity needs to be painstakingly earned and carefully managed.

The comic George Burns once said of honesty, “If you can fake that, you've got it made.” He could equally have been talking about authenticity. Of course, authentic leaders don't really fake it to make it, but Burns's joke resonates precisely because it acknowledges what we might be reluctant to admit—that the expression of one's authentic self is a complicated and contrived act. All authentic leaders are complicated and contrived. Many Americans revere the late Ronald Reagan for his authenticity as president—but he was also the first professional actor to make it to the White House. ▀

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FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

Discovering Your Authentic Leadership

by Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean, and Diana Mayer

HBR, February 2007

Product no. R0702H

The authors' interviews with 125 leaders yield a profile of the authentic leader: one who discovers and uses his or her own voice rather than emulating people who are perceived to be good leaders.

The Authenticity Paradox by Herminia Ibarra

HBR, January–February 2015

Product no. R1501C

Ibarra explains how leaning on authenticity can limit leaders' growth and impact. It's OK to change tactics as the situation requires—that's how we figure out what's right for the challenges we face. She offers three strategies for breaking free from a rigid self-concept.



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The Decision to Trust

A new model explains the mental calculations people make before choosing to trust someone.

by Robert F. Hurley

ROUGHLY HALF OF ALL MANAGERS don't trust their leaders. That's what I found when I recently surveyed 450 executives of 30 companies from around the world. Results from a GolinHarris survey of Americans back in 2002 were similarly bleak: 69% of respondents agreed with the statement "I just don't know who to trust anymore." In that same year the University of Chicago surveyed 800 Americans and discovered that more than four out of five had "only some" or "hardly any" confidence in the people running major corporations. Granted, trusting corporate leaders in the abstract is different from trusting your own CEO, and some companies and executives are almost universally considered trustworthy; but the general trend is troubling.

It's troubling because a distrustful environment leads to expensive and sometimes terminal problems. We hardly need reminding of the recent wave of scandals that shattered the public's faith in corporate leaders. And although you'll never see a financial statement with a line item labeled "distrust," the WorldCom fiasco underscores just how expensive broken trust can be. When I teach executive seminars on trust, I ask participants to describe how a working environment feels when it is characterized by low levels of trust. The most frequent responses include "stressful," "threatening," "divisive," "unproductive," and "tense." When asked how a high-

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Doug Fraser



trust work environment feels, the participants most frequently say “fun,” “supportive,” “motivating,” “productive,” and “comfortable.” Clearly, companies that foster a trusting culture will have a competitive advantage in the war for talent: Who would choose to stay in a stressful, divisive atmosphere if offered a productive, supportive one?

It is crucial, then, for managers to develop a better understanding of trust and of how to manage it. I define trust as confident reliance on someone when you are in a position of vulnerability. Given the pace of change in organizations today—mergers, downsizing, new business models, globalization—it is not surprising that trust is an issue. Fortunately, 50 years of research in social psychology has shown that trust isn’t magically created. In fact, it’s not even that mysterious. When people choose to trust, they have gone through a decision-making process—one involving factors that can be identified, analyzed, and influenced.

This article presents a model that sheds light on how the decision to trust is made. (We will ignore the extremes of complete trust based on blind faith and total distrust based on paranoia, and focus instead on the familiar situation in which

uncertainty, possible damage, and multiple other reasons to trust or distrust are combined.) By understanding the mental calculations behind the decision whether or not to trust, managers can create an environment in which trust flourishes.

A Model for Trust

Building on the social psychologist Morton Deutsch’s research on trust, suspicion, and the resolution of conflict, and on my own experience over the past 15 years consulting with organizations and executives on trust, I developed a model that can be used to predict whether an individual will choose to trust or distrust another in a given situation. (See the exhibit “To Trust or Not to Trust?”) I have tested this model, which identifies ten factors at play in the decision-making process, with hundreds of top executives. Using it, they were able to identify relationships that would benefit from greater trust and to diagnose the root causes of distrust. Armed with that knowledge, they took concrete steps that made it easier for others to place confidence in them.

Decision-maker factors. The first three factors concern the decision maker himself: the “truster.” These factors often

have little to do with the person asking for trust: the “trustee.” They are the result of a complex mix of personality, culture, and experience.

Risk tolerance. Some people are natural risk takers; others are innately cautious. How tolerant people are of risk has a big impact on their willingness to trust—regardless of who the trustee is. Risk seekers don’t spend much time calculating what might go wrong in a given situation; in the absence of

able trusting. For instance, a CEO who delegates a task to one of her vice presidents is primarily concerned with that person’s competence. She can be reasonably confident that the VP will try to serve her interests, because if he doesn’t, he may face unpleasant repercussions. The vice president, however, has little power to reward or sanction the CEO. Therefore, his choice to trust the CEO is less automatic; he must consider such things as her intentions and her integrity.

Companies that foster a trusting culture will have an advantage in the war for talent: Who would choose to stay in a stressful, divisive atmosphere if offered a productive, supportive one?

any glaring problems, they tend to have faith that things will work out. Risk avoiders, however, often need to feel in control before they place their trust in someone, and are reluctant to act without approval. Not only do they not trust others, they don’t even trust themselves. Research by the organizational anthropologist Geert Hofstede suggests that at some level, culture influences risk tolerance. The Japanese, for instance, tend to have a lower tolerance for risk than Americans.

Level of adjustment. Psychologists have shown that individuals vary widely in how well adjusted they are. Like risk tolerance, this aspect of personality affects the amount of time people need to build trust. Well-adjusted people are comfortable with themselves and see the world as a generally benign place. Their high levels of confidence often make them quick to trust, because they believe that nothing bad will happen to them. People who are poorly adjusted, by contrast, tend to see many threats in the world, and so they carry more anxiety into every situation. These people take longer to get to a position of comfort and trust, regardless of the trustee.

For example, Bill, a senior vice president at a major financial services firm, was a poorly adjusted person who always operated in “high alert” mode. He micromanaged his direct reports, even his most talented ones, because he couldn’t feel secure unless he was personally involved in the details. His inability to delegate had little to do with the trustees and everything to do with his own nature; he regularly chose suspicion over trust because he saw even the slightest mistake as a potential threat to his reputation.

Relative power. Relative power is another important factor in the decision to trust. If the truster is in a position of authority, he is more likely to trust, because he can sanction a person who violates his trust. But if the truster has little authority, and thus no recourse, he is more vulnerable and so will be less comfort-

Situational factors. The remaining seven factors concern aspects of a particular situation and of the relationship between the parties. These are the factors that a trustee can most effectively address in order to gain the confidence of trusters.

Security. Earlier we dealt with risk tolerance as a personal-ity factor in the truster. Here we look at the opposite of risk—security—as it relates to a given situation. Clearly, not all risks are equal. An employee who in good times trusts that his supervisor will approve the funding for his attendance at an expensive training program might be very suspicious of that same supervisor when the company is making layoffs. A general rule to remember: The higher the stakes, the less likely people are to trust. If the answer to the question “What’s the worst that could happen?” isn’t that scary, it’s easier to be trustful. We have a crisis of trust today in part because virtually nobody’s job is truly secure, whereas just a generation ago, most people could count on staying with one company throughout their careers.

Number of similarities. At heart we are still quite tribal, which is why people tend to more easily trust those who appear similar to themselves. Similarities may include common values (such as a strong work ethic), membership in a defined group (such as the manufacturing department, or a local church, or even a gender), and shared personality traits (extroversion, for instance, or ambition). In deciding how much to trust someone, people often begin by tallying up their similarities and differences.

Imagine that you are looking to hire a consultant for a strategy assignment. The first candidate walks into your office wearing a robe; he speaks with an accent and has a degree from a university you’ve never heard of. When you meet the second candidate, she is dressed very much like you and speaks as you do. You learn that she also attended your alma mater. Most people would feel more comfortable hiring the second

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Half of all managers don't trust their leaders. And in organizations mired in mistrust, stress, divisiveness, and lackluster productivity prevail—prompting valued employees to flee to more motivating environments.

How to win your employees' trust? Understand that trust doesn't happen magically: According to Robert Hurley, your employees *decide* whether to trust you—by conducting mental calculations based on factors you can assess and influence. These factors include shared values (such as a strong work ethic) and employees' perceptions that you're competent.

To win employees' trust, identify which factors may cause them to mistrust you—then behave in ways that secure their confidence in you. For example, Whole Foods CEO John Mackey forfeited \$46,000 of a larger bonus when he realized that his total compensation violated the company's policy that a CEO cannot make more than 14 times the average employee's salary. Mackey's action reinforced employees' belief that he served the best interests of the company, not just his own.

Your reward for winning employee's trust? You retain the talented workforce your firm needs to trounce rivals.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Hurley offers these guidelines for enhancing ten factors that inspire trust:

FACTOR	TO INCREASE EMPLOYEES'...	
Risk tolerance	Faith that “things will work out”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time explaining options during stressful times. • Offer a safety net.
Adjustment	Confidence; belief that the world is a benign place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize employee's achievements. • Correct failures through coaching, not harsh discipline.
Power	Feeling of authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide choices; avoid being coercive. • Explain how decisions serve company interests.
Security	Sense of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comfort during turbulent times. • Temper risks inherent in times of change.
Similarity	Sense of shared values and group identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use “we” more than “I.” • Emphasize what you have in common.
Interest alignment	Sense of shared interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find wins for employees. • Explain how meeting company goals benefits everyone.
Benevolent concern	Belief that you will put yourself at risk for them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate genuine concern for employees. • Occasionally make sacrifices for employees.
Capability	Perception that you're competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate your skills in relation to tasks at hand. • Delegate tasks you're not good at.
Predictability/Integrity	Belief that you behave consistently and fulfill promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underpromise and overdeliver. • If you can't fulfill a promise, explain why.
Communication	Experience of open and honest exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency and candor of your communications. • Cultivate bonds beyond workplace roles; e.g., by having lunch.

EXAMPLE

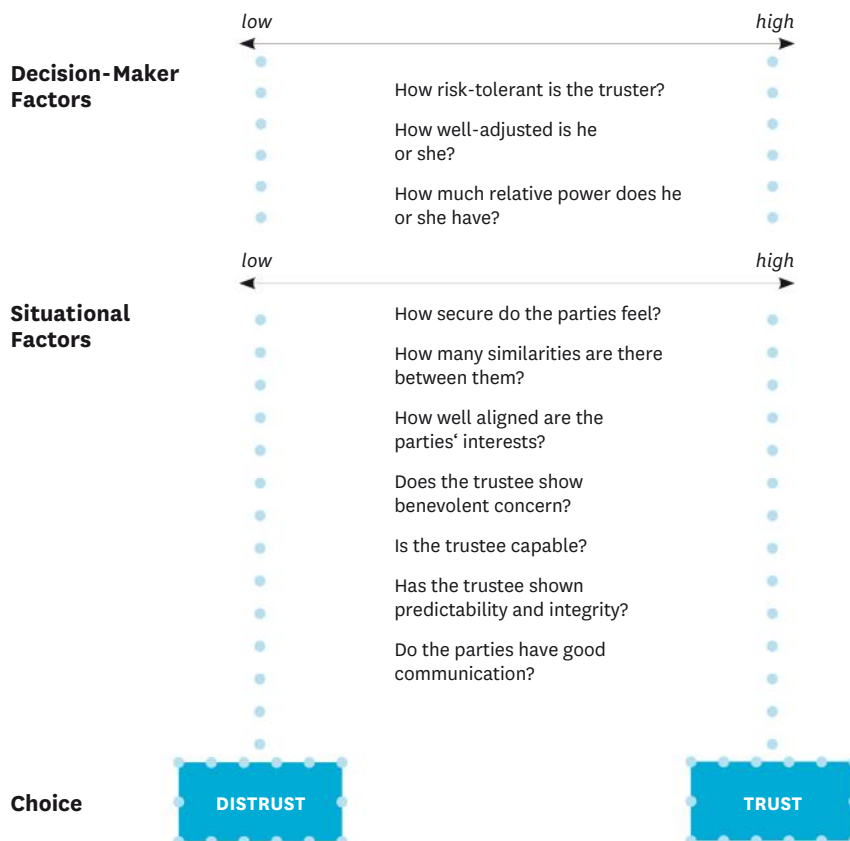
Sue, a new VP, managed Joe, a veteran employee, at a company undergoing a turnaround. Joe knew he was performing badly in a new assignment. Fearing termination and wary of Sue's short tenure, Joe wasn't inclined to trust her.

To win his trust, Sue increased **communication** by talking frequently and openly with Joe about his situation. She demonstrated **benevolent concern** by expressing empathy for the stresses associated with career uncertainty. She increased her benevolent concern by giving Joe time to obtain career coaching. Then, when Joe expressed interest in changing positions in the firm, she enhanced her **capability** in his eyes by offering him alternative roles.

Joe eventually moved to a new position—and shared his positive feelings about the process with his former colleagues, who still reported to Sue. Result? Trust increased in the department, even as it endured major change.

To Trust or Not to Trust?

When deciding whether to trust someone, people weigh ten basic factors. Three relate to the decision maker alone—the “truster”—and seven reflect the specific situation involving him or her and the person asking for trust—the “trustee.” The more factors that score on the high end of the scale, the more likely the decision maker is to choose trust.



candidate, rationalizing that she could be counted on to act as they would in a given situation.

That's partly why companies with a strong unifying culture enjoy higher levels of trust—particularly if their cultural values include candor, integrity, and fair process—than companies without one. A good example of this is QuikTrip, a convenience store chain with more than 7,000 employees, which has been named to *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For in each of the past four years. One of the company's bedrock values is do the right thing—for the employee and for the customer. This meaningful and relevant shared value serves as a foundation for an exceptionally strong culture of trust. On the flip side, a lack of similarities and shared values explains why, in many organizations, the workaholic manager is suspicious of his family-oriented employee, or the entrepreneurial field sales group and the control-oriented headquarters never get along: It's more difficult to trust people who seem different.

Alignment of interests. Before a person places her trust in someone else, she carefully weighs the question “How likely is this person to serve my interests?” When people's interests are completely aligned, trust is a reasonable response. (Because both the patient and the surgeon, for instance, benefit from a successful operation, the patient doesn't need to question the surgeon's motives.) A fairly unsophisticated leader will assume that everyone in the organization has the same interests. But in reality people have both common and unique interests. A good leader will turn critical success factors for the company into common interests that are clear and superordinate.

Consider compensation policies. We've all heard of companies that have massive layoffs, drive their stock prices up, and reward their CEOs with handsome bonuses—in the same year. It's no wonder that so many employees distrust management. Whole Foods Market, by contrast, has a policy stating that the CEO cannot make more than 14 times the average employee's

salary; in 2005 CEO John Mackey forfeited a bonus of \$46,000. That policy helps demonstrate to workers that the CEO is serving the best interests of the company, not only his own. Aligned interests lead to trust; misaligned interests lead to suspicion.

This factor also operates on a more macro-organizational level. In “Fair Process: Managing in the Knowledge Economy” (HBR July–August 1997), W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne described how a transparent, rigorous process for decision making leads to higher levels of organizational trust. Opaque decision-making processes, which may appear to serve special interests whether they do or not, breed distrust.

Because trust is a relational concept, good communication is critical.

Benevolent concern. Trust is an issue not because people are evil but because they are often self-centered. We’ve all known a manager whom employees don’t trust because they don’t believe he will fight for them. In other words, he has never demonstrated a greater concern for others’ interests than for his own. The manager who demonstrates benevolent concern—who shows his employees that he will put himself at risk for them—engenders not only trust but also loyalty and commitment.

Aaron Feuerstein, the former CEO of Malden Mills, represents an extreme example of benevolent concern. In 1995 a fire destroyed his textile mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts, which had employed some 3,200 people. He could have taken the insurance money and moved his manufacturing overseas. Then 70, he could have retired. Instead Feuerstein promised his workers that he would rebuild the mill and save their jobs, and he kept them on the payroll. Feuerstein’s benevolent concern for his employees, despite the cost to himself, gained their trust. Unfortunately, it lost the trust of his banks, which probably would have preferred that more benevolent concern be directed toward them. The resulting debt eventually forced the company to file for bankruptcy protection. This points to a real challenge in managing trust: how to balance multiple and sometimes competing interests.

Capability. Similarities, aligned interests, and benevolent concern have little meaning if the trustee is incompetent. (If you’re going to have surgery, you’re probably more concerned about your surgeon’s technical skills than about how much the two of you have in common.) Managers routinely assess capability when deciding to trust or delegate authority to those who work for them.

Capability is also relevant at the group and organizational levels. Shareholders will be suspicious of a board of directors that can’t establish reliable processes for compensating CEOs fairly and uncovering unethical behavior. A customer will not trust a firm that has not demonstrated a consistent ability to meet his or her needs.

Predictability and integrity. At some point in the trust decision the truster asks, “How certain am I of how the trustee will act?” A trustee whose behavior can be reliably predicted will be seen as more trustworthy. One whose behavior is erratic will be met with suspicion. Here the issue of integrity comes into play—that is, doing what you say you will do. Trustees who say one thing but do another lack integrity. The audio does not match the video, and we are confused as to which message to believe. The result is distrust.

In my executive-coaching work, I have seen some managers consistently overpromise but underdeliver. These people are well-intentioned, and they care passionately about their work, but their enthusiasm leads them to promise things they simply cannot produce. Despite their hard work and good intentions, colleagues don’t trust them because of their poor track records.

Take the case of Bob, the managing partner of a global consulting firm. Bob was a creative and strategic thinker who was well liked by everyone. He had good intentions and had demonstrated benevolent concern for employees. But the other partners in the firm did not trust Bob, because he often failed to deliver what he had promised when he had promised it. Despite his good intentions, people in the firm said that any project that relied on Bob was in a “danger zone.” With time and coaching, Bob learned to delegate more and to live up to his commitments. But the point here is that when a person fails to deliver, he’s not just missing a deadline; he’s undermining his own trustworthiness.

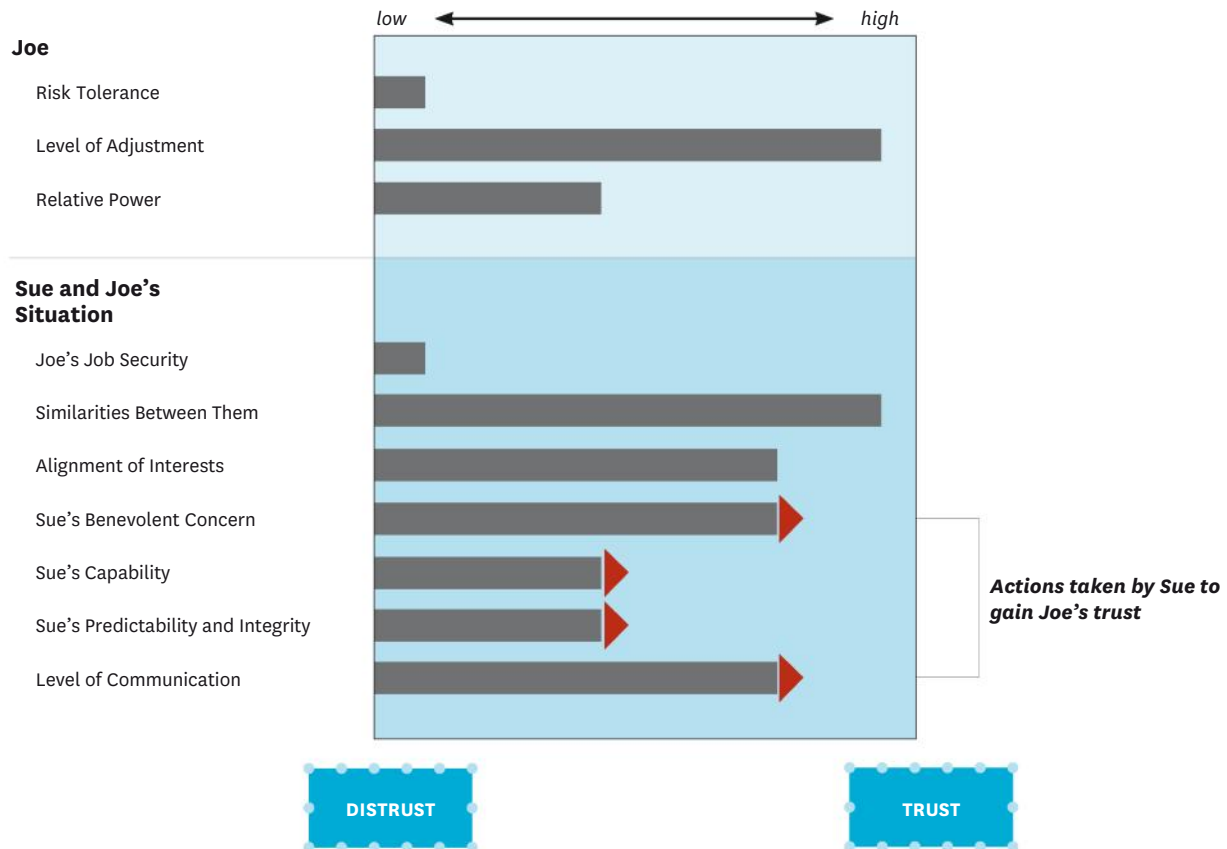
Level of communication. Because trust is a relational concept, good communication is critical. Not surprisingly, open and honest communication tends to support the decision to



Trust Intervention: Sue and Joe

Sue, a VP of sales, needed to make some personnel changes in her department. Joe, her direct report, wasn't inclined to trust Sue, because the company was going through a turnaround and he feared for his job. Moreover, since she was relatively new to the company, he couldn't predict what she would do or gauge how capable she was. Sue used the trust model to identify what she could do to

change Joe's feelings. By getting approval from her own boss for alternate positions for Joe, for instance, she demonstrated capability in finding solutions. And by empathizing with Joe's feeling of insecurity and openly discussing his options with him, she demonstrated both benevolent concern and increased communication. The result was that Joe found it easier to place his faith in Sue.



trust, whereas poor (or no) communication creates suspicion. Many organizations fall into a downward spiral: Miscommunication causes employees to feel betrayed, which leads to a greater breakdown in communication and, eventually, outright distrust.

Consider how the Catholic Church handled allegations of sexual abuse by priests in the Boston area. Cardinal Bernard Law failed to openly communicate the nature and scope of the allegations. When the details emerged during legal proceedings, parishioners felt betrayed, and trust was destroyed. The word "cover-up" was frequently used in the media to describe Law's response to the crisis. His lack of candor caused people to feel that the truth was being obscured at the expense of the victims.

Around that time I witnessed an example of excellent communication within the same Catholic Church. I sat with my family one Sunday while, in an agonizingly uncomfortable homily, a priest confessed from the altar that he had had an inappropriate encounter 20 years earlier with a woman employed by the parish. He acknowledged his mistake, talked about how he had dealt with the issue, and asked for forgiveness. Over time his parishioners came once again to regard him as a trusted spiritual leader. His offense was less serious than Law's, but his story shows that honest communication can go a long way toward building or repairing relationships and engendering trust. To some degree, one person's openness induces openness in others, and the decision to put faith in others makes it more likely that they will reciprocate.

Managing with the Trust Model

Once these ten factors are understood, executives can begin managing trust in their own relationships and within their organizations.

Consider the example of Sue and Joe, a manager and her direct report in a *Fortune* 500 consumer goods company that was in the midst of a major turnaround. Sue, a relatively new VP of sales, wanted to make some aggressive personnel moves in response to pressure from her boss to improve performance. Joe, one of Sue's employees, was three years shy of his retirement date. He had been a loyal employee for 17 years and had been successful in previous staff roles. Recently, however, he had taken on a new job as a line manager in sales and was not performing well. In fact, Sue's boss had suggested that it was time to move Joe out.

Joe was a confident person (high level of adjustment), but he knew that he was in the wrong job and wanted to find a different way to contribute (high alignment of interests with Sue). He was concerned about how candid to be with Sue, because he was afraid of being terminated (low risk tolerance and low security). And because Sue was a new VP, Joe was uncertain whether she was the decision maker and had any real control (low predictability and low capability).

As the situation originally stood, Joe wasn't inclined to trust his manager; there were too many risks and uncertainties. The trust model helped Sue identify what she could do to change the situation and create a climate of trust afterward. (See the exhibit "Trust Intervention: Sue and Joe.") Sue and I realized, for instance, that we could do little to raise Joe's tolerance for risk. Cautious by nature, he was genuinely—and quite rightly—fearful of losing his job. So I encouraged Sue to demonstrate greater benevolent concern: to have a candid but supportive conversation with Joe and give him time to go through a self-discovery process using an outside consultant. After that process,

Practical Ways of Managing Trust

If this factor is low...	then you should:
Risk Tolerance	<p>Spend more time explaining options and risks.</p> <p>Evaluate processes and results separately; recognize excellent work regardless of the outcome.</p> <p>Offer some sort of safety net.</p>
Level of Adjustment	<p>Be patient; it simply takes longer to build trust with some individuals.</p> <p>Try to enhance confidence by recognizing achievements and by correcting failures through coaching rather than harsh discipline.</p>
Relative Power	<p>Provide choices when possible; avoid being coercive.</p> <p>Communicate that leadership decisions aren't made arbitrarily by explaining how they serve organizational interests.</p>
Security	<p>Find ways to temper the risk inherent in the situation.</p> <p>Expect to invest time in raising comfort levels.</p>
Number of Similarities	<p>Use the word "we" more and the word "I" less.</p> <p>Emphasize what you have in common (values, membership, and so on).</p>
Alignment of Interests	<p>Be clear with yourself about whose interests you are serving. Take others' interests into account and find a way to accommodate them where possible.</p> <p>Focus on the overarching strategy, vision, and goals.</p> <p>Shape a culture that reinforces doing the right thing for the enterprise.</p>
Benevolent Concern	<p>Take actions that demonstrate a genuine concern for others.</p> <p>Serve others' interests even if, on occasion, you bear some loss (and find a tasteful way to show that—by your choice—they gained more than you did).</p> <p>Engage in fair process.</p>
Capability	<p>Find ways to demonstrate competence in carrying out the task at hand.</p> <p>Acknowledge areas of incompetence and compensate by sharing or delegating responsibility.</p>
Predictability and Integrity	<p>Underpromise and overdeliver.</p> <p>If you can't fulfill your promises, explain why honestly.</p> <p>Describe the values that drive your behavior so that others see consistency rather than randomness.</p>
Level of Communication	<p>Increase the frequency and candor of your communications.</p> <p>Build a relationship beyond the constraints of your respective roles—for example, by going out to lunch or playing golf.</p>

Broken trust can be mended over time if leaders engage in the right behavior.

Joe requested a transfer. I also coached Sue to work with her boss to gain approval for some alternate options for Joe, thus increasing her capability and predictability in Joe's eyes. In addition, Sue began communicating more frequently and openly to Joe about his options in the organization and was sincerely empathetic about how this career uncertainty would affect him and his wife—showing still more benevolent concern. Eventually Joe was moved into a more suitable position. He wasn't shy in sharing his positive feelings about the whole process with his former colleagues, who still reported to Sue. As a result, those people were more apt to place their faith in her, and trust increased in the department even though it was experiencing major change.

The trust model can also be applied on a broader, organizational scale. Consider the situation at Texaco in the 1990s. In 1994 a group of minority employees filed a racial-discrimination suit against the oil giant, charging that black employees were being paid less than white employees for equal work. Two years later tensions reached a crisis level when senior Texaco executives were secretly recorded denigrating black workers. It's safe to say that among black workers, trust in their company's executives bottomed out. Then-chairman and CEO Peter Bijur recognized the graveness of the situation and knew he needed to act quickly to repair the broken trust.

Bijur started by hiring outside counsel to investigate the matter; bringing in a neutral third party alleviated any suspicions that conflict of interest would taint the investigation. He also created a special board of directors committee, which was charged with evaluating the company's diversity training. That step demonstrated that Texaco placed a high value on diversity. New diversity and sensitivity training led to a corporate culture built on shared values. Those who didn't belong—specifically, the senior executives heard speaking offensively on the tape—were terminated, suspended, or had their retirement benefits cut off. To make the company's actions more predictable for employees, Bijur hired a respected judge to evaluate Texaco's HR policies, and the company changed those that were deemed unfair or not transparent. Moreover, senior executives were sent to all company locations to apologize for the humiliation to which black workers had been subjected. These meetings not only demonstrated benevolent concern but also opened up lines of communication between skeptical employees and top management.

Collectively, these actions made it easier for disillusioned workers to place their faith in the company again. Trust wasn't restored overnight—there's no quick fix for broken faith—but concerted efforts to correct the sources of distrust eventually paid off. In 1999 Bijur received an award from a national African-American group for commitment to diversity, and in 2000 Texaco received praise from SocialFunds.com for being a “model for challenging corporate racism.”

Broken trust can be mended over time if leaders consistently engage in the right behaviors. The exhibit “Practical Ways of Managing Trust” identifies some behaviors that are particularly effective.

TRUST IS a measure of the quality of a relationship—between two people, between groups of people, or between a person and an organization. In totally predictable situations the question of trust doesn't arise: When you know exactly what to expect, there's no need to make a judgment call. The turbulence of outsourcing, mergers, downsizing, and changing business models creates a breeding ground for distrust.

Leading in such an environment requires acting in ways that provide clear reasons to decide to trust. There is no returning to the days when organizations expected—and received—unconditional loyalty from employees. But by using this model, you may be able to create a more dynamic and sustainable foundation for productive relationships. ▀

Robert F. Hurley is a professor of management at Fordham University in New York and president of Hurley Associates.

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FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

The Geography of Trust by Saj-nicole A. Joni

HBR, March 2004

Product no. R0403F

Three types of trust are crucial to your effectiveness as a leader. Cultivating trust among followers is the first step. You must also prove your subject-matter expertise and demonstrate clear insights into your organization.

Who Can You Trust? by David DeSteno

HBR, March 2014

Product no. R1403K

DeSteno draws on emerging research to show how trust-worthiness works. He offers four points to remember the next time you're deciding whether to do business with a new partner: Integrity can vary, power does corrupt, confidence often masks incompetence, and it's OK to trust your gut.



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The Necessary Art of Persuasion

The language of leadership is misunderstood, underutilized—and more essential than ever.

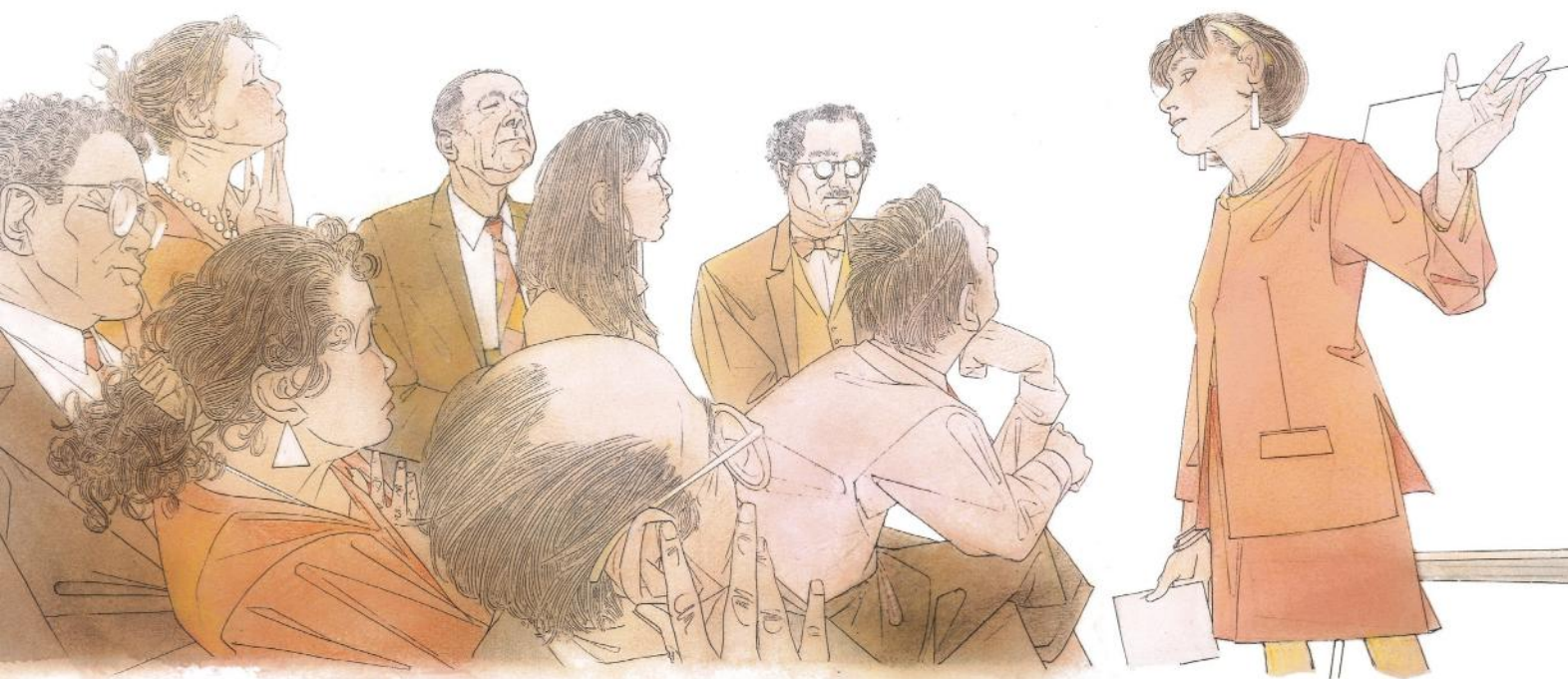
by Jay A. Conger

IF THERE EVER WAS A TIME for businesspeople to learn the fine art of persuasion, it is now. Gone are the command-and-control days of executives managing by decree. Today businesses are run largely by cross-functional teams of peers and populated by baby boomers and their Generation X offspring, who show little tolerance for unquestioned authority. Electronic communication and globalization have further eroded the traditional hierarchy, as ideas and people flow more freely than ever around organizations and as decisions get made closer to the markets. These fundamental changes, more than a decade in the making but now firmly part of the economic landscape, essentially come down to this: work today gets done in an environment where people don't just ask What should I do? but Why should I do it?

To answer this why question effectively is to persuade. Yet many businesspeople misunderstand persuasion, and more still underutilize it. The reason? Persuasion is widely perceived as a skill reserved for selling products and closing deals. It is also commonly seen as just another form of manipulation—devious and to be avoided. Certainly, persuasion can be used in selling and deal-clinching situations, and it can be misused to manipulate people. But exercised constructively and to its full potential, persuasion supersedes sales and is quite the opposite of deception.

Originally published in
May–June 1998

David Johnson



Effective persuasion becomes a negotiating and learning process through which a persuader leads colleagues to a problem's shared solution. Persuasion does indeed involve moving people to a position they don't currently hold, but not by begging or cajoling. Instead, it involves careful preparation, the proper framing of arguments, the presentation of vivid supporting evidence, and the effort to find the correct emotional match with your audience.

Effective persuasion is a difficult and time-consuming proposition, but it may also be more powerful than the command-and-control managerial model it succeeds. As AlliedSignal's CEO Lawrence Bossidy said recently, "The day when you could yell and scream and beat people into good performance is over. Today you have to appeal to them by helping them see how they can get from here to there, by establishing some credibility, and by giving them some reason and help to get there. Do all those things, and they'll knock down doors." In essence, he is describing persuasion—now more than ever, the language of business leadership.

Think for a moment of your definition of persuasion. If you are like most businesspeople I have encountered (see the

insert "Twelve Years of Watching and Listening"), you see persuasion as a relatively straightforward process. First, you strongly state your position. Second, you outline the supporting arguments, followed by a highly assertive, data-based exposition. Finally, you enter the deal-making stage and work toward a "close." In other words, you use logic, persistence, and personal enthusiasm to get others to buy a good idea. The reality is that following this process is one surefire way to fail at persuasion. (See the insert "Four Ways Not to Persuade.")

What, then, constitutes effective persuasion? If persuasion is a learning and negotiating process, then in the most general terms it involves phases of discovery, preparation, and dialogue. Getting ready to persuade colleagues can take weeks or months of planning as you learn about your audience and the position you intend to argue. Before they even start to talk, effective persuaders have considered their positions from every angle. What investments in time and money will my position require from others? Is my supporting evidence weak in any way? Are there alternative positions I need to examine?

Dialogue happens before and during the persuasion process. Before the process begins, effective persuaders use dialogue

to learn more about their audience's opinions, concerns, and perspectives. During the process, dialogue continues to be a form of learning, but it is also the beginning of the negotiation stage. You invite people to discuss, even debate, the merits of your position, and then to offer honest feedback and suggest alternative solutions. That may sound like a slow way to achieve your goal, but effective persuasion is about testing and revising ideas in concert with your colleagues' concerns and needs. In fact, the best persuaders not only listen to others but also incorporate their perspectives into a shared solution.

Persuasion, in other words, often involves—indeed, demands—compromise. Perhaps that is why the most effective persuaders seem to share a common trait: they are open-minded, never dogmatic. They enter the persuasion process prepared to adjust their viewpoints and incorporate others' ideas. That approach to persuasion is, interestingly, highly persuasive in itself. When colleagues see that a persuader is eager to hear their views and willing to make changes in response to their needs and concerns, they respond very positively. They trust the persuader more and listen more attentively. They don't fear being bowled over or manipulated. They see the persuader as flexible and are thus more willing to make sacrifices themselves. Because that is such a powerful dynamic, good persuaders often enter the persuasion process with judicious compromises already prepared.

Four Essential Steps

Effective persuasion involves four distinct and essential steps. First, effective persuaders establish credibility. Second, they

frame their goals in a way that identifies common ground with those they intend to persuade. Third, they reinforce their positions using vivid language and compelling evidence. And fourth, they connect emotionally with their audience. As one of the most effective executives in our research commented, "The most valuable lesson I've learned about persuasion over the years is that there's just as much strategy in how you present your position as in the position itself. In fact, I'd say the strategy of presentation is the more critical."

Establish credibility. The first hurdle persuaders must overcome is their own credibility. A persuader can't advocate a new or contrarian position without having people wonder, Can we trust this individual's perspectives and opinions? Such a reaction is understandable. After all, allowing oneself to be persuaded is risky, because any new initiative demands a commitment of time and resources. Yet even though persuaders must have high credibility, our research strongly suggests that most managers overestimate their own credibility—considerably.

In the workplace, credibility grows out of two sources: expertise and relationships. People are considered to have high levels of expertise if they have a history of sound judgment or have proven themselves knowledgeable and well informed about their proposals. For example, in proposing a new product idea, an effective persuader would need to be perceived as possessing a thorough understanding of the product—its specifications, target markets, customers, and competing products. A history of prior successes would further strengthen the persuader's perceived expertise. One extremely successful executive in our research had a track record of 14 years of devising highly

Twelve Years of Watching and Listening

The ideas behind this article spring from three streams of research.

For the last 12 years as both an academic and as a consultant, I have been studying 23 senior business leaders who have shown themselves to be effective change agents. Specifically, I have investigated how these individuals use language to motivate their employees, articulate vision and strategy, and mobilize their organizations to adapt to challenging business environments.

Four years ago, I started a second stream of research exploring the capabilities and characteristics of successful cross-functional team leaders. The core of my database comprised interviews

with and observations of 18 individuals working in a range of U.S. and Canadian companies. These were not senior leaders as in my earlier studies but low- and middle-level managers. Along with interviewing the colleagues of these people, I also compared their skills with those of other team leaders—in particular, with the leaders of less successful cross-functional teams engaged in similar initiatives within the same companies. Again, my focus was on language, but I also studied the influence of interpersonal skills.

The similarities in the persuasion skills possessed by both the change-agent leaders and effective team leaders prompted me to explore the academic

literature on persuasion and rhetoric, as well as on the art of gospel preaching. Meanwhile, to learn how most managers approach the persuasion process, I observed several dozen managers in company meetings, and I employed simulations in company executive-education programs where groups of managers had to persuade one another on hypothetical business objectives. Finally, I selected a group of 14 managers known for their outstanding abilities in constructive persuasion. For several months, I interviewed them and their colleagues and observed them in actual work situations.

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Today, employees don't just ask, "What should I do?" They also ask, "Why should I do it?" This is where persuasion comes into play. It's often perceived as a skill only for sales and deal closing—just another form of manipulation. But persuasion is much more than a selling technique, and it represents the opposite of deception. Effective persuasion is a learning and negotiating process for leading your colleagues to a **shared solution** to a problem.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

The process of persuasion has four steps:

1. ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY

Your credibility grows out of two sources: **expertise** and **relationships**. If you have a history of well-informed, sound judgment, your colleagues will trust your expertise. If you've demonstrated that you can work in the best interest of others, your colleagues will have confidence in your relationships. If you are weak on the expertise side, bolster your position by

- learning more through formal and informal education—for example, conversations with in-house experts
- hiring recognized outside experts
- launching pilot projects

To fill in the relationship gap, try meeting one-on-one with key people and involving like-minded coworkers who have good support with your audience.

EXAMPLE

Two developers at Microsoft envisioned a controversial new software product. Despite their strengths and long experience in the company, executives perceived them to be technology novices. By working closely with technical experts and market testing a prototype, they persuaded management that the new product was ideally suited to the average computer user. It sold half a million units.

2. FRAME GOALS ON COMMON GROUND

Tangibly describe the benefits of your position. The fastest way to get a child to the grocery store is to point out the lollipops by the cash register. That is not deception—it's persuasion. When no shared advantages are apparent, adjust your position.

EXAMPLE

An ad agency executive persuaded skeptical fast-food franchisees to support headquarters' new price discounts. She cited reliable research showing how the pricing scheme improved franchisees' profits. They supported the new plan unanimously.

3. VIVIDLY REINFORCE YOUR POSITION

Ordinary evidence won't do. Make numerical data more compelling with examples, stories, and metaphors that have an emotional impact.

EXAMPLE

The founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics made a speech comparing salespeople's weekly meetings to gatherings among Christians resisting Roman rule. This drove home the importance of a mutually supportive sales force and imbued the work with a sense of heroic mission.

4. CONNECT EMOTIONALLY

Adjust your own emotional tone to match each audience's ability to receive your message. Learn how your colleagues have interpreted past events in the organization and sense how they will probably interpret your proposal. Test key individuals' possible reactions.

EXAMPLE

A Chrysler team leader raised the morale of employees demoralized by foreign competition and persuaded management to bring a new car design in-house. He showed both audiences slides of his hometown, which had been devastated by foreign mining competition. His patriotic appeal reinvigorated his team, and the chairman approved the plan.

effective advertising campaigns. Not surprisingly, he had an easy time winning colleagues over to his position. Another manager had a track record of seven successful new-product launches in a period of five years. He, too, had an advantage when it came to persuading his colleagues to support his next new idea.

On the relationship side, people with high credibility have demonstrated—again, usually over time—that they can be trusted to listen and to work in the best interests of others. They have also consistently shown strong emotional character and integrity; that is, they are not known for mood extremes or inconsistent performance. Indeed, people who are known to be honest, steady, and reliable have an edge when going into any persuasion situation. Because their relationships are robust, they are more apt to be given the benefit of the doubt. One effective persuader in our research was considered by colleagues to be remarkably trustworthy and fair; many people confided in her. In addition, she generously shared credit for

good ideas and provided staff with exposure to the company's senior executives. This woman had built strong relationships, which meant her staff and peers were always willing to consider seriously what she proposed.

If expertise and relationships determine credibility, it is crucial that you undertake an honest assessment of where you stand on both criteria before beginning to persuade. To do so, first step back and ask yourself the following questions related to expertise: How will others perceive my knowledge about the strategy, product, or change I am proposing? Do I have a track record in this area that others know about and respect? Then, to assess the strength of your relationship credibility, ask yourself, Do those I am hoping to persuade see me as helpful, trustworthy, and supportive? Will they see me as someone in sync with them—emotionally, intellectually, and politically—on issues like this one? Finally, it is important to note that it is not enough to get your own read on these matters. You must also test your answers with colleagues you trust

Four Ways Not to Persuade

In my work with managers as a researcher and as a consultant, I have had the unfortunate opportunity to see executives fail miserably at persuasion. Here are the four most common mistakes people make:

1. They attempt to make their case with an up-front, hard sell. I call this the John Wayne approach. Managers strongly state their position at the outset, and then through a process of persistence, logic, and exuberance, they try to push the idea to a close. In reality, setting out a strong position at the start of a persuasion effort gives potential opponents something to grab onto—and fight against. It's far better to present your position with the finesse and reserve of a lion tamer, who engages his "partner" by showing him the legs of a chair. In other words, effective persuaders don't begin the process by giving their colleagues a clear target in which to set their jaws.

2. They resist compromise. Too many managers see compromise as surrender, but it is essential to constructive persuasion. Before people buy into a proposal, they want to see that the persuader is flexible enough to respond to their concerns. Compromises can often lead to better, more sustainable shared solutions.

By not compromising, ineffective persuaders unconsciously send the message that they think persuasion is a one-way street. But persuasion is a process of give-and-take. Kathleen Reardon, a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California, points out that a persuader rarely changes another person's behavior or viewpoint without altering his or her own in the process. To persuade meaningfully, we must not only listen to others but also incorporate their perspectives into our own.

3. They think the secret of persuasion lies in presenting great arguments.

In persuading people to change their minds, great arguments matter. No doubt about it. But arguments, per se, are only one part of the equation. Other factors matter just as much, such as the persuader's credibility and his or her ability to create a proper, mutually beneficial frame for a position, connect on the right emotional level with an audience, and communicate through vivid language that makes arguments come alive.

4. They assume persuasion is a one-shot effort. Persuasion is a process, not an event. Rarely, if ever, is it possible to arrive at a shared solution on the first try. More often than not, persuasion involves listening to people, testing a position, developing a new position that reflects input from the group, more testing, incorporating compromises, and then trying again. If this sounds like a slow and difficult process, that's because it is. But the results are worth the effort.

to give you a reality check. Only then will you have a complete picture of your credibility.

In most cases, that exercise helps people discover that they have some measure of weakness, either on the expertise or on the relationship side of credibility. The challenge then becomes to fill in such gaps.

In general, if your area of weakness is on the expertise side, you have several options:

- First, you can learn more about the complexities of your position through either formal or informal education and through conversations with knowledgeable individuals. You might also get more relevant experience on the job by asking, for instance, to be assigned to a team that would increase your insight into particular markets or products.

- Another alternative is to hire someone to bolster your expertise—for example, an industry consultant or a recognized outside expert, such as a professor. Either one may have the knowledge and experience required to support your position effectively. Similarly, you may tap experts within your organization to advocate your position. Their credibility becomes a substitute for your own.

- You can also utilize other outside sources of information to support your position, such as respected business or trade periodicals, books, independently produced reports, and lectures by experts. In our research, one executive from the clothing industry successfully persuaded his company to reposition an entire product line to a more youthful market after bolstering his credibility with articles by a noted demographer in two highly regarded journals and with two independent market-research studies.

- Finally, you may launch pilot projects to demonstrate on a small scale your expertise and the value of your ideas.

As for filling in the relationship gap:

- You should make a concerted effort to meet one-on-one with all the key people you plan to persuade. This is not the time to outline your position but rather to get a range of perspectives on the issue at hand. If you have the time and resources, you should even offer to help these people with issues that concern them.

- Another option is to involve like-minded coworkers who already have strong relationships with your audience. Again, that is a matter of seeking out substitutes on your own behalf.

For an example of how these strategies can be put to work, consider the case of a chief operating officer of a large retail bank, whom we will call Tom Smith. Although he was new to his job, Smith ardently wanted to persuade the senior management team that the company was in serious trouble. He believed that the bank's overhead was excessive and would jeopardize its position as the industry entered a more competitive era. Most of his colleagues, however, did not see the potential seriousness of the situation. Because the bank had been enormously successful in recent years, they believed changes in the industry posed little danger. In addition to being newly

appointed, Smith had another problem: his career had been in financial services, and he was considered an outsider in the world of retail banking. Thus he had few personal connections to draw on as he made his case, and he was not perceived to be particularly knowledgeable about marketplace exigencies.

As a first step in establishing credibility, Smith hired an external consultant with respected credentials in the industry who showed that the bank was indeed poorly positioned to be a low-cost producer. In a series of interactive presentations to the bank's top-level management, the consultant revealed how the company's leading competitors were taking aggressive actions to contain operating costs. He made it clear from these presentations that not cutting costs would soon cause the bank to fall drastically behind the competition. These findings were then distributed in written reports that circulated throughout the bank.

Next, Smith determined that the bank's branch managers were critical to his campaign. The buy-in of those respected and informed individuals would signal to others in the company that his concerns were valid. Moreover, Smith looked to the branch managers because he believed that they could increase his expertise about marketplace trends and also help him test his own assumptions. Thus, for the next three months, he visited every branch in his region of Ontario, Canada—135 in all. During each visit, he spent time with branch managers, listening to their perceptions of the bank's strengths and weaknesses. He learned firsthand about the competition's initiatives and customer trends, and he solicited ideas for improving the bank's services and minimizing costs. By the time he was through, Smith had a broad perspective on the bank's future that few people even in senior management possessed. And he had built dozens of relationships in the process.

Finally, Smith launched some small but highly visible initiatives to demonstrate his expertise and capabilities. For example, he was concerned about slow growth in the company's mortgage business and the loan officers' resulting slip in morale. So he devised a program in which new mortgage customers would make no payments for the first 90 days. The initiative proved remarkably successful, and in short order Smith appeared to be a far more savvy retail banker than anyone had assumed.

Another example of how to establish credibility comes from Microsoft. In 1990, two product-development managers, Karen Fries and Barry Linnett, came to believe that the market would greatly welcome software that featured a "social interface." They envisioned a package that would employ animated human and animal characters to show users how to go about their computing tasks.

Inside Microsoft, however, employees had immediate concerns about the concept. Software programmers ridiculed the cute characters. Animated characters had been used before only in software for children, making their use in adult environments hard to envision. But Fries and Linnett felt their proposed product had both dynamism and complexity, and

they remained convinced that consumers would eagerly buy such programs. They also believed that the home-computer software market—largely untapped at the time and with fewer software standards—would be open to such innovation.

Within the company, Fries had gained quite a bit of relationship credibility. She had started out as a recruiter for the company in 1987 and had worked directly for many of Microsoft's senior executives. They trusted and liked her. In addition, she had been responsible for hiring the company's product and program managers. As a result, she knew all the senior people at Microsoft and had hired many of the people who would be deciding on her product.

Linnett's strength laid in his expertise. In particular, he knew the technology behind an innovative tutorial program called PC Works. In addition, both Fries and Linnett had managed Publisher, a product with a unique help feature called Wizards, which Microsoft's CEO, Bill Gates, had liked. But those factors were sufficient only to get an initial hearing from Microsoft's senior management. To persuade the organization to move forward, the pair would need to improve perceptions of their expertise. It hurt them that this type of social-interface software had no proven track record of success and that they were both novices with such software. Their challenge became one of finding substitutes for their own expertise.

Research strongly suggests that most managers are in the habit of overestimating their own credibility—often considerably.

Their first step was a wise one. From within Microsoft, they hired respected technical guru Darrin Massena. With Massena, they developed a set of prototypes to demonstrate that they did indeed understand the software's technology and could make it work. They then tested the prototypes in market research, and users responded enthusiastically. Finally, and most important, they enlisted two Stanford University professors, Clifford Nass and Bryon Reeves, both experts in human-computer interaction. In several meetings with Microsoft senior managers and Gates himself, they presented a rigorously compiled and thorough body of

research that demonstrated how and why social-interface software was ideally suited to the average computer user. In addition, Fries and Linnett asserted that considerable jumps in computing power would make more realistic cartoon characters an increasingly malleable technology. Their product, they said, was the leading edge of an incipient software revolution. Convinced, Gates approved a full product-development team, and in January 1995, the product called BOB was launched. BOB went on to sell more than half a million copies, and its concept and technology are being used within Microsoft as a platform for developing several Internet products.

Credibility is the cornerstone of effective persuading; without it, a persuader won't be given the time of day. In the best-case scenario, people enter into a persuasion situation with some measure of expertise and relationship credibility. But it is important to note that credibility along either lines can be built or bought. Indeed, it must be, or the next steps are an exercise in futility.

Frame for common ground. Even if your credibility is high, your position must still appeal strongly to the people you are trying to persuade. After all, few people will jump on board a train that will bring them to ruin or even mild discomfort. Effective persuaders must be adept at describing their positions in terms that illuminate their advantages. As any parent can tell you, the fastest way to get a child to come along willingly on a trip to the grocery store is to point out that there are lollipops by the cash register. That is not deception. It is just a persuasive way of framing the benefits of taking such a journey. In work situations, persuasive framing is obviously more complex, but the underlying principle is the same. It is a process of identifying shared benefits.

Monica Ruffo, an account executive for an advertising agency, offers a good example of persuasive framing. Her client, a fast-food chain, was instituting a promotional campaign in Canada; menu items such as a hamburger, fries, and cola were to be bundled together and sold at a low price. The strategy made sense to corporate headquarters. Its research showed that consumers thought the company's products were higher priced than the competition's, and the company was anxious to overcome this perception. The franchisees, on the other hand, were still experiencing strong sales and were far more concerned about the short-term impact that the new, low prices would have on their profit margins.

A less experienced persuader would have attempted to rationalize headquarters' perspective to the franchisees—to convince them of its validity. But Ruffo framed the change in pricing to demonstrate its benefits to the franchisees themselves. The new value campaign, she explained, would actually improve franchisees' profits. To back up this point, she drew on several sources. A pilot project in Tennessee, for instance, had demonstrated that under the new pricing scheme, the sales of french fries and drinks—the two most profitable items on the

menu—had markedly increased. In addition, the company had rolled out medium-sized meal packages in 80% of its U.S. outlets, and franchisees' sales of fries and drinks had jumped 26%. Citing research from a respected business periodical, Ruffo also showed that when customers raised their estimate of the value they receive from a retail establishment by 10%, the establishment's sales rose by 1%. She had estimated that the new meal plan would increase value perceptions by 100%, with the result that franchisees' sales could be expected to grow 10%.

Ruffo closed her presentation with a letter written many years before by the company's founder to the organization. It was an emotional letter extolling the values of the company and stressing the importance of the franchisees to the company's success. It also highlighted the importance of the company's position as the low-price leader in the industry. The beliefs and values contained in the letter had long been etched in the minds of Ruffo's audience. Hearing them again only confirmed the company's concern for the franchisees and the importance of their winning formula. They also won Ruffo a standing ovation. That day, the franchisees voted unanimously to support the new meal-pricing plan.

The Ruffo case illustrates why—in choosing appropriate positioning—it is critical first to identify your objective's tangible benefits to the people you are trying to persuade. Sometimes that is easy. Mutual benefits exist. In other situations, however, no shared advantages are readily apparent—or meaningful. In these cases, effective persuaders adjust their positions. They know it is impossible to engage people and gain commitment to ideas or plans without highlighting the advantages to all the parties involved.

At the heart of framing is a solid understanding of your audience. Even before starting to persuade, the best persuaders we have encountered closely study the issues that matter to their colleagues. They use conversations, meetings, and other forms of dialogue to collect essential information. They are good at listening. They test their ideas with trusted confidants, and they ask questions of the people they will later be persuading. Those steps help them think through the arguments, the evidence, and the perspectives they will present. Oftentimes, this process causes them to alter or compromise their own plans before they even start persuading. It is through this thoughtful, inquisitive approach they develop frames that appeal to their audience.

Consider the case of a manager who was in charge of process engineering for a jet engine manufacturer. He had redesigned the work flow for routine turbine maintenance for airline clients in a manner that would dramatically shorten the turnaround time for servicing. Before presenting his ideas to the company's president, he consulted a good friend in the company, the vice president of engineering, who knew the president well. This conversation revealed that the president's prime concern would not be speed or efficiency but profitability. To get the president's buy-in, the vice president explained, the new sys-

tem would have to improve the company's profitability in the short run by lowering operating expenses.

At first this information had the manager stumped. He had planned to focus on efficiency and had even intended to request additional funding to make the process work. But his conversation with the vice president sparked him to change his position. Indeed, he went so far as to change the work-flow design itself so that it no longer required new investment but rather drove down costs. He then carefully documented the cost savings and profitability gains that his new plan would produce and presented this revised plan to the president. With his initiative positioned anew, the manager persuaded the president and got the project approved.

A persuader should make a concerted effort to meet one-on-one with all the key people he or she plans to persuade.

Provide evidence. With credibility established and a common frame identified, persuasion becomes a matter of presenting evidence. Ordinary evidence, however, won't do. We have found that the most effective persuaders use language in a particular way. They supplement numerical data with examples, stories, metaphors, and analogies to make their positions come alive. That use of language paints a vivid word picture and, in doing so, lends a compelling and tangible quality to the persuader's point of view.

Think about a typical persuasion situation. The persuader is often advocating a goal, strategy, or initiative with an uncertain outcome. Karen Fries and Barry Linnett, for instance, wanted Microsoft to invest millions of dollars in a software package with chancy technology and unknown market demand. The team could have supported its case solely with market research, financial projections, and the like. But that would have been a mistake, because research shows that most people perceive such reports as not entirely informative. They are too abstract to be completely meaningful or memorable. In essence, the numbers don't make an emotional impact.

By contrast, stories and vivid language do, particularly when they present comparable situations to the one under discussion. A marketing manager trying to persuade senior executives to invest in a new product, for example, might cite

examples of similar investments that paid off handsomely. Indeed, we found that people readily draw lessons from such cases. More important, the research shows that listeners absorb information in proportion to its vividness. Thus it is no wonder that Fries and Linnett hit a home run when they presented their case for BOB with the following analogy:

Imagine you want to cook dinner and you must first go to the supermarket. You have all the flexibility you want—you can cook anything in the world as long as you know how and have the time and desire to do it. When you arrive at the supermarket, you find all these overstuffed aisles with cryptic single-word headings like “sundries” and “ethnic food” and “condiments.” These are the menus on typical computer interfaces. The question is whether salt is under condiments or ethnic food or near the potato chip section. There are surrounding racks and wall spaces, much as our software interfaces now have support buttons, tool bars, and lines around the perimeters. Now after you have collected everything, you still need to put it all together in the correct order to make a meal. If you’re a good cook, your meal will probably be good. If you’re a novice, it probably won’t be.

We [at Microsoft] have been selling under the supermarket category for years, and we think there is a big opportunity for restaurants. That’s what we are trying to do now with BOB: pushing the next step with software that is more like going to a restaurant, so the user doesn’t spend all of his time searching for the ingredients. We find and put the ingredients together. You sit down, you get comfortable. We bring you a menu. We do the work, you relax. It’s an enjoyable experience. No walking around lost trying to find things, no cooking.

Had Fries and Linnett used a literal description of BOB’s advantages, few of their highly computer-literate colleagues at Microsoft would have personally related to the menu-searching frustration that BOB was designed to eliminate. The analogy they selected, however, made BOB’s purpose both concrete and memorable.

A master persuader, Mary Kay Ash, the founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, regularly draws on analogies to illustrate and “sell” the business conduct she values. Consider this speech at the company’s annual sales convention:

Back in the days of the Roman Empire, the legions of the emperor conquered the known world. There was, however, one band of people that the Romans never conquered. Those people were the followers of the great teacher from Bethlehem. Historians have long since discovered that one of the reasons for the sturdiness of this folk was their habit of meeting together weekly. They shared their difficulties, and they stood side by side. Does this remind you of something? The way we stand side by side and share our knowledge and difficulties with each other in our weekly unit meetings? I have so often observed when a director or unit member is confronted with a personal problem that the unit stands together in helping that sister in distress. What a wonderful circle of friendships

we have. Perhaps it’s one of the greatest fringe benefits of our company.

Through her vivid analogy, Ash links collective support in the company to a courageous period in Christian history. In doing so, she accomplishes several objectives. First, she drives home her belief that collective support is crucial to the success of the organization. Most Mary Kay salespeople are independent operators who face the daily challenges of direct selling. An emotional support system of fellow salespeople is essential to ensure that self-esteem and confidence remain intact in the face of rejection. Next she suggests by her analogy that solidarity against the odds is the best way to stymie powerful oppressors—to wit, the competition. Finally, Ash’s choice of analogy imbues a sense of a heroic mission to the work of her sales force.

You probably don’t need to invoke the analogy of the Christian struggle to support your position, but effective persuaders are not afraid of unleashing the immense power of language. In fact, they use it to their utmost advantage.

Connect emotionally. In the business world, we like to think that our colleagues use reason to make their decisions, yet if we scratch below the surface we will always find emotions at play. Good persuaders are aware of the primacy of emotions and are responsive to them in two important ways. First, they show their own emotional commitment to the position they are advocating. Such expression is a delicate matter. If you act too emotional, people may doubt your clearheadedness. But you must also show that your commitment to a goal is not just in your mind but in your heart and gut as well. Without this demonstration of feeling, people may wonder if you actually believe in the position you’re championing.

Perhaps more important, however, is that effective persuaders have a strong and accurate sense of their audience’s emotional state, and they adjust the tone of their arguments accordingly. Sometimes that means coming on strong, with forceful points. Other times, a whisper may be all that is required. The idea is that whatever your position, you match your emotional fervor to your audience’s ability to receive the message.

Effective persuaders seem to have a second sense about how their colleagues have interpreted past events in the organization and how they will probably interpret a proposal. The best persuaders in our study would usually canvass key individuals who had a good pulse on the mood and emotional expectations of those about to be persuaded. They would ask those individuals how various proposals might affect colleagues on an emotional level—in essence, testing possible reactions. They were also quite effective at gathering information through informal conversations in the hallways or at lunch. In the end, their aim was to ensure that the emotional appeal behind their persuasion matched what their audience was already feeling or expecting.

To illustrate the importance of emotional matchmaking in persuasion, consider this example. The president of an aeronautics manufacturing company strongly believed that the

maintenance costs and turnaround time of the company's U.S. and foreign competitors were so much better than his own company's that it stood to lose customers and profits. He wanted to communicate his fear and his urgent desire for change to his senior managers. So one afternoon, he called them into the boardroom. On an overhead screen was the projected image of a smiling man flying an old-fashioned biplane with his scarf blowing in the wind. The right half of the transparency was covered. When everyone was seated, the president explained that he felt as this pilot did, given the company's recent good fortune. The organization, after all, had just finished its most successful year in history. But then with a deep sigh, he announced that his happiness was quickly vanishing. As the president lifted the remaining portion of the sheet, he revealed an image of the pilot flying directly into a wall. The president then faced his audience and in a heavy voice said, "This is what I see happening to us." He asserted that the company was headed for a crash if people didn't take action fast. He then went on to lecture the group about the steps needed to counter this threat.

The reaction from the group was immediate and negative. Directly after the meeting, managers gathered in small clusters in the hallways to talk about the president's "scare tactics." They resented what they perceived to be the president's overstatement of the case. As the managers saw it, they had exerted enormous effort that year to break the company's records in sales and profitability. They were proud of their achievements. In fact, they had entered the meeting expecting it would be the moment of recognition. But to their absolute surprise, they were scolded.

The president's mistake? First, he should have canvassed a few members of his senior team to ascertain the emotional state of the group. From that, he would have learned that they were in need of thanks and recognition. He should then have held a separate session devoted simply to praising the team's accomplishments. Later, in a second meeting, he could have expressed his own anxieties about the coming year. And rather than blame the team for ignoring the future, he could have calmly described what he saw as emerging threats to the company and then asked his management team to help him develop new initiatives.

Now let us look at someone who found the right emotional match with his audience: Robert Marcell, head of Chrysler's small-car design team. In the early 1990s, Chrysler was eager to produce a new subcompact—indeed, the company had not introduced a new model of this type since 1978. But senior managers at Chrysler did not want to go it alone. They thought an alliance with a foreign manufacturer would improve the car's design and protect Chrysler's cash stores.

Marcell was convinced otherwise. He believed that the company should bring the design and production of a new subcompact in-house. He knew that persuading senior managers would be difficult, but he also had his own team to contend with. Team members had lost their confidence that they would



When a fast-food chain needed to persuade its franchisees to buy into a meal-pricing plan that had the potential to eat into profits, headquarters framed the initiative to accent the positive.

ever again have the opportunity to create a good car. They were also angry that the United States had once again given up its position to foreign competitors when it came to small cars.

Marcell decided that his persuasion tactics had to be built around emotional themes that would touch his audience. From innumerable conversations around the company, he learned that many people felt as he did—that to surrender the subcompact's design to a foreign manufacturer was to surrender the company's soul and, ultimately, its ability to provide jobs. In addition, he felt deeply that his organization was a talented group hungry for a challenge and an opportunity to restore its self-esteem and pride. He would need to demonstrate his faith in the team's abilities.

Marcell prepared a 15-minute talk built around slides of his hometown, Iron River, a now defunct mining town in Upper

It's important for people to understand persuasion for what it is—not convincing and selling but learning and negotiating.

Michigan, devastated, in large part, by foreign mining companies. On the screen flashed recent photographs he had taken of his boarded-up high school, the shuttered homes of his childhood friends, the crumbling ruins of the town's iron-works, closed churches, and an abandoned railroad yard. After a description of each of these places, he said the phrase, "We couldn't compete"—like the refrain of a hymn. Marcell's point was that the same outcome awaited Detroit if the production of small cars was not brought back to the United States. Surrender was the enemy, he said, and devastation would follow if the group did not take immediate action.

Marcell ended his slide show on a hopeful note. He spoke of his pride in his design group and then challenged the team to build a "made-in-America" subcompact that would prove that the United States could still compete. The speech, which echoed the exact sentiments of the audience, rekindled the group's fighting spirit. Shortly after the speech, group members began drafting their ideas for a new car.

Marcell then took his slide show to the company's senior management and ultimately to Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca.

As Marcell showed his slides, he could see that Iacocca was touched. Iacocca, after all, was a fighter and a strongly patriotic man himself. In fact, Marcell's approach was not too different from Iacocca's earlier appeal to the United States Congress to save Chrysler. At the end of the show, Marcell stopped and said, "If we dare to be different, we could be the reason the U.S. auto industry survives. We could be the reason our kids and grand-kids don't end up working at fast-food chains." Iacocca stayed on for two hours as Marcell explained in greater detail what his team was planning. Afterward, Iacocca changed his mind and gave Marcell's group approval to develop a car, the Neon.

With both groups, Marcell skillfully matched his emotional tenor to that of the group he was addressing. The ideas he conveyed resonated deeply with his largely Midwestern audience. And rather than leave them in a depressed state, he offered them hope, which was more persuasive than promising doom. Again, this played to the strong patriotic sentiments of his American-heartland audience.

No effort to persuade can succeed without emotion, but showing too much emotion can be as unproductive as showing too little. The important point to remember is that you must match your emotions to your audience's.

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

Change the Way You Persuade

by Gary A. Williams and Robert B. Miller

HBR, May 2002

Product no. 9969

Your argument is impassioned, your logic unassailable, your data bulletproof—yet your brilliant proposal has been tabled. What went wrong? The authors advise gearing your proposals to your boss's particular decision-making type: charismatic, thinker, skeptic, follower, or controller.



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Change Through Persuasion

by David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto

HBR, February 2005

Product no. R0502F

Garvin and Roberto contend that a successful change effort relies on a persuasion campaign that begins long before the plan is finalized. They describe a four-part communications strategy and use the dramatic turnaround at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center as an example.

The Force of Persuasion

The concept of persuasion, like that of power, often confuses and even mystifies businesspeople. It is so complex—and so dangerous when mishandled—that many would rather just avoid it altogether. But like power, persuasion can be a force for enormous good in an organization. It can pull people together, move ideas forward, galvanize change, and forge constructive solutions. To do all that, however, people must understand persuasion for what it is—not convincing and selling but learning and negotiating. Furthermore, it must be seen as an art form that requires commitment and practice, especially as today's business contingencies make persuasion more necessary than ever. ▀

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Area Development's annual Top States for Doing Business report

Harnessing the Science of Persuasion

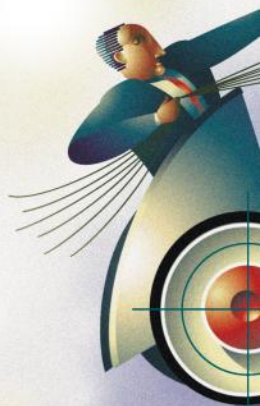
No leader can succeed without mastering the art of persuasion. But there's hard science in that skill, too, and a large body of psychological research suggests there are six basic laws of winning friends and influencing people.

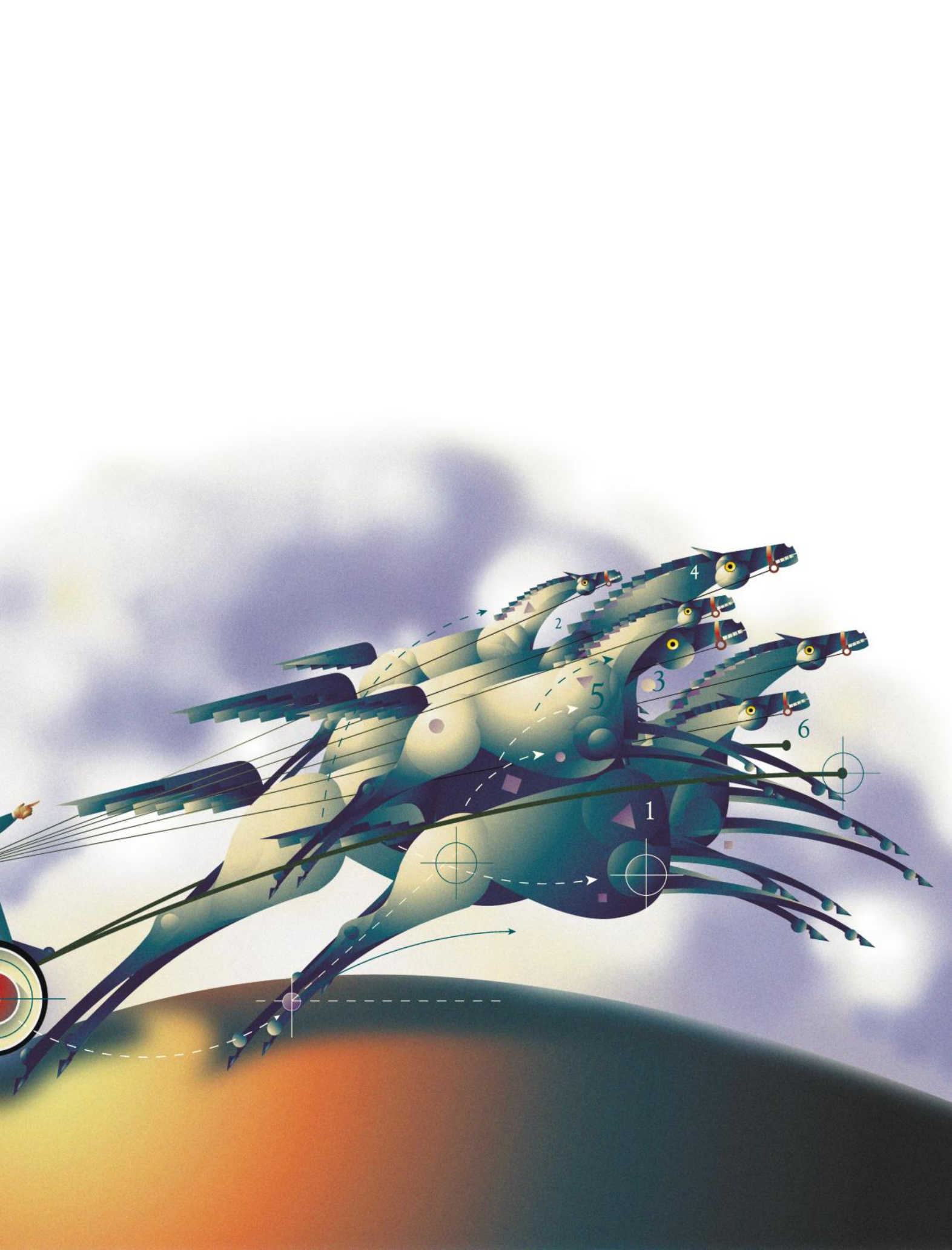
by Robert B. Cialdini

A LUCKY FEW HAVE IT; most of us do not. A handful of gifted “naturals” simply know how to capture an audience, sway the undecided, and convert the opposition. Watching these masters of persuasion work their magic is at once impressive and frustrating. What’s impressive is not just the easy way they use charisma and eloquence to convince others to do as they ask. It’s also how eager those others are to do what’s requested of them, as if the persuasion itself were a favor they couldn’t wait to repay.

The frustrating part of the experience is that these born persuaders are often unable to account for their remarkable skill or pass it on to others. Their way with people is an art, and artists as a rule are far better at doing than at explaining. Most of them can’t offer much help to those of us who possess no more than the ordinary quotient of charisma and eloquence but who still have to wrestle with leadership’s fundamental challenge: getting things done through others. That challenge is painfully familiar to corporate executives, who every day have to figure out how to motivate and direct a highly individualistic work force. Playing the “Because I’m the boss” card is out. Even if it weren’t demeaning and demoralizing for all concerned, it would be out of place in a world where cross-functional

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teams, joint ventures, and intercompany partnerships have blurred the lines of authority. In such an environment, persuasion skills exert far greater influence over others' behavior than formal power structures do.

Which brings us back to where we started. Persuasion skills may be more necessary than ever, but how can executives acquire them if the most talented practitioners can't pass them along? By looking to science. For the past five decades, behavioral scientists have conducted experiments that shed considerable light on the way certain interactions lead people to concede, comply, or change. This research shows that persuasion works by appealing to a limited set of deeply rooted human drives and needs, and it does so in predictable ways. Persuasion, in other words, is governed by basic principles that can be taught, learned, and applied. By mastering these principles, executives can bring scientific rigor to the business of securing consensus, cutting deals, and winning concessions. In the pages that follow, I describe six fundamental principles of persuasion and suggest a few ways that executives can apply them in their own organizations.

The Principle of Liking

People like those who like them.

The Application

Uncover real similarities and offer genuine praise.

The retailing phenomenon known as the Tupperware party is a vivid illustration of this principle in action. The demonstration party for Tupperware products is hosted by an individual, almost always a woman, who invites to her home an array of friends, neighbors, and relatives. The guests' affection for their hostess predisposes them to buy from her, a dynamic that was confirmed by a 1990 study of purchase decisions made at demonstration parties. The researchers, Jonathan Frenzen and Harry Davis, writing in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, found that the guests' fondness for their hostess weighed twice as heavily in their purchase decisions as their regard for the products they bought. So when guests at a Tupperware party buy something, they aren't just buying to please themselves. They're buying to please their hostess as well.

What's true at Tupperware parties is true for business in general: If you want to influence people, win friends. How? Controlled research has identified several factors that reliably increase liking, but two stand out as especially compelling—similarity and praise. Similarity literally draws people together. In one experiment, reported in a 1968 article in the *Journal of Personality*, participants stood physically closer to one another after learning that they shared political beliefs and social values. And in a 1963 article in *American Behavioral Scientists*, researcher F. B. Evans used demographic data from insurance company records to demonstrate that prospects were more

willing to purchase a policy from a salesperson who was akin to them in age, religion, politics, or even cigarette-smoking habits.

Managers can use similarities to create bonds with a recent hire, the head of another department, or even a new boss. Informal conversations during the workday create an ideal opportunity to discover at least one common area of enjoyment, be it a hobby, a college basketball team, or reruns of *Seinfeld*. The important thing is to establish the bond early because it creates a presumption of goodwill and trustworthiness in every subsequent encounter. It's much easier to build support for a new project when the people you're trying to persuade are already inclined in your favor.

Praise, the other reliable generator of affection, both charms and disarms. Sometimes the praise doesn't even have to be merited. Researchers at the University of North Carolina writing in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* found that men felt the greatest regard for an individual who flattered them unstintingly even if the comments were untrue. And in their book *Interpersonal Attraction* (Addison-Wesley, 1978), Ellen Berscheid and Elaine Hatfield Walster presented experimental data showing that positive remarks about another person's traits, attitude, or performance reliably generates liking in return, as well as willing compliance with the wishes of the person offering the praise.

Along with cultivating a fruitful relationship, adroit managers can also use praise to repair one that's damaged or unproductive. Imagine you're the manager of a good-sized unit within your organization. Your work frequently brings you into contact with another manager—call him Dan—whom you have come to dislike. No matter how much you do for him, it's not enough. Worse, he never seems to believe that you're doing the best you can for him. Resenting his attitude and his obvious lack of trust in your abilities and in your good faith, you don't spend as much time with him as you know you should; in consequence, the performance of both his unit and yours is deteriorating.

Persuasion appeals to deeply rooted human drives and needs in predictable ways.

The research on praise points toward a strategy for fixing the relationship. It may be hard to find, but there has to be something about Dan you can sincerely admire, whether it's his concern for the people in his department, his devotion to his family, or simply his work ethic. In your next encounter with him, make an appreciative comment about that trait. Make it clear

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Do you have it—that magical power to capture your audience, sway undecideds, convert opponents? In an era of cross-functional teams and inter-company partnerships, masters of persuasion exert far greater influence than formal power structures.

But is persuasion really magic? Must we ordinary types struggling with leadership's greatest challenge—getting things done through others—despair of ever mastering this art?

Good news from behavioral science: Persuasion works by appealing predictably to deeply rooted human needs. The rest of us can learn to secure consensus, cut deals, and win concessions by artfully applying six scientific principles of winning friends and influencing people.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

PERSUASION PRINCIPLES

Principle	Example	Business Application
LIKING People like those who like them.	At Tupperware parties, guests' fondness for their host influences purchase decisions twice as much as regard for the products.	To influence people, win friends through: <i>Similarity</i> : Create early bonds with new peers, bosses, and direct reports by informally discovering common interests—you'll establish goodwill and trustworthiness. <i>Praise</i> : Charm and disarm. Make positive remarks about others—you'll generate more willing compliance.
RECIPROCITY People repay in kind.	When the Disabled American Veterans enclosed free personalized address labels in donation-request envelopes, response rates doubled.	Give what you want to receive. Lend a staff member to a colleague who needs help; you'll get <i>his</i> help later.
SOCIAL PROOF People follow the lead of similar others.	More New York City residents tried returning a lost wallet after learning that other New Yorkers had tried.	Use peer power to influence horizontally, not vertically. Ask an esteemed old-timer who supports your new initiative to persuade other veterans who may resist.
CONSISTENCY People align with their clear commitments.	92% of residents of an apartment complex who signed a petition supporting a new recreation center later donated money to the cause.	Make others' commitments active, public, and voluntary. If you supervise an employee who should submit reports on time, get that understanding in writing (a memo); make the commitment public (note colleagues' agreement with the memo); and link the commitment to the employee's values (the impact of timely reports on team spirit).
AUTHORITY People defer to experts.	A single <i>New York Times</i> expert-opinion news story aired on TV generated a 4% shift in U.S. public opinion.	Don't assume your expertise is self-evident. Instead, establish your expertise before doing business with new colleagues or partners; e.g., in conversations before an important meeting, describe how you solved a problem similar to the one on the agenda.
SCARCITY People value what's scarce.	Wholesale beef buyers' orders jumped 600% when they alone received information on a possible beef shortage.	Use exclusive information to persuade. Influence and rivet key players' attention by saying, for example: "...Just got this information today. It won't be distributed until next week."

that in this case at least, you value what he values. I predict that Dan will relax his relentless negativity and give you an opening to convince him of your competence and good intentions.

The Principle of Reciprocity

People repay in kind.

The Application

Give what you want to receive.

Praise is likely to have a warming and softening effect on Dan because, ornery as he is, he is still human and subject to the universal human tendency to treat people the way they treat him. If you have ever caught yourself smiling at a coworker just because he or she smiled first, you know how this principle works.

Charities rely on reciprocity to help them raise funds. For years, for instance, the Disabled American Veterans organization, using only a well-crafted fund-raising letter, garnered a very respectable 18% rate of response to its appeals. But when the group started enclosing a small gift in the envelope, the response rate nearly doubled to 35%. The gift—personalized address labels—was extremely modest, but it wasn't what prospective donors received that made the difference. It was that they had gotten anything at all.

What works in that letter works at the office, too. It's more than an effusion of seasonal spirit, of course, that impels suppliers to shower gifts on purchasing departments at holiday time. In 1996, purchasing managers admitted to an interviewer from *Inc.* magazine that after having accepted a gift from a supplier, they were willing to purchase products and services they would have otherwise declined. Gifts also have a startling effect on retention. I have encouraged readers of my book to send me examples of the principles of influence at work in their own lives. One reader, an employee of the State of Oregon, sent a letter in which she offered these reasons for her commitment to her supervisor:

He gives me and my son gifts for Christmas and gives me presents on my birthday. There is no promotion for the type of job I have, and my only choice for one is to move to another department. But I find myself resisting trying to move. My boss is reaching retirement age, and I am thinking I will be able to move out after he retires....[F]or now, I feel obligated to stay since he has been so nice to me.

Ultimately, though, gift giving is one of the cruder applications of the rule of reciprocity. In its more sophisticated uses, it confers a genuine first-mover advantage on any manager who is trying to foster positive attitudes and productive personal relationships in the office: Managers can elicit the desired behavior from coworkers and employees by displaying it first. Whether it's a sense of trust, a spirit of cooperation, or a pleasant demeanor, leaders should model the behavior they want to see from others.

The same holds true for managers faced with issues of information delivery and resource allocation. If you lend a member of your staff to a colleague who is shorthanded and staring at a fast-approaching deadline, you will significantly increase your chances of getting help when you need it. Your odds will improve even more if you say, when your colleague thanks you for the assistance, something like, "Sure, glad to help. I know how important it is for me to count on your help when I need it."

The Principle of Social Proof

People follow the lead of similar others.

The Application

Use peer power whenever it's available.

Social creatures that they are, human beings rely heavily on the people around them for cues on how to think, feel, and act. We know this intuitively, but intuition has also been confirmed by experiments, such as the one first described in 1982 in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. A group of researchers went door-to-door in Columbia, South Carolina, soliciting donations for a charity campaign and displaying a list of neighborhood residents who had already donated to the cause. The researchers found that the longer the donor list was, the more likely those solicited would be to donate as well.

To the people being solicited, the friends' and neighbors' names on the list were a form of social evidence about how they should respond. But the evidence would not have been nearly as compelling had the names been those of random strangers. In an experiment from the 1960s, first described in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, residents of New York City were asked to return a lost wallet to its owner. They were highly likely to attempt to return the wallet when they learned that another New Yorker had previously attempted to do so. But learning that someone from a foreign country had tried to return the wallet didn't sway their decision one way or the other.

The lesson for executives from these two experiments is that persuasion can be extremely effective when it comes from peers. The science supports what most sales professionals already know: Testimonials from satisfied customers work best when the satisfied customer and the prospective customer share similar circumstances. That lesson can help a manager faced with the task of selling a new corporate initiative. Imagine that you're trying to streamline your department's work processes. A group of veteran employees is resisting. Rather than try to convince the employees of the move's merits yourself, ask an old-timer who supports the initiative to speak up for it at a team meeting. The compatriot's testimony stands a much better chance of convincing the group than yet another speech from the boss. Stated simply, influence is often best exerted horizontally rather than vertically.

The Principle of Consistency

People align with their clear commitments.

The Application

Make their commitments active, public, and voluntary.

Liking is a powerful force, but the work of persuasion involves more than simply making people feel warmly toward you, your idea, or your product. People need not only to like you but to feel committed to what you want them to do. Good turns are one reliable way to make people feel obligated to you. Another is to win a public commitment from them.

My own research has demonstrated that most people, once they take a stand or go on record in favor of a position, prefer to stick to it. Other studies reinforce that finding and go on to show how even a small, seemingly trivial commitment can have a powerful effect on future actions. Israeli researchers writing in 1983 in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* recounted how they asked half the residents of a large apartment complex to sign a petition favoring the establishment of a recreation center for the handicapped. The cause was good and the request was small, so almost everyone who was asked agreed to sign. Two weeks later, on National Collection Day for the Handicapped, all residents of the complex were approached at home and asked to give to the cause. A little more than half of those who were not asked to sign the petition made a contribution. But an astounding 92% of those who did sign donated money. The residents of the apartment complex felt obligated to live up to their commitments because those commitments were active, public, and voluntary. These three features are worth considering separately.

People need not only like you but feel committed to what you want them to do.

There's strong empirical evidence to show that a choice made actively—one that's spoken out loud or written down or otherwise made explicit—is considerably more likely to direct someone's future conduct than the same choice left unspoken. Writing in 1996 in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Delia Cioffi and Randy Garner described an experiment in which college students in one group were asked to fill out a printed form saying they wished to volunteer for an AIDS education project in the public schools. Students in another group volunteered for the same project by leaving blank a form stating that they didn't want to participate. A few days

later, when the volunteers reported for duty, 74% of those who showed up were students from the group that signaled their commitment by filling out the form.

The implications are clear for a manager who wants to persuade a subordinate to follow some particular course of action: Get it in writing. Let's suppose you want your employee to submit reports in a more timely fashion. Once you believe you've won agreement, ask him to summarize the decision in a memo and send it to you. By doing so, you'll have greatly increased the odds that he'll fulfill the commitment because, as a rule, people live up to what they have written down.

Research into the social dimensions of commitment suggests that written statements become even more powerful when they're made public. In a classic experiment, described in 1955 in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, college students were asked to estimate the length of lines projected on a screen. Some students were asked to write down their choices on a piece of paper, sign it, and hand the paper to the experimenter. Others wrote their choices on an erasable slate, then erased the slate immediately. Still others were instructed to keep their decisions to themselves.

The experimenters then presented all three groups with evidence that their initial choices may have been wrong. Those who had merely kept their decisions in their heads were the most likely to reconsider their original estimates. More loyal to their first guesses were the students in the group that had written them down and immediately erased them. But by a wide margin, the ones most reluctant to shift from their original choices were those who had signed and handed them to the researcher.

This experiment highlights how much most people wish to appear consistent to others. Consider again the matter of the employee who has been submitting late reports. Recognizing the power of this desire, you should, once you've successfully convinced him of the need to be more timely, reinforce the commitment by making sure it gets a public airing. One way to do that would be to send the employee an e-mail that reads, "I think your plan is just what we need. I showed it to Diane in manufacturing and Phil in shipping, and they thought it was right on target, too." Whatever way such commitments are formalized, they should never be like the New Year's resolutions people privately make and then abandon with no one the wiser. They should be publicly made and visibly posted.

More than 300 years ago, Samuel Butler wrote a couplet that explains succinctly why commitments must be voluntary to be lasting and effective: "He that complies against his will/Is of his own opinion still." If an undertaking is forced, coerced, or imposed from the outside, it's not a commitment; it's an unwelcome burden. Think how you would react if your boss pressured you to donate to the campaign of a political candidate. Would that make you more apt to opt for that candidate in the privacy of a voting booth? Not likely. In fact, in their 1981 book *Psychological Reactance* (Academic Press), Sharon S. Brehm and

Jack W. Brehm present data that suggest you'd vote the opposite way just to express your resentment of the boss's coercion.

This kind of backlash can occur in the office, too. Let's return again to that tardy employee. If you want to produce an enduring change in his behavior, you should avoid using threats or pressure tactics to gain his compliance. He'd likely view any change in his behavior as the result of intimidation rather than a personal commitment to change. A better approach would be to identify something that the employee genuinely values in the workplace—high-quality workmanship, perhaps, or team spirit—and then describe how timely reports are consistent with those values. That gives the employee reasons for improvement that he can own. And because he owns them, they'll continue to guide his behavior even when you're not watching.

The Principle of Authority

People defer to experts.

The Application

Expose your expertise; don't assume it's self-evident.

Two thousand years ago, the Roman poet Virgil offered this simple counsel to those seeking to choose correctly: "Believe an expert." That may or may not be good advice, but as a description of what people actually do, it can't be beaten. For instance, when the news media present an acknowledged expert's views on a topic, the effect on public opinion is dramatic. A single expert-opinion news story in the *New York Times* is associated with a 2% shift in public opinion nationwide, according to a 1993 study described in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*. And researchers writing in the *American Political Science Review* in 1987 found that when the expert's view was aired on national television, public opinion shifted as much as 4%. A cynic might argue that these findings only illustrate the docile submissiveness of the public. But a fairer explanation is that, amid the teeming complexity of contemporary life, a well-selected expert offers a valuable and efficient shortcut to good decisions. Indeed, some questions, be they legal, financial, medical, or technological, require so much specialized knowledge to answer, we have no choice but to rely on experts.

Since there's good reason to defer to experts, executives should take pains to ensure that they establish their own expertise before they attempt to exert influence. Surprisingly often, people mistakenly assume that others recognize and appreciate their experience. That's what happened at a hospital where some colleagues and I were consulting. The physical therapy staffers were frustrated because so many of their stroke patients abandoned their exercise routines as soon as they left the hospital. No matter how often the staff emphasized the importance of regular home exercise—it is, in fact, crucial to the process of regaining independent function—the message just didn't sink in.

Interviews with some of the patients helped us pinpoint the problem. They were familiar with the background and training of their physicians, but the patients knew little about the credentials of the physical therapists who were urging them to exercise. It was a simple matter to remedy that lack of information: We merely asked the therapy director to display all the awards, diplomas, and certifications of her staff on the walls of the therapy rooms. The result was startling: Exercise compliance jumped 34% and has never dropped since.

What we found immensely gratifying was not just how much we increased compliance, but how. We didn't fool or browbeat any of the patients. We *informed* them into compliance. Nothing had to be invented; no time or resources had to be spent in the process. The staff's expertise was real—all we had to do was make it more visible.

The task for managers who want to establish their claims to expertise is somewhat more difficult. They can't simply nail their diplomas to the wall and wait for everyone to notice. A little subtlety is called for. Outside the United States, it is customary for people to spend time interacting socially before getting down to business for the first time. Frequently they gather for dinner the night before their meeting or negotiation. These get-togethers can make discussions easier and help blunt disagreements—remember the findings about liking and similarity—and they can also provide an opportunity to establish expertise. Perhaps it's a matter of telling an anecdote about successfully solving a problem similar to the one that's on the agenda at the next day's meeting. Or perhaps dinner is the time to describe years spent mastering a complex discipline—not in a boastful way but as part of the ordinary give-and-take of conversation.

Surprisingly often, people mistakenly assume that others recognize and appreciate their experience.

Granted, there's not always time for lengthy introductory sessions. But even in the course of the preliminary conversation that precedes most meetings, there is almost always an opportunity to touch lightly on your relevant background and experience as a natural part of a sociable exchange. This initial disclosure of personal information gives you a chance to establish expertise early in the game, so that when the discussion turns to the business at hand, what you have to say will be accorded the respect it deserves.

Persuasion Experts, Safe at Last

Thanks to several decades of rigorous empirical research by behavioral scientists, our understanding of the how and why of persuasion has never been broader, deeper, or more detailed. But these scientists aren't the first students of the subject. The history of persuasion studies is an ancient and honorable one, and it has generated a long roster of heroes and martyrs.

A renowned student of social influence, William McGuire, contends in a chapter of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1985) that scattered among the more than four millennia of recorded Western history are four centuries in which the study of persuasion flourished as a craft. The first was the Periclean Age of ancient Athens, the second occurred during the years of the Roman Republic, the next appeared in the time of the European Renaissance, and the last extended over the hundred years that have just ended, which witnessed the advent of large-scale advertising, information, and mass media campaigns. Each of the three previous centuries of systematic persuasion study was marked by a flowering of human achievement that was suddenly cut short when political authorities had the masters

of persuasion killed. The philosopher Socrates is probably the best known of the persuasion experts to run afoul of the powers that be.

Information about the persuasion process is a threat because it creates a base of power entirely separate from the one controlled by political authorities. Faced with a rival source of influence, rulers in previous centuries had few qualms about eliminating those rare individuals who truly understood how to marshal forces that heads of state have never been able to monopolize, such as cleverly crafted language, strategically placed information, and, most important, psychological insight.

It would perhaps be expressing too much faith in human nature to claim that persuasion experts no longer face a threat from those who wield political power. But because the truth about persuasion is no longer the sole possession of a few brilliant, inspired individuals, experts in the field can presumably breathe a little easier. Indeed, since most people in power are interested in remaining in power, they're likely to be more interested in acquiring persuasion skills than abolishing them.

The Principle of Scarcity

People want more of what they can have less of.

The Application

Highlight unique benefits and exclusive information.

Study after study shows that items and opportunities are seen to be more valuable as they become less available. That's a tremendously useful piece of information for managers. They can harness the scarcity principle with the organizational equivalents of limited-time, limited-supply, and one-of-a-kind offers. Honestly informing a coworker of a closing window of opportunity—the chance to get the boss's ear before she leaves for an extended vacation, perhaps—can mobilize action dramatically.

Managers can learn from retailers how to frame their offers not in terms of what people stand to gain but in terms of what they stand to lose if they don't act on the information. The power of "loss language" was demonstrated in a 1988 study of California home owners written up in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Half were told that if they fully insulated their homes, they would save a certain amount of money each day. The other half were told that if they failed to insulate, they would lose that amount each day. Significantly more people

insulated their homes when exposed to the loss language. The same phenomenon occurs in business. According to a 1994 study in the journal *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, potential losses figure far more heavily in managers' decision making than potential gains.

In framing their offers, executives should also remember that exclusive information is more persuasive than widely available data. A doctoral student of mine, Amram Knishinsky, wrote his 1982 dissertation on the purchase decisions of wholesale beef buyers. He observed that they more than doubled their orders when they were told that, because of certain weather conditions overseas, there was likely to be a scarcity of foreign beef in the near future. But their orders increased 600% when they were informed that no one else had that information yet.

The persuasive power of exclusivity can be harnessed by any manager who comes into possession of information that's not broadly available and that supports an idea or initiative he or she would like the organization to adopt. The next time that kind of information crosses your desk, round up your organization's key players. The information itself may seem dull, but exclusivity will give it a special sheen. Push it across your desk and say, "I just got this report today. It won't be distributed until next week, but I want to give you an early look at what it shows." Then watch your listeners lean forward.

Allow me to stress here a point that should be obvious. No offer of exclusive information, no exhortation to act now or miss this opportunity forever should be made unless it is genuine. Deceiving colleagues into compliance is not only ethically objectionable, it's foolhardy. If the deception is detected—and it certainly will be—it will snuff out any enthusiasm the offer originally kindled. It will also invite dishonesty toward the deceiver. Remember the rule of reciprocity.

Putting It All Together

There's nothing abstruse or obscure about these six principles of persuasion. Indeed, they neatly codify our intuitive understanding of the ways people evaluate information and form decisions. As a result, the principles are easy for most people to grasp, even those with no formal education in psychology. But in the seminars and workshops I conduct, I have learned that two points bear repeated emphasis.

First, although the six principles and their applications can be discussed separately for the sake of clarity, they should be applied in combination to compound their impact. For instance, in discussing the importance of expertise, I suggested that managers use informal, social conversations to establish their credentials. But that conversation affords an opportunity to gain information as well as convey it. While you're showing your dinner companion that you have the skills and experience your business problem demands, you can also learn about your companion's background, likes, and dislikes—information that will help you locate genuine similarities and give sincere compliments. By letting your expertise surface and also

establishing rapport, you double your persuasive power. And if you succeed in bringing your dinner partner on board, you may encourage other people to sign on as well, thanks to the persuasive power of social evidence.

The other point I wish to emphasize is that the rules of ethics apply to the science of social influence just as they do to any other technology. Not only is it ethically wrong to trick or trap others into assent, it's ill-advised in practical terms. Dishonest or high-pressure tactics work only in the short run, if at all. Their long-term effects are malignant, especially within an organization, which can't function properly without a bedrock level of trust and cooperation.

That point is made vividly in the following account, which a department head for a large textile manufacturer related at a training workshop I conducted. She described a vice president in her company who wrung public commitments from department heads in a highly manipulative manner. Instead of giving his subordinates time to talk or think through his proposals carefully, he would approach them individually at the busiest moment of their workday and describe the benefits of his plan in exhaustive, patience-straining detail. Then he would move in for the kill. "It's very important for me to see you as being on my team on this," he would say. "Can I count on your support?" Intimidated, frazzled, eager to chase the man from their offices so they could get back to work, the department heads would invariably go along with his request. But because the commitments never felt voluntary, the department heads never followed through, and as a result the vice president's initiatives all blew up or petered out.

This story had a deep impact on the other participants in the workshop. Some gulped in shock as they recognized their own manipulative behavior. But what stopped everyone cold was the expression on the department head's face as she recounted the damaging collapse of her superior's proposals. She was smiling.

Nothing I could say would more effectively make the point that the deceptive or coercive use of the principles of social influence is ethically wrong and pragmatically wrongheaded. Yet the same principles, if applied appropriately, can steer decisions correctly. Legitimate expertise, genuine obligations, authentic similarities, real social proof, exclusive news, and freely made commitments can produce choices that are likely to benefit both parties. And any approach that works to everyone's mutual benefit is good business, don't you think? Of course, I don't want to press you into it, but, if you agree, I would love it if you could just jot me a memo to that effect. 📧

Robert B. Cialdini is Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University and author of the books *Influence*, now in its fifth edition (2009), and *Pre-Suasion* (2016). Further regularly updated information about the influence process can be found at www.influenceatwork.com.

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

How Certainty Transforms Persuasion

by **Zakary L. Tormala** and **Derek D. Rucker**

HBR, September 2015

Product no. R1509H

People who are certain of their opinions are more likely to be good customers, but the influence of certainty on behavior is overlooked as a potent tool of persuasion. The authors identify four levers for systematically increasing certainty: consensus, repetition, ease, and defense.

How Customers Can Rally Your Troops

by **Adam M. Grant**

HBR, June 2011

Product no. R1106G

End users motivate employees to work more effectively—making customers important allies for leaders. The author outlines how leaders can effectively outsource inspiration by acknowledging workers' impact on customers' lives.



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The Uses (and Abuses) of **Influence**

Interview by Sarah Cliffe

ROBERT CIALDINI, considered the leading social scientist in the field of influence, was initially drawn to the topic because he saw how easily people could step over an ethical line into manipulation or even abuse. His 2001 book *Influence*, which laid out six principles of persuasion, was eloquent about the dangers of persuasive techniques in the wrong hands. A best-selling article he wrote for HBR the same year, “Harnessing the Science of Persuasion,” looked at the positive side of persuasion: how managers could use those principles to run their organizations more effectively.

Cialdini is the Regents’ Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University and the president of the consulting firm Influence at Work. In this edited interview with HBR executive editor Sarah Cliffe, he drills deeper into everyday uses of persuasion inside businesses and describes new research on the ethics of influence.

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Mark Peterman



HBR: I'm going to run a few scenarios by you to explore how people can influence others more effectively at work. First, imagine that you're an employee trying to behave entrepreneurially. You need resources to jump-start a great business idea. How do you get people to help?

Cialdini: It requires prework. People will help if they owe you for something you did in the past to advance *their* goals. That's the rule of reciprocity.

Get in the habit of helping people out, and—this part's really important—don't wave it away when people thank you. Don't say, "Oh, no big deal." We're given serious persuasive power immediately after someone thanks us. So say something like "Of course; it's what partners do *for each other*"—label what happened an act of partnership. With that prework done, a manager who subsequently needs support, who needs staffing, who maybe even needs a budget, will have significantly elevated the probability of success.

Adam Grant's work on the importance of giving inside organizations echoes that, doesn't it?

It does. Grant provides a brilliant analysis. Another fascinating study was done by Frank Flynn, formerly at Columbia, now at Stanford. He examined giving behaviors at a large telecom and found that two things happened when people helped their colleagues. One, the helpers were perceived by their fellow employees to be extremely valuable. Two—and here's where it gets complicated—they had lower productivity on their own projects. They were diverting a lot of time and energy to their colleagues' problems.

How do you manage that discrepancy between generosity and productivity?

Flynn found one thing that increased both the social value of the giver *and* that person's productivity. It wasn't the number of favors done. It was the number of favors *exchanged*.

If the initial giver creates a sense of reciprocity—a sense that there's a network of partners who are not just willing but eager to help—he will get a lot in return. He can increase the likelihood

of a big ROI by characterizing his assistance as a two-way partnership.

Second situation: An executive needs to convince a group that a big change in direction is necessary. What would you advise?

Moving people under conditions of uncertainty is difficult—the first thing they do is freeze. They're scared of what they might lose. Therefore, it's good to tell people what they will lose if they *fail* to move. Daniel Kahneman won a Nobel Prize for showing that if you're trying to mobilize people under conditions of uncertainty, notions of loss are psychologically more powerful than notions of gain. Managers can take the wind in their faces and make it wind in their sails by speaking not just of what will be gained by moving but also of what will be lost or forgone if people fail to move.

A second thing that happens when people are uncertain is that they don't look inside themselves for answers—all they see is ambiguity and their own lack of confidence. Instead, they look outside for sources of information that can reduce their uncertainty. The first thing they look to is authority: What do the experts think about this topic?

That's not necessarily the boss. It could be the person who knows the subject best.

That's an important distinction. We're not talking about being *in* authority but about being *an* authority. The manager needs to marshal evidence from acknowledged experts—they could be outsiders—that aligns with the rationale for the initiative.

The other place people look is to peers. If a couple of people are hanging back in a team meeting, the manager shouldn't hammer those guys, trying to get them to fall in line. Instead, he or she should identify a respected member of the group who agrees with the plan and ask that person to weigh in. Peers are often more convincing than executives when we're deciding what we should do.

Get in the habit of helping people out, and don't wave it away and say, "Oh, no big deal." We have serious persuasive power immediately after someone thanks us.

The Six Principles of Persuasion

Persuasion works by appealing to certain deeply rooted human responses. Experiments in social psychology by Robert Cialdini and others have identified six of those responses, which Cialdini initially described in his book *Influence*.

Liking

If people like you—because they sense that you like them, or because of things you have in common—they're more apt to say yes to you.

Reciprocity

People tend to return favors. If you help people, they'll help you. If you behave in a certain way (cooperatively, for example), they'll respond in kind.

Social proof

People will do things they see other people doing—especially if those people seem similar to them.

Commitment and consistency

People want to be consistent, or at least to appear to be. If they make a public, voluntary commitment, they'll try to follow through.

Authority

People defer to experts and to those in positions of authority (and typically underestimate their tendency to do so).

Scarcity

People value things more if they perceive them to be scarce.

Here's another scenario. I was recently at a conference where a group of CEOs were asked to cooperate on a task that was important in a civic sense—important to the world—but was not necessarily something their shareholders would applaud. The organizer was deeply respected but had no formal power. In that kind of situation, how do you get people to make commitments that last beyond the feel-good moment?

Two things strike me as important. The first is something I'm thinking about right now for a book I'm writing: the power of *we*. When people see themselves as part of a larger group that has a shared identity, they are willing to take steps they wouldn't take for their individual interests. The research on this is very clear. So the organizer needed to build that sense of shared purpose in the moment.

Once people disperse, they go back to their everyday *we*—in this case, the companies they run. So you need to lock in the change by getting people to make a public commitment while they're still together. You have to ask them what they will do and, if possible, get a written response.

Why does getting it in writing matter?

People live up to what they write down, for some reason; it seems to make the choice more conscious. They should also be asked to make commitments about next steps and to schedule another conversation, by which time they will be ready to describe the progress they've made. Bit by bit, the commitment becomes more concrete.

If you want to build up your informal networks, how do you go about it?

Here's where the internet helps us. We can find out a lot about people by checking their Facebook or LinkedIn pages. Look for things you have in common—maybe it's running, maybe it's knitting, maybe it's where you went to school. Finding something in common is powerful, because we like people who are like us; that's another principle of influence. If you use that similarity as a point of departure, and if you do it honestly, they'll like you, and you'll come to like them. Now you have people who are willing to be part of your network because of commonalities that were under the surface.

What advice can you give people who are reluctant to negotiate for themselves and need to get better at it? I'm thinking particularly about the research suggesting that women typically "don't ask."

I've done some work with Jeffrey Pfeffer, of Stanford, on whether you need someone to advance your case in a negotiation, and we've found that having an agent or advocate can be very helpful.

There are two benefits associated with having an agent when, say, you're being considered or recruited for a position. One is that you're perceived as more prestigious if someone is advocating for you. That's the authority principle in action.

The liking principle also comes into play. If you have to be a broker of information about yourself, you often appear self-aggrandizing, and it rubs people the wrong way. In the research we did, we found that if an advocate for a candidate makes demands that are based on the candidate's merits, it doesn't harm the candidate. But if the candidate argues the very same case, it does. The people on the receiving end just don't like that person, who comes off as a braggart.

This is especially relevant for women. We have done research showing that women who are anything less than modest about their accomplishments are harmed interpersonally. Men can also do themselves damage by being boastful, but we *expect* them to be aggressive. It hurts them far, far less than it hurts women.

Because of this bias, women will do better in organizations where managers are expected to advance the case for their people—where that's the cultural norm.

Any organization has minority groups—people who are “other” to some extent. Do they face difficulties when it comes to influencing those around them?

Yes, because of the similarity factor we talked about earlier. But there's a way around that. Those surface characteristics—race, ethnicity, foreign-born status—become irrelevant when there are commonalities in terms of values. We all want to work with people who share our sense of what's important—our priorities on the job, or even beyond the job. So one thing people can do is establish commonalities that aren't immediately visible. It usually takes a while for those things to be recognized; you can shorten the process by speaking about values more spontaneously.

So many businesses now are global—what kinds of difficulties do you run into cross-culturally with persuasion?

The good news is that the six principles of influence do seem to exist in all cultures. They're part

of the human condition. The bad news is that their weights change from culture to culture.

In our research, we've found that in more collectivist, communal cultures, certain kinds of persuasive appeals are more successful. Social proof is very powerful. If a lot of your peers are doing something, that's a more powerful impetus for you than for people in more individualistic cultures, where one looks inside the self and doesn't use the group as the standard for deciding.

For example, we did a study in the U.S. and in Poland, which has a more communal orientation than the U.S. We asked individuals if they would be willing to participate in a marketing survey. We also asked them whether they had done that sort of thing in the past and whether they thought their friends had. In the U.S. the issue that best correlated with whether people would participate was whether they themselves had previously done so. That's the principle of consistency in action. In Poland it was whether they perceived that their friends had done that sort of thing in the past.

One of the clichés in Western management literature is that the command-and-control organization is dead. When we print something like that in HBR, I'm never sure if it rings true globally.

There's some evidence in that regard. Citibank asked its managers in various countries the following question: Suppose a fellow manager's project is suffering, and he or she asks for help. Responding will take time and energy, maybe even resources and staffing. Under what circumstances would you feel most compelled to help? In Hong Kong and in China the answer was “I would ask myself, Is the requester connected to a senior person in my group?” Out of fealty, you have to say yes to someone who is above you. In Spain the answer was “I would ask myself, Is the requester connected to one of my friends?” There it's not fealty; it's loyalty. It's the liking principle. You have to know

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those shifts in emphasis across cultures in order to optimize your effectiveness.

One thing that has changed since you did your original work on influence is the extent to which the internet and social media have taken over our lives. When you're not in a face-to-face setting, how does influence change?

Social media have allowed us to access other sources of information than in the past, but I don't think they've changed our responses to influence appeals. One thing we're seeing, though, is that people are beginning to be influenced by their peers more than by experts.

If you look at TripAdvisor or Yelp, you find that it's not travel writers or restaurant critics who are influencing others' choices. It's people just like you and me, who can now report on their experiences.

That peer-influence effect reminds me of the work you've done on how hotels influence guests to reuse towels. Making an environmental argument was powerful, but what really moved the needle was hearing about the number of other guests who reused their towels.

Yes, and in follow-up studies we found that the most successful message was not the one that said the majority of people who've stayed in this hotel reused their towels. It was the one that said the majority of people who've stayed *in this room* reused their towels.

That's such an odd finding.

Isn't it? But one thing I've learned is that the most primitive techniques of influence are the most powerful ones. By "primitive," I don't mean anything derogatory. It's just clear that the more localized and personalized we can make a source

of information, the more likely it is to move people in our direction.

What emerging themes in the field interest you?

One important issue is the durability of the change we create. The research typically hasn't looked at that. However, along with a company called Opower, we're now in our fourth year of giving people access to information about their neighbors' patterns of energy usage, and the latest study indicates that people continue to pay attention to that information and to adjust their own usage accordingly. We have to give people a reason to pay attention—in this case, it's evidence about what their neighbors are doing—so that their commitments will endure.

The other issue I've gotten interested in is the ethics of influence, which we haven't examined in a rigorous, scientific way. What are the consequences of being ethical or unethical? Of course, we know that a person's reputation—and her ability to influence—suffers damage if she is discovered to have been unethical, especially inside an organization. However, that fact doesn't necessarily constrain less-than-ethical behavior. Here's why: People don't expect to be found out. Especially at the highest levels of power, people feel that they're bulletproof.

So we're approaching ethics from another, more self-interested, angle: Is there a bottom-line argument for being scrupulously ethical in the way you deal with customers, clients, vendors, regulators, and so on? Our hypothesis is that if an organization allows or cultivates a culture of dishonesty with the world outside the firm, the people inside the organization who are uncomfortable with dishonesty will seek to leave, and they will remain uncomfortable and stressed until they do. Conversely, the people who are comfortable with dishonesty will stay. Eventually the organization will be full of people who are comfortable with cheating—and who will cheat the organization.

Along with Adriana Samper [of Arizona State University] and Jessica Li [of the University of Kansas], I've done some experimental work to test this hypothesis. First we set up project teams and gave some members reason to believe that their fellow team members had conspired to cheat. When those witnesses were then given a difficult problem to solve, they performed significantly worse than people who hadn't been exposed to cheating. They were stressed. They were preoccupied to the point where it affected their performance. In a related experiment, people who, when given a choice, were comfortable working with a dishonest team cheated 50% more often than anyone else did.

These are early data, but we suspect this is a decent proxy for what will happen inside an organization over time. If an organization chooses to be unethical with clients or suppliers, it will ultimately be cheated by people who are happy to work in a dishonest culture. Eventually the organization will pay for it on the bottom line. Count on it. 🗳

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Are You In with the In Crowd?

A core group in every company dominates all the goings-on. Who gets to be a member of this inner circle, and what makes it so powerful?

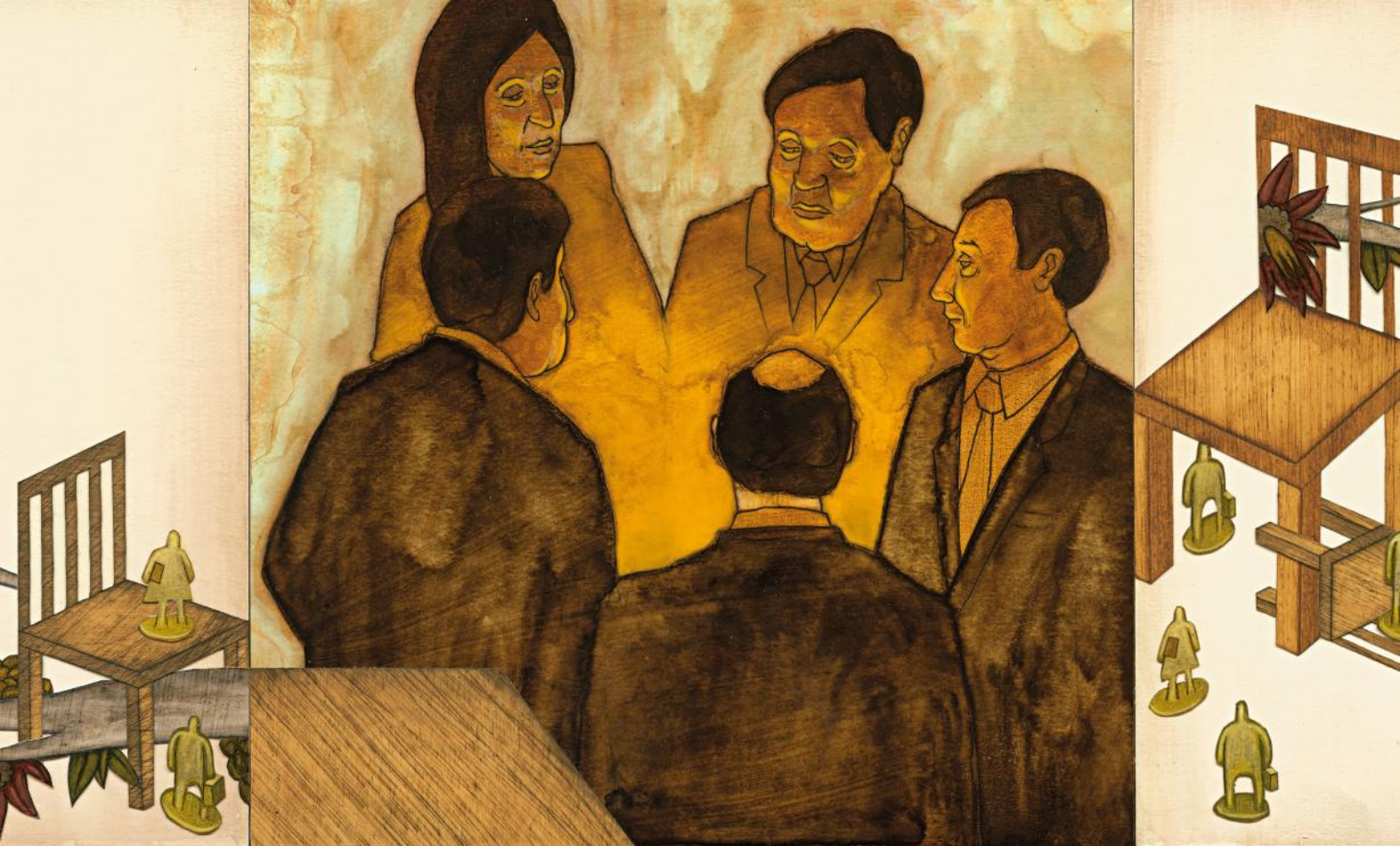
by Art Kleiner

AT THE CORE OF YOUR COMPANY, there is a group of people who seem to call the shots. More precisely, all the shots seem to be called for their benefit. It's as if the organization, beneath its formal statements of mission and purpose, has actually been set up to fulfill this group's needs and priorities. Everything else that the organization does comes later: satisfying customers, creating wealth, delivering products or services, developing employees' talents, returning investment to shareholders, and even insuring the company's own survival. They are means to the end of keeping the core group happy.

The core group won't be found on any formal organization chart. It exists in people's minds and hearts—indeed, the root of the word “core” is probably the Latin word *cor*, for heart. It comprises the cluster (or clusters) of people whose perceived interests and needs are taken into account, consciously or not, as decisions are made throughout the organization. In most organizations, talking explicitly about this group is taboo; its existence is a dirty secret that contradicts the vital corporate premise that we all have a common stake in the company's success. In fact, all employees *do* have a common stake in the company's success, but the

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Daniel Chang



company has a greater stake in the success of some employees than of others.

All organizations have core groups, but different organizations, depending on their histories and natures, have different types of core groups. In small start-ups, for example, the core group often consists of just the entrepreneurial founders, an angel-mentor or two, and a confidant. By contrast, a large and complex organization such as General Electric or Procter & Gamble can have hundreds of interlocking core groups, each active in its own division, department, or region. They vie with one another for the attention of the ultimate core group, the people in the CEO's kitchen cabinet. This group generally (but not always) includes the people at the top of the hierarchy. But it may also include people who—because they are respected, popular, successful, or manipulative, or because they control access to some critical bottleneck—have gained the loyalty and attention of others throughout the company.

When taking over a new company or division, smart leaders are quick to sort out who belongs to this in crowd. They

recognize that an organization can be led only in a manner that is consistent with the perceived attitudes of the core group. Anything considered to run contrary to the group's interests will be resisted (because employees will assume that their jobs require them to resist it)—even if the group members themselves say otherwise. Thus, if you do not know who constitutes the core group in your organization, or what they stand for, you may find that leading will be extremely difficult—even if you are ostensibly the person in charge. And if you want to move the organization in a new direction, you may need to explicitly challenge the core group first, perhaps by removing some of its key members or persuading them to publicly and consistently embrace your goals. Otherwise, the rest of the organization will not go along.

For better and for worse, core groups are as inevitable as human nature. Where they function well, the entire organization moves naturally and smoothly toward high levels of performance, responsibility, and creativity. But, of course, with so much influence over decision making concentrated in the

hands of such a powerful group, the possibility of abuse is real. In some cases, the core group becomes a kind of internal mafia that effortlessly (sometimes despite its own intentions) exploits the rest of the organization. This phenomenon explains why some companies can spend years scrabbling frugally for profit only to squander it all on ill-advised mergers. It also explains why, at some companies, the in-group lavishes upon itself pay and perks that are entirely out of line with the firm's success.

This is not to say that core groups are inherently bad. In fact, behind every great organization is a great core group. The core group is best seen as an organizational resource, invisible but tangible. Executives who fail to take the core group's priorities into account risk not only their organization's performance but their own goals and, in some cases, their careers.

Talking explicitly about the core group is taboo; its existence is a dirty secret that contradicts the vital corporate premise that we all have a common stake in the success of the company.

Consider Lothar, a senior manager and innovative researcher at a consulting firm that had recently split off from a much larger electronics corporation. The new board was still working out the details of the separation when Marianne, the CEO, made an exultant speech at a company celebration, thanking all the people who had helped launch the new firm. Brad, the head of human resources, followed her, colorfully recounting the details of the transition. During their toasts, neither Marianne nor Brad mentioned Lothar; they honestly forgot him. Somehow, during the spin-off (which Lothar had initially opposed), his status had changed. Indeed, only a few months after the festive evening, Lothar learned that he had been passed over for the job he had been promised as the head of research, and he had to scramble quickly to find another position at his old corporate parent.

Who sabotaged Lothar's career? No one did it deliberately. It's just that in the two years since the leaders of the consulting department had decided to form their own company, Lothar had gradually become a symbol of a past that the core group had rejected. Lothar had been one of the highest-performing managers and an emphatic advocate of the new company's values, but most people did not see him as enthusiastic or

interested in the new firm. That was enough for the system, as a whole, to deny him legitimacy. Had Lothar understood this perception better—and earlier—he would have had time to carve out a new core-group identity for himself and negotiate a new relationship with the organization. Although they may not know when they're part of the core group, people find out fast when they've been dropped.

Stories like Lothar's unfold in organizations all the time. Over the past 15 years, I have conducted interviews with dozens of senior executives who have found themselves enmeshed in what seem like mystifying organizational dynamics. To unpick those dynamics, it is necessary to examine the reasons for core groups' extraordinary influence in organizations. We must understand, for example, the forces that legitimize core groups, as well as the factors that guarantee their continuity. It is also important to grapple with what makes core groups dysfunctional and explore what can be done to make them healthier.

There's Always an In Crowd

No matter how large a core group may be, it always consists of a minority of the people in an organization. Indeed, in most organizations, it's unlikely that more than 5% of the people ever become members of a core group. Such groups vary dramatically from organization to organization. At the Body Shop, the core group is almost entirely composed of women; at Patagonia, it consists largely of mountain climbers. At most magazines I've known, either the production staff has core group status (in which case deadlines are sacrosanct and unchangeable) or the editorial staff does (in which case the magazine is exceptionally tolerant of last-minute changes).

In the best organizations, the core group members represent the unique values and knowledge that distinguish their companies from the rest. For example, only a few Coca-Cola executives have access to the vault where the secret syrup formula is kept. Of course, no one is worried that anyone will actually steal and use it. But the Coke formula has tremendous value as a talisman that separates Coca-Cola's core group from other members of the organization—and from the core groups of other companies. To have seen the Coke formula is truly to be part of a powerful and envied secret society.

Whatever the oil of anointment—whether it's seeing the Coke formula or getting invited to the CEO's house—the inner circle derives its power from the fact that life is too complicated without some such group to act as a symbolic lodestar. Think about it for a minute. The basic building block of organizations isn't the job, the team, the process, or even the share—it's the decision. People in organizations collectively make hundreds of thousands of decisions each day, usually without knowing exactly what the results will be. These decisions are made amid a maelstrom of competing jurisdictions, commitments, desires, and needs, including each decision maker's own self-interest. We make sense of a particular decision by asking ourselves, consciously or not: "What would so-and-so think of this?" The

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

organizational core group consists of the aggregate of all these individual so-and-sos.

Indeed, in some organizations you can hear the core group named in the decision-making process. When debating a new plan, for example, people will say, “John is really excited about it.” Or, “Larry has a lot of heartburn about it.” Or, “I don’t want to be the one to tell Kevin we can’t make it happen.” (These are real quotes from a Cisco Systems employee who was describing how decisions at the company were made on behalf of core group members CEO John Chambers, chief financial officer Larry Carter, and then–senior vice president Kevin Kennedy.) These statements sound like comments about emotions, but they are actually hard-nosed assessments of the core group’s readiness to act. It doesn’t matter how good the plan is; if Larry has heartburn, it’s not going to happen. That’s not just because as CFO, Larry Carter has power. It is also because he is part of the group that matters in the company’s decision-making process. In this way, the core group becomes involved in decisions even when none of its members is present.

Of course, at any given moment the organizational rank and file could conceivably shift its choices against one of the member’s interests, and this would push him or her out of the core group. (This happens, sometimes, with lame-duck leaders whose tenure at the organization is clearly limited.) Even in the most authoritarian organizations, the people in command know they can’t rule through the power of their positions alone. Young U.S. Army lieutenants, fresh from West Point, discovered this during the Vietnam War when they tried to pull rank. The veteran troops razed these new guys, openly disobeyed them, and sometimes even killed them. In most organizations, the stubborn fact is that we can confer legitimacy on anyone but ourselves. Indeed, what people conventionally call leadership is, at bottom, the ability to get others to confer legitimacy on us—and thus to get others to put us in the core group.

That can be a complicated process. Different kinds of organizations confer legitimacy on different types of leaders, and a would-be core member must read his or her followers accurately. I recently learned of an editor at a small community newspaper who continually snapped at his subordinates. Finally, one of his assistants sent him an e-mail with an ultimatum: “Don’t you ever tell me to shut up like that again.” The next day, she walked in on him while he was chewing out another staffer. He snarled at that person and then without missing a beat turned to the assistant and said, “And you—shut up!” Sure, the editor apologized. Sure, the assistant forgave him. And, yes, they’re both still working at the newspaper. The editor’s formal power is intact, but his influence has been compromised. In a commodities trading company, his behavior wouldn’t have affected his legitimacy. But in this context, the editor’s rage was disastrous for his career. In fact, the word went around the office: A few more lapses and he would, in effect, be kicked out of the core group. He would no longer be able to get anyone to do what he asked them to. The core group can govern

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

At the core of any company is a group of people who do not appear on any org chart, yet around whose benefit all decisions seem to be made. Employees unconsciously pick up on the unspoken true interests of these people, and the core group reinforces whatever it pays attention to. If you don’t know who’s in that “in crowd” in your company, or what they stand for, you may find it difficult to effect change—even if you are supposed to be the person in charge.

Smart leaders are quick to sort out who belongs to this group. It generally includes people who have gained the loyalty and attention of the rest of the company, be it through their position, popularity, success, or manipulation. Where core groups function with independence, creativity, and power, the whole organization moves naturally toward high levels of performance. But with the influence over decision making concentrated among such a powerful group, the possibility of abuse is real.

The core group is best seen as an organizational resource, invisible but tangible. Leaders who fail to take the core group’s priorities into account risk not only their organization’s performance but possibly their own goals and careers.

only with the consent of the governed. That’s why smart core members understand that the connection with their followers requires deliberate attention and design, and they work at it. Otherwise, the organization is vulnerable to dysfunctional core group relationships.

How Core Groups Go Bad

Enron’s collapse was compelling not just because of its speed and magnitude but because of what it revealed about core group dynamics. Enron’s employees were unusual in the pride so many of them took in seeing themselves as part of the core group. Then in November 2001, it suddenly became clear that there was an inner core group—the people who were distinguished not by their ownership of stock but by their knowledge of the illicit partnerships that masked Enron’s losses.

Enron may have been anomalous in the extent of the corruption in its inner circle, but if the truth be told, it’s disturbingly easy for core groups to become dysfunctional. There are powerful dynamics at work in these groups that can tear at the very fabric of the organization. Most notable among them is a phenomenon that psychologist and management consultant Charles Hampden-Turner has labeled amplification. Amplification is the process by which a core group member’s remarks, actions, and even body language are automatically magnified by his followers. In other words, the leaders’ comments

come across to others in the organization as louder, stronger, and more commanding than they seemed to him when he uttered them.

The phenomenon is universal. Recent psychological research has shown that children are uncannily in sync with their mothers' moods and expressions and even their unconscious wishes. In a similar way, employees tend to pick up on the unspoken true interests of core group members. This has a positive side, of course. It is the reason, for example, that core group members can play big roles in fostering creativity: Core group members' attendance at a design meeting, even if they don't say anything, matters enormously in stimulating participants' creative output. Similarly, it matters which prototype cars auto executives seem most interested in driving, which software demos computer executives linger at, and which ideas

executives in all industries mention to their peers. Others in the organization register these cues and act accordingly.

Unfortunately, it's not just creativity that can be rewarded this way. Deceit, inefficiency, moral cowardice, and general unaccountability can be rewarded, too. The core group reinforces whatever it pays attention to. A core group member who casually mentions a product might well discover three weeks later that someone has spent \$1 million introducing it. At one energy company, a boss was heard to remark in passing that it would be nice to have more open office space. Within a few days, contractors were tearing down the walls. A week later, the same boss complained that the place looked flaky, and the walls went up again.

In an organization where people eagerly try to smoke out the core group's needs and wishes—and then anxiously

Does Your Company Love You?

Welcome to the core group. There is no formal initiation, not even a celebratory lunch. There are no forms to fill out, and there's probably no change in your official job description. But everything is different now. The organization suddenly sees you as central to its fate. From now on, it will pivot and twist to give you what it thinks you want and need.

If you need a high-status position, the organization will find you one. When you travel, someone will meet you at the airport. The organization will boost your pay without waiting for you to ask for a raise. And if you have children who need watching, your company will set up a child care program. You won't even have to request it; it will be justified as a general benefit for all employees.

And the more you ask of your organization, the more it will do for you. It's as if the organization has fallen in love with you—a passionate, head-over-heels kind of love in which you are never far from the center of its thoughts. If you have ever started an organization, or if you have become part of the core group of an existing one, you know how exhilarating this kind of treatment can be. Drinks in the chairman's office after work... an invitation to join the golf club...the quiet extension of perks into retirement. Tony O'Reilly, when he was head of Heinz, used to give parties for his staff at his castle in Ireland. There would be plenty of drinking, and O'Reilly, who was famously clever, would lead the group in making up extemporaneous limericks. An invitation was a sign that you were in the core group. At GE, Jack Welch got key lieutenants to buy houses near him in Florida.

And yet the most significant and irresistible benefits are the intangible ones. Core group members are taken seriously in a way that few other people are. They are invited to solve problems, even when they don't have any special knowledge or skill. They are magically "in the know." They hear early—maybe

earlier than their superiors—about new projects in other divisions that the CEO is championing. Their solutions are deemed brilliant because everyone sees to it that their solutions work. In fact, core members routinely receive credit for others' insights. "Nobody at Citibank was interested in anything," wrote Charles Ferguson in *High Stakes, No Prisoners*, "unless John Reed thought of it first." The lives of core members are a succession of peak experiences—often the kinds of epiphanies that money can't buy, that come only from access to remarkable people or once-in-a-lifetime events. Few of us get to experience it. We only hear stories from afar, glimpses of fairy-tale-like perks and privilege, where the organization lays the world at its lover's feet.



withdraw when they guess wrong—those in power infer that the organization lacks individuals who can take initiative. Or the core group simply concludes that staff members can't think for themselves. The rest of the organization, meanwhile, comes to believe that the core group members are self-centered, arbitrary, and oblivious. In such organizations, as the two sides lose their trust in each other, direct communication disappears. The only way to know where you stand is through the trappings of organizational politics: Who has the largest office or the largest staff? Who is invited to speak at a meeting? Who gets credit? Who gets publicly criticized or reprimanded? These bits of data are important indicators of whom the core group may or may not be grooming as potential members.

Amplification is the process by which a core group member's remarks, actions, and even body language are automatically magnified by his followers.

It's almost as if both sides are deliberately colluding to perpetuate a system in which they don't have to confront their stereotypes of each other, so they can spare themselves the difficult work of talking about the organization's real needs. In the endless (and often underground) bickering that ensues, various factions of the core group and their followers can get trapped in a vortex of suspicion and self-righteousness ("They just don't get it") that can escalate into paranoia and eventually into warfare. That's when the organization becomes truly dysfunctional; it is liable to damage its prospects because it is too torn by infighting to serve customers.

Getting the Group on Track

It's easy to dismiss that kind of toxicity as an inevitable by-product of core groups. But the core group can use its enormous power to shape the creativity, efficiency, and accountability of an organization for good as well as ill. There are many examples of organizations where the leaders make decisions better because they can draw on a well-functioning core group as a resource. This is not because the core group sets policy but simply because of the group's potential to establish an example for the rest of the organization. If the core group is going to be

the means to move the organization forward, we need to know how to clarify its priorities.

A first step toward improving any core group involves reducing the level of distortion in the signals that are amplified. Politicians, diplomats, and psychiatrists have long been aware that they have to be exceedingly careful with even their most offhand remarks, because these can have huge effects on their listeners. Every U.S. president and treasury secretary quickly learns, for example, not to make casual remarks about currency exchange rates. And aristocrats have long practiced elaborate protocols for reducing misunderstandings when they interact with people of lesser status. A friend of mine once had dinner with England's Princess Margaret and a group of visiting Americans. A professional ambassador, Princess Margaret arrived at the gathering and quickly asked for a drink. She then lit a cigarette and immediately stubbed it out. She knew that her hosts would not feel free to drink or smoke until she had done so first.

Few business leaders have that instinct of noblesse oblige. To compensate, therefore, they need to make themselves more aware of the signals they send, both intended and unintended. This means not only knowing what messages they unconsciously convey about the types of programs they favor and the ideas they want. It also means being cognizant of how those messages are communicated. In many organizations, conversation up and down the hierarchy is limited to sports talk and superficial inquiry. News of business realities travels only through projections and forecasts, which sends the message that if you see a discrepancy in these numbers, you may correct it—but don't try to talk about the reasons why a discrepancy appears. That would be getting too personal.

Often, the unconscious message is simply that core group members don't want to be disturbed or made uncomfortable. It takes a lot to disabuse people of that idea. A core group member's expression of even the slightest irritation has a tremendous impact on subordinates. Some senior executives try to compensate for this by demonstrating that they are willing to be uncomfortable. One consumer-products company CEO, for example, drags his direct reports through arduous mountain-climbing trips and desert safaris to shock everyone out of complacency. The intended message is: Our leaders are so passionate and involved that they will endure discomfort and even pain for the sake of high performance. Sure, subordinates come back talking about the life-changing, team-building experience they've had. But they all know what it means—if you really want to talk to *this* guy, you've got to let him drag you out to the Sahara first.

You can't break a core group pattern by convening a retreat or issuing a policy. You have to set an example and reinforce that example, time after time, action after action, for a year or more. The essential component of communication is trust, and trust is something that has to be earned; there are no shortcuts. One small step you can take is to demonstrate, through

continual soft-spoken patience and receptiveness, that you really would rather get bad news than false good news. Once you've done that, you will have taken a giant leap toward ensuring the health of the core group.

Finally, organizational design plays a role in determining how healthy a core group is. In the most effective organizations I know of, the leaders create the largest possible core group, and members work under policies that combine access to inner-circle information with opportunities for taking actions whose results will affect the bottom line. In general, the more widely held financial information is, the less likely it is that the members of the core group will be able to enrich themselves at the expense of an organization's broader interests. Similarly, a core group that is diverse in terms of race, gender, and nationality will tend to operate more capably and with more awareness than one whose homogeneity sends a message that "the only people who count around here are people like us."

Of course, any kind of organizational engineering conducted for the sake of influencing core group dynamics needs a delicate touch and a deliberate design; a company should not just set up a raft of sinecures for the core group members to keep them happy. Nor is it easy for a core group to suddenly make itself open up to new members. In order for an inner circle to allow different types of people to enter, members must be willing and able to talk about misunderstandings and disagreements—subjects that homogeneous groups can avoid.

The Limits of the Law

Core groups are an inevitable part of any organization; there would never be business as usual without them. At their worst,

core groups can become what management author Arie de Geus calls parasites, exploiting the company for their own benefit and generating the kind of corruption and abuse we have become sadly accustomed to. Corporate governance reforms that have emerged in response to those scandals have been designed to make the corporate in crowd more accountable to shareholders. Many of the proposals are worthwhile, but my experience suggests that most will not achieve the desired results unless they take into account the nature and role of core groups.

For a start, while corporations legally belong to shareholders, the psychological truth is that they will always belong to some inner group of managers. An organization's employees will put shareholder value first only if the core group sets an example of doing so and makes it clear that everyone else's job depends on following suit. Because the core group sets the organization's strategic direction, it can even help a company lead, rather than merely follow, the financial markets or its industry. When BP established its "new brand," Beyond Petroleum, the City of London did not approve. The stock price fell, reflecting investors' presumption that an established energy company with 100,000 employees or so around the world could not change its habits. At that point, BP's core group had to choose what kind of stand to take. Employees throughout the corporation could (and did) make personal decisions about how avidly to support the new brand, but only the core group could establish an overall corporate point of view concerning, for example, when a viable infrastructure for distributing hydrogen-based energy was likely to be developed.

When core groups display independence, creativity, and power, the rest of the company follows. The same goes for when core groups take courageous stands; when they talk together openly and raise disputes for the sake of understanding them better; when they are diverse in their makeup and their thinking; when they forgo politicking, empire building, and exploitive behavior; and when they embody a sense of stewardship for the organization. Such behavior on the part of the company, in turn, creates value for shareholders, especially over the long term. But unless you are prepared to remove many of the members from the organization, these traits can't be engineered into the core group. In most situations, core groups take on such traits when they realize they will be rewarded for them—in part by the approval of regulators, but primarily by the group's own newfound ability to attract employees, customers, financiers, and shareholders. ▀

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FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

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The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why

*We all know what confidence, competence, and authority sound like.
Or do we?*

by Deborah Tannen

THE HEAD OF A LARGE DIVISION of a multinational corporation was running a meeting devoted to performance assessment. Each senior manager stood up, reviewed the individuals in his group, and evaluated them for promotion. Although there were women in every group, not one of them made the cut. One after another, each manager declared, in effect, that every woman in his group didn't have the self-confidence needed to be promoted. The division head began to doubt his ears. How could it be that all the talented women in the division suffered from a lack of self-confidence?

In all likelihood, they didn't. Consider the many women who have left large corporations to start their own businesses, obviously exhibiting enough confidence to succeed on their own. Judgments about confidence can be inferred only from the way people present themselves, and much of that presentation is in the form of talk.

The CEO of a major corporation told me that he often has to make decisions in five minutes about matters on which others may have worked five months. He said he uses this rule: If the person making the proposal seems confident, the CEO approves it. If not, he says no. This might seem like a reasonable approach. But my field of research, sociolinguistics, suggests otherwise. The CEO obviously thinks he knows what a confident person

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Getty Images



sounds like. But his judgment, which may be dead right for some people, may be dead wrong for others.

Communication isn't as simple as saying what you mean. How you say what you mean is crucial, and differs from one person to the next, because using language is learned social behavior: How we talk and listen are deeply influenced by cultural experience. Although we might think that our ways of saying what we mean are natural, we can run into trouble if we interpret and evaluate others as if they necessarily felt the same way we'd feel if we spoke the way they did.

Since 1974, I have been researching the influence of linguistic style on conversations and human relationships. In the past four years, I have extended that research to the workplace, where I have observed how ways of speaking learned in childhood affect judgments of competence and confidence, as well as who gets heard, who gets credit, and what gets done.

The division head who was dumbfounded to hear that all the talented women in his organization lacked confidence was probably right to be skeptical. The senior managers were judging the women in their groups by their own linguistic norms, but women—like people who have grown up in a different

culture—have often learned different styles of speaking than men, which can make them seem less competent and self-assured than they are.

What Is Linguistic Style?

Everything that is said must be said in a certain way—in a certain tone of voice, at a certain rate of speed, and with a certain degree of loudness. Whereas often we consciously consider what to say before speaking, we rarely think about how to say it, unless the situation is obviously loaded—for example, a job interview or a tricky performance review. Linguistic style refers to a person's characteristic speaking pattern. It includes such features as directness or indirectness, pacing and pausing, word choice, and the use of such elements as jokes, figures of speech, stories, questions, and apologies. In other words, linguistic style is a set of culturally learned signals by which we not only communicate what we mean but also interpret others' meaning and evaluate one another as people.

Consider turn taking, one element of linguistic style. Conversation is an enterprise in which people take turns: One person speaks, then the other responds. However, this apparently

simple exchange requires a subtle negotiation of signals so that you know when the other person is finished and it's your turn to begin. Cultural factors such as country or region of origin and ethnic background influence how long a pause seems natural. When Bob, who is from Detroit, has a conversation with his colleague Joe, from New York City, it's hard for him to get a word in edgewise because he expects a slightly longer pause between turns than Joe does. A pause of that length never comes because, before it has a chance to, Joe senses an uncomfortable silence, which he fills with more talk of his own. Both men fail to realize that differences in conversational style are getting in their way. Bob thinks that Joe is pushy and uninterested in what he has to say, and Joe thinks that Bob doesn't have much to contribute. Similarly, when Sally relocated from Texas to Washington, DC, she kept searching for the right time to break in during staff meetings—and never found it. Although in Texas she was considered outgoing and confident, in Washington she was perceived as shy and retiring. Her boss even suggested she take an assertiveness training course. Thus slight differences in conversational style—in these cases, a few seconds of pause—can have a surprising impact on who gets heard and on the judgments, including psychological ones, that are made about people and their abilities.

Every utterance functions on two levels. We're all familiar with the first one: Language communicates ideas. The second level is mostly invisible to us, but it plays a powerful role in communication. As a form of social behavior, language also negotiates relationships. Through ways of speaking, we signal—and create—the relative status of speakers and their level of rapport. If you say, "Sit down!" you are signaling that you have higher status than the person you are addressing, that you are so close to each other that you can drop all pleasantries, or that you are angry. If you say, "I would be honored if you would sit down," you are signaling great respect—or great sarcasm, depending on your tone of voice, the situation, and what you both know about how close you really are. If you say, "You must be so tired—why don't you sit down," you are communicating either closeness and concern or condescension. Each of these ways of saying "the same thing"—telling someone to sit down—can have a vastly different meaning.

In every community known to linguists, the patterns that constitute linguistic style are relatively different for men and women. What's "natural" for most men speaking a given language is, in some cases, different from what's "natural" for most women. That is because we learn ways of speaking as children growing up, especially from peers, and children tend to play with other children of the same sex. The research of sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists observing American children at play has shown that, although both girls and boys find ways of creating rapport and negotiating status, girls tend to learn conversational rituals that focus on the rapport dimension of relationships whereas boys tend to learn rituals that focus on the status dimension.

Girls tend to play with a single best friend or in small groups, and they spend a lot of time talking. They use language to negotiate how close they are; for example, the girl you tell your secrets to becomes your best friend. Girls learn to downplay ways in which one is better than the others and to emphasize ways in which they are all the same. From childhood, most girls learn that sounding too sure of themselves will make them unpopular with their peers—although nobody really takes such modesty literally. A group of girls will ostracize a girl who calls attention to her own superiority and criticize her by saying, "She thinks she's something"; and a girl who tells others what to do is called "bossy." Thus girls learn to talk in ways that balance their own needs with those of others—to save face for one another in the broadest sense of the term.

Boys tend to play very differently. They usually play in larger groups in which more boys can be included, but not everyone is treated as an equal. Boys with high status in their group are expected to emphasize rather than downplay their status, and usually one or several boys will be seen as the leader or leaders. Boys generally don't accuse one another of being bossy, because the leader is expected to tell lower-status boys what to do. Boys learn to use language to negotiate their status in the group by displaying their abilities and knowledge, and by challenging others and resisting challenges. Giving orders is one way of getting and keeping the high-status role. Another is taking center stage by telling stories or jokes.

This is not to say that all boys and girls grow up this way or feel comfortable in these groups or are equally successful at negotiating within these norms. But, for the most part, these childhood play groups are where boys and girls learn their conversational styles. In this sense, they grow up in different worlds. The result is that women and men tend to have different habitual ways of saying what they mean, and conversations between them can be like cross-cultural communication: You can't assume that the other person means what you would mean if you said the same thing in the same way.

My research in companies across the United States shows that the lessons learned in childhood carry over into the workplace. Consider the following example: A focus group was organized at a major multinational company to evaluate a recently implemented flextime policy. The participants sat in a circle and discussed the new system. The group concluded that it was excellent, but they also agreed on ways to improve it. The meeting went well and was deemed a success by all, according to my own observations and everyone's comments to me. But the next day, I was in for a surprise.

I had left the meeting with the impression that Phil had been responsible for most of the suggestions adopted by the group. But as I typed up my notes, I noticed that Cheryl had made almost all those suggestions. I had thought that the key ideas came from Phil because he had picked up Cheryl's points and supported them, speaking at greater length in doing so than she had in raising them.

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

You can spot a competent colleague with a great idea a mile away. Or can you?

Most of us judge others' competence—as well as their confidence and authority—by the way they talk. Based on what we hear, we decide whether a boss's, peer's, or subordinate's ideas merit our attention and support.

There's only one problem with this process: We all speak different "languages." We assign different meaning to linguistic behaviors such as questioning, apologizing, and being indirect. Result? We misjudge one another—ignoring or outright rejecting someone's ideas because we've decided she lacks competence.

But when we undervalue and reject certain ideas because we misunderstand their presenter's linguistic style, we deprive our companies of the opportunity to benefit from those ideas.

Linguistic style differences are especially noticeable between genders. In U.S. businesses, where men's speaking style dominates, women may be ignored, interrupted, and passed over for promotions—even if they're highly competent.

How to make sure your talented employees get heard, get credit, and get work done—no matter what "language" they speak? Hone your awareness of different linguistic styles. Then develop flexible approaches to meetings, mentoring, and performance evaluation. Finally, adjust your style to those of individuals with whom you interact.

Responding flexibly to various styles of interaction is especially important in today's culturally diverse and global business world.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

This table shows examples of styles of talking (including the assumptions behind each style) and unintended consequences a company may suffer because of misinterpreted stylistic differences.

	Style of Talking	Unintended Consequences of Style
Sharing Credit	Uses "we" rather than "I" to describe accomplishments. <i>Why?</i> Using "I" seems too self-promoting.	Speaker doesn't get credit for accomplishments and may hesitate to offer good ideas in the future.
Acting Modest	Downplays their certainty, rather than minimizing doubts, about future performance. <i>Why?</i> Confident behavior seems too boastful.	Speaker appears to lack confidence and, therefore, competence; others reject speaker's good ideas.
Asking Questions	Asks questions freely. <i>Why?</i> Questions generate needed knowledge.	Speaker appears ignorant to others; if organization discourages speaker from asking questions, valuable knowledge remains buried.
Apologizing	Apologizes freely. <i>Why?</i> Apologies express concern for others.	Speaker appears to lack authority.
Giving Feedback	Notes weaknesses only after first citing strengths. <i>Why?</i> Buffering criticism saves face for the individual receiving feedback.	Person receiving feedback concludes that areas needing improvement aren't important.
Avoiding Verbal Opposition	Avoids challenging others' ideas, and hedges when stating own ideas. <i>Why?</i> Verbal opposition signals destructive fighting.	Others conclude that speaker has weak ideas.
Managing Up	Avoids talking up achievements with higher-ups. <i>Why?</i> Emphasizing achievements to higher-ups constitutes boasting.	Managers conclude that speaker hasn't achieved much and doesn't deserve recognition or promotion.
Being Indirect	Speaks indirectly rather than bluntly when telling subordinates what to do. <i>Why?</i> Blatantly directing others is too bossy.	Subordinates conclude that manager lacks assertiveness and clear thinking, and judge manager's directives as unimportant.

It would be easy to regard Phil as having stolen Cheryl's ideas—and her thunder. But that would be inaccurate. Phil never claimed Cheryl's ideas as his own. Cheryl herself told me later that she left the meeting confident that she had contributed significantly, and that she appreciated Phil's support. She volunteered, with a laugh, "It was not one of those times when a woman says something and it's ignored, then a man says it and it's picked up." In other words, Cheryl and Phil worked well as a team, the group fulfilled its charge, and the company got what it needed. So what was the problem?

I went back and asked all the participants who they thought had been the most influential group member, the one most responsible for the ideas that had been adopted. The pattern of answers was revealing. The two other women in the group named Cheryl. Two of the three men named Phil. Of the men, only Phil named Cheryl. In other words, in this instance, the women evaluated the contribution of another woman more accurately than the men did.

Meetings like this take place daily in companies around the country. Unless managers are unusually good at listening closely to how people say what they mean, the talents of someone like Cheryl may well be undervalued and underutilized.

People in powerful positions are likely to reward linguistic styles similar to their own.

One Up, One Down

Individual speakers vary in how sensitive they are to the social dynamics of language—in other words, to the subtle nuances of what others say to them. Men tend to be sensitive to the power dynamics of interaction, speaking in ways that position themselves as one up and resisting being put in a one-down position by others. Women tend to react more strongly to the rapport dynamic, speaking in ways that save face for others and buffering statements that could be seen as putting others in a one-down position. These linguistic patterns are pervasive; you can hear them in hundreds of exchanges in the workplace every day. And, as in the case of Cheryl and Phil, they affect who gets heard and who gets credit.

Getting Credit. Even so small a linguistic strategy as the choice of pronoun can affect who gets credit. In my research in the workplace, I heard men say "I" in situations where I heard women say "we." For example, one publishing company executive said, "I'm hiring a new manager. I'm going to put him in

charge of my marketing division," as if he owned the corporation. In stark contrast, I recorded women saying "we" when referring to work they alone had done. One woman explained that it would sound too self-promoting to claim credit in an obvious way by saying, "I did this." Yet she expected—sometimes vainly—that others would know it was her work and would give her the credit she did not claim for herself.

Managers might leap to the conclusion that women who do not take credit for what they've done should be taught to do so. But that solution is problematic because we associate ways of speaking with moral qualities: The way we speak is who we are and who we want to be.

Veronica, a senior researcher in a high-tech company, had an observant boss. He noticed that many of the ideas coming out of the group were hers but that often someone else trumpeted them around the office and got credit for them. He advised her to "own" her ideas and make sure she got the credit. But Veronica found she simply didn't enjoy her work if she had to approach it as what seemed to her an unattractive and unappealing "grabbing game." It was her dislike of such behavior that had led her to avoid it in the first place.

Whatever the motivation, women are less likely than men to have learned to blow their own horns. And they are more likely than men to believe that if they do so, they won't be liked.

Many have argued that the growing trend of assigning work to teams may be especially congenial to women, but it may also create complications for performance evaluation. When ideas are generated and work is accomplished in the privacy of the team, the outcome of the team's effort may become associated with the person most vocal about reporting results. There are many women and men—but probably relatively more women—who are reluctant to put themselves forward in this way and who consequently risk not getting credit for their contributions.

Confidence and Boasting. The CEO who based his decisions on the confidence level of speakers was articulating a value that is widely shared in U.S. businesses: One way to judge confidence is by an individual's behavior, especially verbal behavior. Here again, many women are at a disadvantage.

Studies show that women are more likely to downplay their certainty and men are more likely to minimize their doubts. Psychologist Laurie Heatherington and her colleagues devised an ingenious experiment to examine this. They asked hundreds of incoming college students to predict what grades they would get in their first year. Some subjects were asked to make their predictions privately by writing them down and placing them in an envelope; others were asked to make their predictions publicly, in the presence of a researcher. The results showed that more women than men predicted lower grades for themselves if they made their predictions publicly. If they made their predictions privately, the predictions were the same as those of the men—and the same as their actual grades. This study provides

evidence that what comes across as lack of confidence—predicting lower grades for oneself—may reflect not one’s actual level of confidence but the desire not to seem boastful.

These habits with regard to appearing humble or confident result from the socialization of boys and girls by their peers in childhood play. As adults, both women and men find these behaviors reinforced by the positive responses they get from friends and relatives who share the same norms. But the norms of behavior in the U.S. business world are based on the style of interaction that is more common among men—at least, among American men.

Asking Questions. Although asking the right questions is one of the hallmarks of a good manager, how and when questions are asked can send unintended signals about competence and power. In a group, if only one person asks questions, he or she risks being seen as the only ignorant one. Furthermore, we judge others not only by how they speak but also by how they are spoken to. The person who asks questions may end up being lectured to and looking like a novice under a schoolmaster’s tutelage. The way boys are socialized makes them more likely to be aware of the underlying power dynamic by which a question asker can be seen in a one-down position.

One practicing physician learned the hard way that any exchange of information can become the basis for judgments—or misjudgments—about competence. During her training, she received a negative evaluation that she thought was unfair, so she asked her supervising physician for an explanation. He said that she knew less than her peers. Amazed at his answer, she asked how he had reached that conclusion. He said, “You ask more questions.”

Along with cultural influences and individual personality, gender seems to play a role in whether and when people ask questions. For example, of all the observations I’ve made in lectures and books, the one that sparks the most enthusiastic flash of recognition is that men are less likely than women to stop and ask for directions when they are lost. I explain that men often resist asking for directions because they are aware that it puts them in a one-down position and because they value

who believe that asking questions might reflect negatively on them may, in turn, be likely to form a negative opinion of others who ask questions in situations where they would not.

Conversational Rituals

Conversation is fundamentally ritual in the sense that we speak in ways our culture has conventionalized and expect certain types of responses. Take greetings, for example. I have heard visitors to the United States complain that Americans are hypocritical because they ask how you are but aren’t interested in the answer. To Americans, How are you? is obviously a ritualized way to start a conversation rather than a literal request for information. In other parts of the world, including the Philippines, people ask each other, “Where are you going?” when they meet. The question seems intrusive to Americans, who do not realize that it, too, is a ritual query to which the only expected reply is a vague “Over there.”

It’s easy and entertaining to observe different rituals in foreign countries. But we don’t expect differences, and are far less likely to recognize the ritualized nature of our conversations, when we are with our compatriots at work. Our differing rituals can be even more problematic when we think we’re all speaking the same language.

Apologies. Consider the simple phrase *I’m sorry*.

Catherine: How did that big presentation go?

Bob: Oh, not very well. I got a lot of flak from the VP for finance, and I didn’t have the numbers at my fingertips.

Catherine: Oh, I’m sorry. I know how hard you worked on that.

In this case, *I’m sorry* probably means “I’m sorry that happened,” not “I apologize,” unless it was Catherine’s responsibility to supply Bob with the numbers for the presentation. Women tend to say *I’m sorry* more frequently than men, and often they intend it in this way—as a ritualized means of expressing concern. It’s one of many learned elements of conversational style that girls often use to establish rapport. Ritual apologies—like other conversational rituals—work well when both parties share the same assumptions about their use. But people who utter frequent ritual apologies may end up appearing weaker, less confident, and literally more blameworthy than people who don’t.

Apologies tend to be regarded differently by men, who are more likely to focus on the status implications of exchanges. Many men avoid apologies because they see them as putting the speaker in a one-down position. I observed with some amazement an encounter among several lawyers engaged in a negotiation over a speakerphone. At one point, the lawyer in whose office I was sitting accidentally elbowed the telephone and cut off the call. When his secretary got the parties back on again, I expected him to say what I would have said: “Sorry about that. I knocked the phone with my elbow.” Instead, he said, “Hey, what happened? One minute you were there; the next minute you were gone!” This lawyer seemed to have an

Even the choice of pronoun can affect who gets credit.

the independence that comes with finding their way by themselves. Asking for directions while driving is only one instance—along with many others that researchers have examined—in which men seem less likely than women to ask questions. I believe this is because they are more attuned than women to the potential face-losing aspect of asking questions. And men

automatic impulse not to admit fault if he didn't have to. For me, it was one of those pivotal moments when you realize that the world you live in is not the one everyone lives in and that the way you assume is the way to talk is really only one of many.

Those who caution managers not to undermine their authority by apologizing are approaching interaction from the perspective of the power dynamic. In many cases, this strategy is effective. On the other hand, when I asked people what frustrated them in their jobs, one frequently voiced complaint was working with or for someone who refuses to apologize or admit fault. In other words, accepting responsibility for errors and admitting mistakes may be an equally effective or superior strategy in some settings.

Feedback. Styles of giving feedback contain a ritual element that often is the cause for misunderstanding. Consider the following exchange: A manager had to tell her marketing director to rewrite a report. She began this potentially awkward task by citing the report's strengths and then moved to the main point: the weaknesses that needed to be remedied. The marketing director seemed to understand and accept his supervisor's comments, but his revision contained only minor changes and failed to address the major weaknesses. When the manager told him of her dissatisfaction, he accused her of misleading him: "You told me it was fine."

The impasse resulted from different linguistic styles. To the manager, it was natural to buffer the criticism by beginning with praise. Telling her subordinate that his report is inadequate and has to be rewritten puts him in a one-down position. Praising him for the parts that are good is a ritualized way of saving face for him. But the marketing director did not share his supervisor's assumption about how feedback should be given. Instead, he assumed that what she mentioned first was the main point and that what she brought up later was an afterthought.

Those who expect feedback to come in the way the manager presented it would appreciate her tact and would regard a more blunt approach as unnecessarily callous. But those who share the marketing director's assumptions would regard the blunt approach as honest and no-nonsense, and the manager's as obfuscating. Because each one's assumptions seemed self-evident, each blamed the other: The manager thought the marketing director was not listening, and he thought she had not communicated clearly or had changed her mind. This is significant because it illustrates that incidents labeled vaguely as "poor communication" may be the result of differing linguistic styles.

Compliments. Exchanging compliments is a common ritual, especially among women. A mismatch in expectations about this ritual left Susan, a manager in the human resources field, in a one-down position. She and her colleague Bill had both given presentations at a national conference. On the airplane home, Susan told Bill, "That was a great talk!" "Thank you," he said. Then she asked, "What did you think of mine?" He responded with a lengthy and detailed critique, as she listened uncomfort-

ably. An unpleasant feeling of having been put down came over her. Somehow she had been positioned as the novice in need of his expert advice. Even worse, she had only herself to blame, since she had, after all, asked Bill what he thought of her talk.

But had Susan asked for the response she received? When she asked Bill what he thought about her talk, she expected to hear not a critique but a compliment. In fact, her question had been an attempt to repair a ritual gone awry. Susan's initial compliment to Bill was the kind of automatic recognition she felt was more or less required after a colleague gives a presentation, and she expected Bill to respond with a matching compliment. She was just talking automatically, but he either sincerely misunderstood the ritual or simply took the opportunity to bask in the one-up position of critic. Whatever his motivation, it was Susan's attempt to spark an exchange of compliments that gave him the opening.

Although this exchange could have occurred between two men, it does not seem coincidental that it happened between a man and a woman. In her research, linguist Janet Holmes discovered that women pay more compliments than men. And, as I have observed, fewer men are likely to ask, "What did you think of my talk?" precisely because the question might invite an unwanted critique.

In the social structure of the peer groups in which they grow up, boys are indeed looking for opportunities to put others down and take the one-up position for themselves. In contrast, one of the rituals girls learn is taking the one-down position but assuming that the other person will recognize the ritual nature of the self-denigration and pull them back up.

The exchange between Susan and Bill also suggests how women's and men's characteristic styles may put women at a disadvantage in the workplace. If one person is trying to minimize status differences, maintain an appearance that everyone is equal, and save face for the other, while another person is trying to maintain the one-up position and avoid being positioned as one down, the person seeking the one-up position is likely to get it. At the same time, the person who has not been expending any effort to avoid the one-down position is likely to end up in it. Because women are more likely to take (or accept) the role of advice seeker, men are more inclined to interpret a ritual question from a woman as a request for advice.

Ritual Opposition. Apologizing, mitigating criticism with praise, and exchanging compliments are rituals common among women that men often take literally. A ritual common among men that women often take literally is ritual opposition.

A woman in communications told me she watched with distaste and distress as her office mate argued heatedly with another colleague about whose division should suffer budget cuts. She was even more surprised, however, that a short time later they were as friendly as ever. "How can you pretend that fight never happened?" she asked. "Who's pretending it never happened?" he responded, as puzzled by her question as she had been by his behavior. "It happened," he said, "and it's over."

What she took as literal fighting to him was a routine part of daily negotiation: a ritual fight.

Many Americans expect the discussion of ideas to be a ritual fight—that is, an exploration through verbal opposition. They present their own ideas in the most certain and absolute form they can, and wait to see if they are challenged. Being forced to defend an idea provides an opportunity to test it. In the same spirit, they may play devil's advocate in challenging their colleagues' ideas—trying to poke holes and find weaknesses—as a way of helping them explore and test their ideas.

This style can work well if everyone shares it, but those unaccustomed to it are likely to miss its ritual nature. They may give up an idea that is challenged, taking the objections as an indication that the idea was a poor one. Worse, they may take the opposition as a personal attack and may find it impossible to do their best in a contentious environment. People unaccustomed to this style may hedge when stating their ideas in order to fend off potential attacks. Ironically, this posture makes their arguments appear weak and is more likely to invite attack from pugnacious colleagues than to fend it off.

Ritual opposition can even play a role in who gets hired. Some consulting firms that recruit graduates from the top business schools use a confrontational interviewing technique. They challenge the candidate to “crack a case” in real time. A partner at one firm told me, “Women tend to do less well in this kind of interaction, and it certainly affects who gets hired. But, in fact, many women who don't ‘test well’ turn out to be good consultants. They're often smarter than some of the men who looked like analytic powerhouses under pressure.”

The level of verbal opposition varies from one company's culture to the next, but I saw instances of it in all the organizations I studied. Anyone who is uncomfortable with this linguistic style—and that includes some men as well as many women—risks appearing insecure about his or her ideas.

Men are more attuned than women to the potential face-losing aspect of asking questions.

Negotiating Authority

In organizations, formal authority comes from the position one holds. But actual authority has to be negotiated day to day. The effectiveness of individual managers depends in part on their skill in negotiating authority and on whether others reinforce or undercut their efforts. The way linguistic style reflects status plays a subtle role in placing individuals within a hierarchy.

Managing Up and Down. In all the companies I researched, I heard from women who knew they were doing a superior job and knew that their co-workers (and sometimes their immediate bosses) knew it as well, but believed that the higher-ups did not. They frequently told me that something outside themselves was holding them back and found it frustrating because they thought that all that should be necessary for success was to do a great job, that superior performance should be recognized and rewarded. In contrast, men often told me that if women weren't promoted, it was because they simply weren't up to snuff. Looking around, however, I saw evidence that men more often than women behaved in ways likely to get them recognized by those with the power to determine their advancement.

In all the companies I visited, I observed what happened at lunchtime. I saw young men who regularly ate lunch with their boss, and senior men who ate with the big boss. I noticed far fewer women who sought out the highest-level person they could eat with. But one is more likely to get recognition for work done if one talks about it to those higher up, and it is easier to do so if the lines of communication are already open. Furthermore, given the opportunity for a conversation with superiors, men and women are likely to have different ways of talking about their accomplishments because of the different ways in which they were socialized as children. Boys are rewarded by their peers if they talk up their achievements, whereas girls are rewarded if they play theirs down. Linguistic styles common among men may tend to give them some advantages when it comes to managing up.

All speakers are aware of the status of the person they are talking to and adjust accordingly. Everyone speaks differently when talking to a boss than when talking to a subordinate. But, surprisingly, the ways in which they adjust their talk may be different and thus may project different images of themselves.

Communications researchers Karen Tracy and Eric Eisenberg studied how relative status affects the way people give criticism. They devised a business letter that contained some errors and asked 13 male and 11 female college students to role-play delivering criticism under two scenarios. In the first, the speaker was a boss talking to a subordinate; in the second, the speaker was a subordinate talking to his or her boss. The researchers measured how hard the speakers tried to avoid hurting the feelings of the person they were criticizing.

One might expect people to be more careful about how they deliver criticism when they are in a subordinate position. Tracy and Eisenberg found that hypothesis to be true for the men in their study but not for the women. They reported that the women showed more concern about the other person's feelings when they were playing the role of superior. In other words, the women were more careful to save face for the other person when they were managing down than when they were managing up. This pattern recalls the way girls are socialized: Those who are in some way superior are expected to downplay rather than flaunt their superiority.

In my own recordings of workplace communication, I observed women talking in similar ways. For example, when a manager had to correct a mistake made by her secretary, she did so by acknowledging that there were mitigating circumstances. She said, laughing, “You know, it’s hard to do things around here, isn’t it, with all these people coming in!” The manager was saving face for her subordinate, just like the female students role-playing in the Tracy and Eisenberg study.

Examples such as these notwithstanding, many researchers have claimed that those in subordinate positions are more likely to speak indirectly, and that is surely accurate in some situations. For example, linguist Charlotte Linde examined the black-box conversations that took place between pilots and copilots before airplane crashes. In one particularly tragic instance, an Air Florida plane crashed into the Potomac River immediately after attempting takeoff from National Airport in

Those who are uncomfortable with verbal opposition—women or men—run the risk of seeming insecure about their ideas.

Is this an effective way to communicate? One must ask, effective for what? The manager in question established a positive environment in her group, and the work was done effectively. On the other hand, numerous women in many different fields told me that their bosses say they don’t project the proper authority.

Indirectness. Another linguistic signal that varies with power and status is indirectness—the tendency to say what we mean without spelling it out in so many words. Despite the widespread belief in the United States that it’s always best to say exactly what we mean, indirectness is a fundamental and pervasive element in human communication. It also is one of the elements that vary most from one culture to another, and it can cause enormous misunderstanding when speakers have different habits and expectations about how it is used. It’s often said that American women are more indirect than American men, but in fact everyone tends to be indirect in some situations and in different ways. Allowing for cultural, ethnic, regional, and individual differences, women are especially likely to be indirect when it comes to telling others what to do, which is not surprising, considering girls’ readiness to brand other girls as bossy. On the other hand, men are especially likely to be indirect when it comes to admitting fault or weakness, which also is not surprising, considering boys’ readiness to push around boys who assume the one-down position.

At first glance, it would seem that only the powerful can get away with bald commands such as, “Have that report on my desk by noon.” But power in an organization also can lead to requests so indirect that they don’t sound like requests at all. A boss who says, “Do we have the sales data by product line for each region?” would be surprised and frustrated if a subordinate responded, “We probably do” rather than “I’ll get it for you.”

Washington, DC, killing all but five of the 74 people on board. The pilot, it turned out, had little experience flying in icy weather. The copilot had a bit more, and it became heartbreakingly clear on analysis that he had tried to warn the pilot but had done so indirectly. Alerted by Linde’s observation, I examined the transcript of the conversations and found evidence of her hypothesis. The copilot repeatedly called attention to the bad weather and to ice buildup on other planes:

Copilot: Look how the ice is just hanging on his, ah, back, back there, see that? See all those icicles on the back there and everything?

Pilot: Yeah.

[The copilot also expressed concern about the long waiting time since deicing.]

Copilot: Boy, this is a, this is a losing battle here on trying to deice those things; it [gives] you a false feeling of security, that’s all that does.

[Just before they took off, the copilot expressed another concern—about abnormal instrument readings—but again he didn’t press the matter when it wasn’t picked up by the pilot.]

Copilot: That don’t seem right, does it? [3-second pause] Ah, that’s not right. Well—

Pilot: Yes it is, there’s 80.

Copilot: Naw, I don’t think that’s right. [7-second pause] Ah, maybe it is.

Shortly thereafter, the plane took off, with tragic results. In other instances as well as this one, Linde observed that copilots, who are second in command, are more likely to express themselves indirectly or otherwise mitigate, or soften, their communication when they are suggesting courses of action to the pilot. In an effort to avert similar disasters, some airlines now offer training for copilots to express themselves in more assertive ways.

This solution seems self-evidently appropriate to most Americans. But when I assigned Linde's article in a graduate seminar I taught, a Japanese student pointed out that it would be just as effective to train pilots to pick up on hints. This approach reflects assumptions about communication that typify Japanese culture, which places great value on the ability of people to understand one another without putting everything into words. Either directness or indirectness can be a successful means of communication as long as the linguistic style is understood by the participants.

In the world of work, however, there is more at stake than whether the communication is understood. People in powerful positions are likely to reward styles similar to their own, because we all tend to take as self-evident the logic of our own styles. Accordingly, there is evidence that in the U.S. workplace, where instructions from a superior are expected to be voiced in a relatively direct manner, those who tend to be indirect when telling subordinates what to do may be perceived as lacking in confidence.

Consider the case of the manager at a national magazine who was responsible for giving assignments to reporters. She tended to phrase her assignments as questions. For example, she asked, "How would you like to do the X project with Y?" or said, "I was thinking of putting you on the X project. Is that okay?" This worked extremely well with her staff; they liked working for her, and the work got done in an efficient and orderly manner. But when she had her midyear evaluation with her own boss, he criticized her for not assuming the proper demeanor with her staff.

In any work environment, the higher-ranking person has the power to enforce his or her view of appropriate demeanor, created in part by linguistic style. In most U.S. contexts, that view is likely to assume that the person in authority has the right to be relatively direct rather than to mitigate orders. There also are cases, however, in which the higher-ranking person assumes a more indirect style. The owner of a retail operation told her subordinate, a store manager, to do something. He said he would do it, but a week later he still hadn't. They were able to trace the difficulty to the following conversation: She had said, "The bookkeeper needs help with the billing. How would you feel about helping her out?" He had said, "Fine." This conversation had seemed to be clear and flawless at the time, but it turned out that they had interpreted this simple exchange in very different ways. She thought he meant, "Fine, I'll help the bookkeeper out." He thought he meant, "Fine, I'll think about how I would feel about helping the bookkeeper out." He did think about it and came to the conclusion that he had more important things to do and couldn't spare the time.

To the owner, "How would you feel about helping the bookkeeper out?" was an obviously appropriate way to give the order "Help the bookkeeper out with the billing." Those who expect orders to be given as bald imperatives may find such locutions annoying or even misleading. But those for whom

this style is natural do not think they are being indirect. They believe they are being clear in a polite or respectful way.

What is atypical in this example is that the person with the more indirect style was the boss, so the store manager was motivated to adapt to her style. She still gives orders the same way, but the store manager now understands how she means what she says. It's more common in U.S. business contexts for the highest-ranking people to take a more direct style, with the result that many women in authority risk being judged by their superiors as lacking the appropriate demeanor—and, consequently, lacking confidence.

Women are likely to downplay their certainty; men are likely to minimize their doubts.

What to Do?

I am often asked, What is the best way to give criticism? or What is the best way to give orders?—in other words, What is the best way to communicate? The answer is that there is no one best way. The results of a given way of speaking will vary depending on the situation, the culture of the company, the relative rank of speakers, their linguistic styles, and how those styles interact with one another. Because of all those influences, any way of speaking could be perfect for communicating with one person in one situation and disastrous with someone else in another. The critical skill for managers is to become aware of the workings and power of linguistic style, to make sure that people with something valuable to contribute get heard.

It may seem, for example, that running a meeting in an unstructured way gives equal opportunity to all. But awareness of the differences in conversational style makes it easy to see the potential for unequal access. Those who are comfortable speaking up in groups, who need little or no silence before raising their hands, or who speak out easily without waiting to be recognized are far more likely to get heard at meetings. Those who refrain from talking until it's clear that the previous speaker is finished, who wait to be recognized, and who are inclined to link their comments to those of others will do fine at a meeting where everyone else is following the same rules but will have a hard time getting heard in a meeting with people whose styles are more like the first pattern. Given the socialization typical of boys and girls, men are more likely to have learned the first style and women the second, making meetings more congenial for men than

for women. It's common to observe women who participate actively in one-on-one discussions or in all-female groups but who are seldom heard in meetings with a large proportion of men. On the other hand, there are women who share

the style more common among men, and they run a different risk—of being seen as too aggressive.

A manager aware of those dynamics might devise any number of ways of ensuring that everyone's ideas are heard and credited. Although no single solution will fit all contexts, managers who understand the dynamics of linguistic style can develop more adaptive and flexible approaches to running or participating in meetings, mentoring or advancing the careers of others, evaluating performance, and so on. Talk is the lifeblood of managerial work, and understanding that different people have different ways of saying what they mean will make it possible to take advantage of the talents of people with a broad range of linguistic styles. As the workplace becomes more culturally diverse and business becomes more global, managers will need to become even better at reading interactions and more flexible in adjusting their own styles to the people with whom they interact. ♥

Deborah Tannen is University Professor and professor of linguistics at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. She is the author of 12 books and editor or coeditor of 13 more. Her nearly four-year *New York Times* best seller *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (William Morrow, 1990) introduced to the general public the idea of women's and men's styles of communication. The material in this HBR article is drawn from *Talking from 9 to 5* (William Morrow, 1994).

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Making Relationships Work

The best science we have on relationships comes from the most intense relationship of all—marriage. Here's what we know about it.

A conversation with psychologist John M. Gottman

IT HAS BECOME common to extol the value of human relationships in the workplace. We all agree that managers need to connect deeply with followers to ensure outstanding performance, and we celebrate leaders who have the emotional intelligence to engage and inspire their people by creating bonds that are authentic and reliable. There's a large and fast-growing support industry to help us develop our "softer" relationship skills; many CEOs hire executive coaches, and libraries of self-help books detail how best to build and manage relationships on the way to the top.

Despite all the importance attached to interpersonal dynamics in the workplace, however, surprisingly little hard scientific evidence identifies what makes or breaks work relationships. We know, for instance, that the personal chemistry between a mentor and his or her protégé is critical to that relationship's success, but we don't try to work out what the magic is, at least not in any rigorous way. The absence of hard data and painstaking analysis exacts a heavy price: When relationships sour, as they easily can, there's little guidance on what you can do to patch things up. Even the best human resources officers may not know how or when to stage an intervention. If companies were more effective in helping executives handle

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Gary Benson



their relationships through difficult times, they would see the company's productivity soar and find it much easier to retain leadership talent.

But if there's little research on relationships at work, some is beginning to emerge on relationships at home. That's good news because the way that people manage their work relationships is closely linked to the way they manage their personal ones. People who are abusive at home, for example, are likely to be abusive at work. If you believe that—as most psychologists do—then the relevance of the work of those who study relationships at home immediately becomes obvious.

Few people can tell us more about how to maintain good personal relationships than John M. Gottman, the executive director of the Relationship Research Institute. At the institute's Family Research Laboratory—known as the Love Lab—Gottman has been studying marriage and divorce for the past 35 years. He has screened thousands of couples, interviewed them, and tracked their interactions over time. He and his colleagues use video cameras, heart monitors, and other bio-

feedback equipment to measure what goes on when couples experience moments of conflict and closeness. By mathematically analyzing the data, Gottman has generated hard scientific evidence on what makes good relationships.

HBR senior editor Diane Coutu went to the Seattle headquarters of the Relationship Research Institute to discuss that evidence with Gottman and to ask about the implications of his research for the work environment. As a scientist, he refuses to extrapolate beyond his research on couples to relationships in the workplace. The media have sensationalized his work, he says. However, he was willing to talk freely about what makes for good relationships in our personal lives.

Successful couples, he notes, look for ways to accentuate the positive. They try to say “yes” as often as possible. That doesn't mean good relationships have no room for conflict. On the contrary, individuals in thriving relationships embrace conflict over personality differences as a way to work them through. Gottman adds that good relationships aren't about clear communication—they're about small moments of attachment

and intimacy. It takes time and work to make such moments part of the fabric of everyday life. Gottman discusses these and other nuances of his wisdom, acquired from experience and research, in this edited version of Coutu's conversation with him.

You're said to be able to predict, in a very short amount of time and with a high degree of accuracy, whether couples will stay together for the long term. How do you manage that?

Let me put it this way: If I had three hours with a couple, and if I could interview them and tape them interacting—in positive ways as well as in conflict—then I would say that I could predict a couple's success rate for staying together in the next three to five years with more than 90% accuracy. I've worked with 3,000 couples over 35 years; the data support this claim and have now been replicated by other scientists.

Could you train me to decide whether I should hire Dick or Jane?

I know this question has come up in the media, which have tried to sex up my work. But the reliability you see in my research has to do with studying relationships specifically. Just to predict whether an interviewee would be a good fit for a job—you couldn't do it. At least I know I couldn't do it. I rely on my research to be able to look at *couples*. And even with couples, I need to witness a sample interaction. The more emotional and the more realistic the situation is, the better I am at predicting with a high level of accuracy.

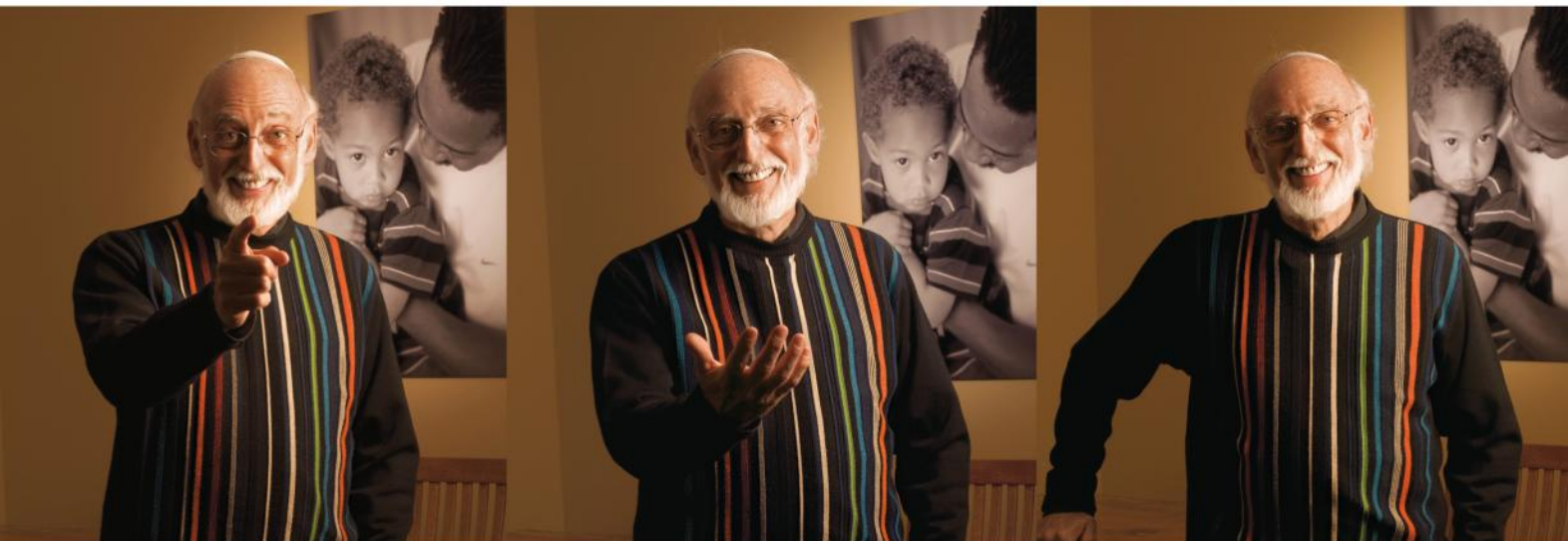
For instance, one test we've used for years is the "paper tower task." We give couples a bunch of materials, such as newspaper, scissors, Scotch tape, and string. We tell them to go build a paper tower that is freestanding, strong, and beautiful, and they have half an hour to do it. Then we watch the way the couples work. It's the very simple things that determine success. One time we had three Australian couples do the task. Beforehand, we had the couples talk on tape about each other and about a major conflict in their relationship that they were trying to resolve. So we had some data about how relatively happy or unhappy they were. When one couple who came across as happy started building their paper tower, the man said, "So, how are we going to do this?" The woman replied, "You know, we can fold the paper, we can turn the paper, we can make structures out of the paper." He said, "Really? Great." It took them something like ten seconds to build a tower. The wife in an unhappily married couple started by saying, "So how are we going to do this?" Her husband said, "Just a minute, can you be quiet while I figure out the design?" It didn't take much time to see that this couple would run into some difficulties down the line.

Your work depends heavily on your interviewing technique.

How did you develop it?

My hero was Studs Terkel. I think he's by far the greatest interviewer ever. Bill Moyers is good. Barbara Walters is very good, too, but Terkel is amazing. In one interview, he went into a woman's attic and said to her, "Give me a tour, tell me what's

Good relationships aren't about clear communication—they're about small moments of attachment and intimacy.



up here.” He had a big cigar in his mouth, but he was really interested. Acting as the tour guide, she said, “Well, I don’t talk much about this doll.” Terkel pointed out that it was not a new doll. “No,” she said, “my first fiancé gave me this doll, before he was killed in a car accident. He was the only man I’ve ever loved.” Surprised, Terkel remarked, “You’re a grandmother; you must have married.” She replied, “Yeah, and I love my husband, but just not like I loved Jack.” The woman then launched into a great monologue, prompted by Terkel. We studied his tapes and based our interview technique on his approach.

What’s your biggest discovery?

It sounds simple, but in fact you could capture all of my research findings with the metaphor of a saltshaker. Instead of filling it with salt, fill it with all the ways you can say yes, and that’s what a good relationship is. “Yes,” you say, “that is a good idea.” “Yes, that’s a great point, I never thought of that.” “Yes, let’s do that if you think it’s important.” You sprinkle yeses throughout your interactions—that’s what a good relationship is. This is particularly important for men, whose ability to accept influence from women is really one of the most critical issues in a relationship. Marriages where the men say to their partners, “Gee, that’s a good point” or “Yeah, I guess we could do that” are much more likely to succeed. In contrast, in a partnership that’s troubled, the saltshaker is filled with all the ways you can say no. In violent relationships, for example, we see men responding to their wives’ requests by saying, “No way,” “It’s just not going to happen,” “You’re not going to control me,” or simply “Shut up.” When a man is not willing to share power with his wife, our research shows, there is an 81% chance that the marriage will self-destruct.

Does that mean that there’s no room for conflict in a good relationship?

Absolutely not. Having a conflict-free relationship does not mean having a happy one, and when I tell you to say yes a lot, I’m not advising simple compliance. Agreement is not the same as compliance, so if people think they’re giving in all the time, then their relationships are never going to work. There are conflicts that you absolutely must have because to give in is to give up some of your personality.

Let me explain by illustrating from personal experience. My wife is very bad at just sitting still and doing nothing. A couple of years ago I gave her a book called *The Art of Doing Nothing*. She never read it. She always has to be up and about doing things. I’m not like that. I don’t multitask the way she does; if I take a day off, I want it to be a day off. I want to play music; I want to have a sense of leisure. We fight about this difference all the time. She wants me to do stuff around the house, and I want her to take it easy. And it’s worth fighting about this because it’s an important personality difference between us. I don’t want to adopt her style, and she doesn’t want to adopt mine.

Another common issue in many relationships is punctuality. People have huge differences in their attitudes toward it and fight about it constantly. And they should—because unless you do, you can’t arrive at an understanding of your differences, which means you can’t work out how to live with them.

What else do people in relationships fight about?

I actually analyzed about 900 arguments last summer. With the help of the lab staff, I interviewed people about their fights—we saw them fighting in the lab and then outside the lab, and we talked about the issue. What we learned from measuring all these interactions is that most people fight about nothing. Their fights are not about money, or sex, or in-laws—none of that stuff. The vast majority of conflicts are about the way people in the relationship fight. One fight we studied was about a remote control. The couple was watching television, and the man said, “OK, let me see what’s on,” and started channel surfing. At one point the woman said, “Wait, leave it on that program, it’s kind of interesting.” He replied, “OK, but first let me see what else is on.” She kept objecting until he finally said, “Fine, here!” and handed her the remote. She bristled and said, “The way you said ‘fine,’ that kind of hurt my feelings.” He shot back with, “You’ve always got to have it your way.” It may seem really elementary, but that’s what people fight about. Unfortunately, most of these issues never get resolved at all. Most couples don’t go back and say, “You know, we should really discuss that remote control issue.” They don’t try to repair the relationship. But repair is the sine qua non of relationships, so everybody needs to know how to process those regrettable moments.

I want to stress that good relationships are not just about knowing when to fight and how to patch things up. We also need humor, affection, playing, silliness, exploration, adventure, lust, touching—all those positive emotional things that we share with all mammals. Something that’s been so hard for me to convey to the media is that trivial moments provide opportunities for profound connection. For example, if you’re giving your little kid a bath and he splashes and you’re impatient, you miss an opportunity to play with him. But if you splash back and you clean up later, you have some fun together and you both get really wet, laugh, and have a beautiful moment. It’s ephemeral, small, even trivial—yet it builds trust and connection. In couples who divorce or who live together unhappily, such small moments of connection are rare.

We can’t splash around at work. Are there equivalent ways to achieve connections there?

There are many similar things you can do in a work environment. You can go into your friend David’s office and say, “How’s little Harry doing?” And he might say, “You know, he really likes his new school. He’s excited by it, and in fact you know what he’s doing now...?” The conversation might take five or ten minutes, but you’ve made a connection. This goes for the boss, too.

A lot of times the person who's running an organization is pretty lonely, and if somebody walks into her office and doesn't talk about work but instead asks about her weekend, the message is, "Hey, I like you. I notice you independent of your position." Within organizations, people have to see each other as human beings or there will be no social glue.

When a man is not willing to share power with his wife, our research shows, there is an 81% chance that the marriage will self-destruct.

What about intimate relationships at work—thumbs up or down?

That can be really problematic. Marriage researcher Shirley Glass did some terrific work on friendship in the workplace. She gave this wonderful example of a man who hadn't had sex for a long time. He and his wife had a new baby and were fighting a lot. Then after work one day, he and his coworkers went out to celebrate a really successful quarter at the company. Everybody had a good time. People eventually started to go home, but this man and a female coworker lingered. They were talking about the excellent fourth quarter earnings, and she said, "You know, George, this is the happiest I've seen you in months." Nothing untoward was happening, but he was enjoying the conversation in a way that he hadn't with his wife in a long time. So on the way home, he thought to himself, "You know, we laughed and shared a lot, and it was kind of intimate, and I should really go home and say, 'Nancy, I'm really kind of worried because I just had a conversation with a woman at work, and I felt closer to her than I've felt to you in months, and it scares the hell out of me, and we need to talk.'" But he knew exactly how his wife would react. She'd tell him to grow up and would say, "Hey, I have this baby sucking at my teats and now you're being a baby, too. I don't need this kind of crap from you, so just suck it up and get on with it. You're a new father, and quit having those conversations with that woman at work." So he decided not to share the experience with his wife because, he thought, "Nothing really happened anyway." But something did happen, and now he's got a secret. That's the beginning of betrayal.

Is there no difference between an emotional and a physical affair?

I honestly don't think so. I've seen this in my clinical work and in my research. Most affairs are not about sex at all; they're about friendship. They're about finding somebody who finds you interesting, attractive, fascinating. This can be on a physical or an emotional level—it all boils down to the same thing.

What contributes to a successful long-term relationship?

Look for the positive in each other. Robert Levenson, of the University of California at Berkeley, and I are in the 18th year of a 20-year longitudinal study in the San Francisco Bay area. We have two groups of couples who were first assessed when they were in their forties and sixties and are now, respectively, in their sixties and eighties. The surprising thing is that the longer people are together, the more the sense of kindness returns. Our research is starting to reveal that in later life your relationship becomes very much like it was during courtship. In courtship you find your new partner very charming and positive. It was all so new then. You de-emphasized the negative qualities and magnified the positive ones. In the long term, the same thing happens. You say, "She's a wonder woman. She can get us through anything." For instance, my wife and I have just moved out of the house we lived in for 14 years, and she orchestrated the entire thing. She was amazing. My genius was to sit back and say nothing. In good relationships, people savor the moments like this that they have together.

Is there such a thing as an ideal relationship?

I don't really know. Somebody I admired a long time ago was Harold Rausch, now retired, from the University of Massachusetts, who studied relationships and decided there was an optimal level of intimacy and friendship—and of conflict. He called couples who had achieved those levels "harmonious." He said that couples who preferred some emotional distance in their relationships were psychologically brittle and not very oriented toward insight and deep understanding. Rausch identified another type of couple—those who fought a lot and were really passionate—and he said they're messed up, too.

We studied those three groups of couples as well, and our research showed that they could all be successful. The people who wanted more-distant relationships and friendships valued loyalty, commitment, and dedication but weren't so interested in intimacy. Still, they could have very happy marriages. You might think, "OK, they don't fight a lot in order to avoid conflict, and maybe that's bad for the kids." It turns out that wasn't true at all. We followed the kids' emotional and intellectual development, and a distant relationship between the parents turned out to be fine for the children. Our research showed that bickering a lot can be fine, too, provided that both people in the relationship agree to it. People have different capacities for how much intimacy and passion they want and how much togetherness they want. The problem is when there's a mismatch.

Are the short-term factors for success in relationships different from the factors that make for long-term success?

We face this question about short- and long-term success when we study adolescents and their relationships. We don't necessarily want a 14-year-old's dating relationship to last, but we'd like it to be a positive experience, and we'd like to facilitate our kids' growth and not lead them down a negative path. Whether we look at teenagers or at older couples, it turns out again and again that respect and affection are the two most important things. Whatever your age, there are so many ways you can show respect for your partner. Express interest in the story she's telling at dinner, pay him compliments, listen to her ideas, ask him to watch a *Nova* special with you so that you can discuss it later. The possibilities abound.

What other advice emerges from your study of good relationships?

I think that men need to learn how to embrace their wives' anger. This message is particularly pertinent today because women are now being educated and empowered to achieve more economically, politically, and socially. But our culture still teaches women that when they assert themselves they are being pushy or obnoxious. Women who get angry when their goals are blocked are labeled as bitchy or rude. If men want to have a good relationship with women, they have to be sensitive to the changing dimensions of power and control in the Western world. And they have to accept the asymmetry in our relationships for the time being. The good news is that embracing your wife's anger just a little bit can go a long way toward unleashing feelings of appreciation and affection.

FURTHER READING

ARTICLE

The Relationship You Need to Get Right

by **Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall, and Laura Sherbin**

HBR, October 2011
Product no. R1110K

The dynamic between mentors and protégés works only when both parties recognize that it's truly a two-way street. The authors provide an invaluable guide for cultivating and nurturing the relationship for a lifelong, mutually beneficial alliance.



More Reading
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BOOK

No One Understands You and What to Do About It

by **Heidi Grant**
Harvard Business Review Press, 2015

Product no. 13874E

Grant explains why we're often misunderstood and how we can fix that. It's all about perception—the subtle biases that can distort how we view one another—and once you understand the science of it, you'll communicate more clearly and improve your personal relationships.

Within organizations, people have to see each other as human beings or there will be no social glue.

I had this funny experience when I sold my book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* to my publisher. I met with the head of the marketing department, a young guy who leaned back in his chair as if he were not at all impressed by any of my work. He pointed his finger at me and said, "All right, tell me one thing in the next 30 seconds that I can do to improve my marriage right now!" I told him that if I were to pick just one thing it would be to honor his wife's dreams. The guy jumped up, put on his coat, and left the room. I found out months later that he had immediately hopped on the subway to Brooklyn, where he surprised his wife, who was at home with a young baby. Her mouth dropped when he asked her what her dreams were. He told me later that she said she thought he would never ask.

What would you suggest we be on guard against in relationships?

What I call the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, and contempt—are the best predictors of breakup or continued misery. Readers familiar with my work will remember that I consider contempt to be the worst: It destroys relationships because it communicates disgust. You can't resolve a conflict with your partner when you're conveying the message that you're disgusted with her. Inevitably, contempt leads to greater conflict and negativity. Our research also shows that people in contemptuous relationships are more likely to suffer from infectious illnesses—flu, colds, and so on—than other people. Contempt attacks the immune system; fondness and admiration are the antidotes.

Are you in a successful relationship?

Yes, my wife and I have just celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary, but we both had disastrous first marriages. Mine failed because my first wife and I had opposite dreams. I really love children and wanted to be a father, but she wasn't so sure and that was a deal breaker. Could a therapist have saved that relationship? I don't think so. My need to be a father was too great. And I'm so glad I became a dad. It's the most important thing I've ever done. ♥

HBR Reprint R0712B

A Smarter Way to Network

Successful executives connect with select people and get more out of them.

by Rob Cross and Robert Thomas



ONE OF THE HAPPIEST, most successful executives we know is a woman named Deb. She works at a major technology company and runs a global business unit that has more than 7,000 employees. When you ask her how she rose to the top and why she enjoys her job, her answer is simple: people. She points to her boss, the CEO, a mentor who “always has her back”; Steve, the head of a complementary business, with whom she has monthly brainstorming lunches and occasional gripe sessions; and Tom, a protégé to whom she has delegated responsibility for a large portion of her division. Outside the company, Deb’s circle includes her counterparts in three strategic partnerships, who inspire her with new ideas; Sheila, a former colleague, now in a different industry, who gives her candid feedback; and her husband, Bob, an executive at a philanthropic organization. She also has close relationships with her fellow volunteers in a program for at-risk high school students and the members of her tennis group and book club.

This is Deb’s social network (the real-world kind, not the virtual kind), and it has helped her career a lot. But not because the group is large or full of

Originally published in July–August 2011



high-powered contacts. Her network is effective because it both supports and challenges her. Deb's relationships help her gain influence, broaden her expertise, learn new skills, and find purpose and balance. Deb values and nurtures them. "Make friends so that you have friends when you need friends" is her motto.

"My current role is really a product of a relationship I formed over a decade ago that came back to me at the right time," she explains. "People may chalk it up to luck, but I think more often than not luck happens through networks where people give first and are authentic in all they do."

Over the past 15 years, we've worked with many executives like Deb, at more than 300 companies. What began as organizational research—helping management teams understand and capitalize on the formal and informal social networks of their employees—has since metamorphosed into personal programs, which teach individual executives to increase their effectiveness by leveraging their networks.

The old adage "It's not what you know, it's who you know" is true. But it's more nuanced than that. In spite of what most self-help books say, network size doesn't usually matter. In fact, we've found that individuals who simply know a lot of people are less likely to achieve standout performance, because they're spread too thin. Political animals with lots of connections to corporate and industry leaders don't win the day, either. Yes, it's important to know powerful people, but if they account for too much of your network, your peers and subordinates often perceive you to be overly self-interested, and you may lose support as a result.

The data we've collected point to a different model for networking. The executives who consistently rank in the top 20% of their companies in both performance and well-being have diverse but select networks like Deb's—made up of high-quality relationships with people who come from several different spheres and from up and down the corporate hierarchy. These

Are You Networking Impaired?

In our work, we have identified six common managerial types who get stuck in three kinds of network traps. Do any of the descriptions below fit you?

The wrong structure

THE FORMALIST

focuses too heavily on his company's official hierarchy, missing out on the efficiencies and opportunities that come from informal connections.

THE OVERLOADED

MANAGER has so much contact with colleagues and external ties that she becomes a bottleneck to progress and burns herself out.

The wrong relationships

THE DISCONNECTED

EXPERT sticks with people who keep him focused on safe, existing competencies, rather than those who push him to build new skills.

THE BIASED LEADER

relies on advisers much like herself (same functional background, location, or values), who reinforce her biases, when she should instead seek outsiders to prompt more fully informed decisions.



high performers, we have found, tap into six critical kinds of connections, which enhance their careers and lives in a variety of ways.

Through our work advising individual managers, we've also identified a four-step process that will help any executive develop this kind of network. But first, let's take a look at some common networking mistakes.

Getting It Wrong

Many people take a misguided approach to networking. They go astray by building imbalanced networks, pursuing the wrong kind of relationships, or leveraging relationships ineffectively. (See the sidebar "Are You Networking Impaired?") These people might remain successful for a time, but often they will hit a plateau or see their career derailed because their networks couldn't prompt or support a critical transition.

Consider Dan, the chief information officer of one of the world's largest life-sciences organizations. He was under constant pressure to find new technologies that would spur innovation and speed the drug commercialization process at his company, and he needed a network that would help him. Unfortunately, more than 70% of his trusted advisers were in the unit he had worked in before becoming CIO. Not only did they reinforce his bias toward certain solutions and vendors, but they lacked the outside knowledge he needed. "I had started to mistake friendship, trust, and accessibility for real expertise in new domains," he told us. "This didn't mean

I was going to dump these people, as they played important roles for me in other ways. But I needed to be more targeted in who I let influence my thinking."

Another overarching mistake we often see in executives' networks is an imbalance between connections that promote career advancement and those that promote engagement and satisfaction. Numerous studies have shown that happier executives are higher-performing ones.

Take Tim, the director of a large practice area at a leading professional services firm. On the surface he was doing well, but job stress had taken its toll. He was 40 pounds overweight, with alarmingly high cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and prone to extreme mood swings. When things went well at work, he was happy; when they didn't, he wasn't pleasant to be around. In fact, Tim's wife finally broke down and told him she thought he had become a career-obsessed jerk and needed to get other interests. With her encouragement, he joined Habitat for Humanity and started rowing with their daughter. As a result, his social network expanded to include people with different perspectives and values, who helped him focus on more healthful and fulfilling pursuits. "As I spent more time with different groups, what I cared about diversified," he says. "Physically, I'm in much better shape and probably staved off a heart attack. But I think I'm a better leader, too, in that I think about problems more broadly, and I'm more resilient. Our peer feedback systems are also clearly indicating that people are more committed to the new me."

ARTICLE AT A GLANCE

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

The wrong behavior

THE SUPERFICIAL NETWORKER

engages in surface-level interaction with as many people as possible, mistakenly believing that a bigger network is a better one.

THE CHAMELEON

changes his interests, values, and personality to match those of whatever subgroup is his audience, and winds up being disconnected from every group.

Many people have misguided ideas about what makes a network strong. It's not the size that matters but the quality. Connecting only with people who are similar to you or in high-powered positions is of limited value.

Instead, you should focus on building a select and varied set of connections that will both support and challenge you. To create such a network, the authors recommend a four-point action plan:

- Analyze the people in your network.
- De-layer by making conscious decisions to step back from draining relationships.
- Diversify through seeking out people who energize you.
- Capitalize by making good use of your contacts.

Connections that are most beneficial to pursue fall into six basic categories: information, political support and influence, personal development, personal support and energy, a sense of purpose or worth, and work/life balance.

By building a network filled with high-quality relationships with people from different spheres you will increase your effectiveness and well-being.

Getting It Right

To understand more about what makes an effective network, let's look again at Deb. She has a small set of core contacts—14 people she really relies on. Effective core networks typically range in size from 12 to 18 people. But what really matters is structure: Core connections must bridge smaller, more-diverse kinds of groups and cross hierarchical, organizational, functional, and geographic lines. Core relationships should result in more learning, less bias in decision making, and greater personal growth and balance. The people in your inner circle should also model positive behaviors, because if those around you are enthusiastic, authentic, and generous, you will be, too.

More specifically, our data show that high performers have strong ties to

1. people who offer them new information or expertise, including internal or external clients, who increase their market awareness; peers in other functions, divisions, or geographies, who share best practices; and contacts in other industries, who inspire innovation;

2. formally powerful people, who provide mentoring, sense-making, political support, and resources; and informally powerful people, who offer influence, help coordinating projects, and support among the rank and file; and

3. people who give them developmental feedback, challenge their decisions, and push them to be better. At an early career stage, an employee might get this from a boss or customers;

later, it tends to come from coaches, trusted colleagues, or a spouse.

Meanwhile, the most satisfied executives have ties to

1. people who provide personal support, such as colleagues who help them get back on track when they're having a bad day or friends with whom they can just be themselves;

2. people who add a sense of purpose or worth, such as bosses and customers who validate their work, and family members and other stakeholders who show them work has a broader meaning; and

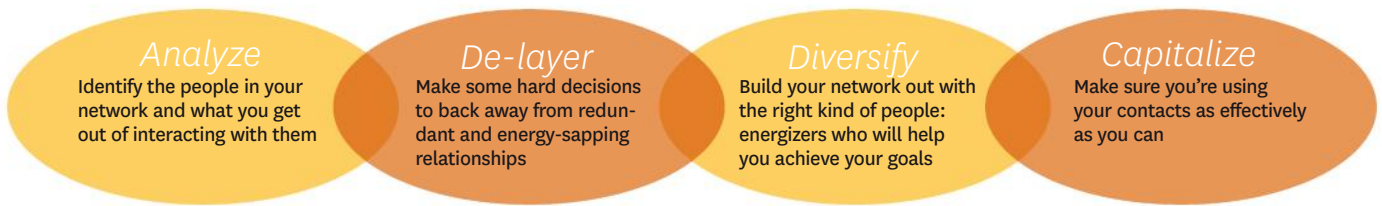
3. people who promote their work/life balance, holding them accountable for activities that improve their physical health (such as sports), mental engagement (such as hobbies or educational classes), or spiritual well-being (music, religion, art, or volunteer work).

How does one create such a varied network? We recommend a four-point action plan: analyze, de-layer, diversify, and capitalize.

Analyze. Start by looking at the individuals in your network. Where are they located—are they within your team, your unit, or your company, or outside your organization? What benefits do your interactions with them provide? How energizing are those interactions?

The last question is an important one. Energizers bring out the best in everyone around them, and our data show that having them in your network is a strong predictor of success over time. These people aren't necessarily extroverted or charismatic.

Four Steps to Building a Better Network



They're people who always see opportunities, even in challenging situations, and create room for others to meaningfully contribute. Good energizers are trustworthy and committed to principles larger than their self-interest, and they enjoy other people. "De-energizers," by contrast, are quick to point out obstacles, critique people rather than ideas, are inflexible in their thinking, fail to create opportunities, miss commitments, and don't show concern for others. Unfortunately, energy-sapping interactions have more impact than energizing ones—up to seven times as much, according to one study. And our own research suggests that roughly 90% of anxiety at work is created by 5% of one's network—the people who sap energy.

Next, classify your relationships by the benefits they provide. Generally, benefits fall into one of six basic categories: information, political support and influence, personal development, personal support and energy, a sense of purpose or worth, and work/life balance. It's important to have people who provide each kind of benefit in your network. Categorizing your relationships will give you a clearer idea of whether your network is extending your abilities or keeping you stuck. You'll see where you have holes and redundancies and which people you depend on too much—or not enough.

Let's use Joe, a rising star in an investment bank, as a case study. He had 24 close advisers—on the surface, a more than healthy number. But many of the people he relied on were from his own department and frequently relied on one another. If he eliminated those redundancies, his network shrank to five

people. After giving it some thought and observing his peers' networks, he realized he was missing links with several important types of people: colleagues focused on financial offerings outside his own products, who could help him deliver broader financial solutions to customers; coworkers in different geographies—particularly London and Asia—who could enhance his ability to sell to global clients; and board-level relationships at key accounts, who could make client introductions and influence purchasing decisions. His insularity was limiting his options and hurting his chances of promotion to managing director. He realized he would need to focus on cultivating a network rather than allowing it to organically arise from the day-to-day demands of his work.

De-layer. Once you've analyzed your network, you need to make some hard decisions about which relationships to back away from. First, look at eliminating or minimizing contact with people who sap you of energy or promote unhealthy behaviors. You can do this by reshaping your role to avoid them, devoting less time to them, working to change their behavior, or reframing your reactions so that you don't dwell on the interactions.

John, an academic, realized that two university administrators in his network were causing him a great deal of anxiety. This had so soured his view of his school that he was considering leaving. He therefore decided to devote less time to projects and committees that would involve the negative contacts and to avoid dwelling on any sniping comments they subjected him to. Within a year he was much more productive and happy. "By shifting my role and how I reacted to the idiots, I turned a negative situation around," John says. "In hindsight it was an obvious move—rather than leave a place I loved—but emotions can spiral on you in ways you don't recognize."

The next step is to ask yourself which of the six categories have too many people in them. Early-stage leaders, for example, tend to focus too much on information and not enough on personal development and might want to shed some of the contacts who give them the former to make more time for those who give them the latter.

Beyond this, consider which individuals—and types of people as determined by function, hierarchy, or geography—have

Bring people with positive energy into your inner circle. If those around you are enthusiastic, authentic, and generous, you will be, too.

too much of you, and why. Is the cause structural, in that work procedures require you to be involved? Or is your own behavior causing the imbalance? What can you change to rectify the situation? Too often we see leaders fail because they accept or create too many collaborative demands.

Paul, the head of research in a consumer products company, had a network of almost 70 people just at work. But he got many complaints from people who said they needed greater access to him. His productivity, and his unit's, was suffering. When he analyzed his network, he realized that he was missing "people and initiatives one or two levels out." To address this, he decided to delegate—stepping away from interactions that didn't require his presence and cultivating "go to" stand-ins in certain areas of expertise. He also changed his leadership style from extraordinarily accessible to helpful but more removed, which encouraged subordinates to solve their own problems by connecting with people around him. "As a leader you can find yourself in this bubble of activity where you feel like a lot is happening moving from meeting to meeting," Paul says. "You can actually start to thrive on this in some ways. I had to move past this for us to be effective as a unit and so that I could be more forward-thinking."

Diversify. Now that you've created room in your network, you need to fill it with the right people. Simple tools like work sheets can help you get started. For example, you might make a list of the six categories of relationships and think about colleagues who could fill the holes you have in each. Remember to focus on positive, energetic, selfless people, and be sure to ask people inside and outside your network for recommendations.

You should also think about how you could connect your network to your professional and personal goals. Here's another

simple exercise: Write down three specific business results you hope to achieve over the next year (such as doubling sales or winning an Asia-based client) and then list the people (by name or general role) who could help you with them, thanks to their expertise, control over resources, or ability to provide political support. Joe, the investment banker, identified counterparts in the Asian and European operations of his company who had relationships with the clients he was focused on and then scheduled regular calls with them to coordinate efforts. "In a couple of cases this helped me identify opportunities I could pitch proactively. In others it just helped us appear more coordinated when we were competing against other banks," he says. One of the big challenges for Paul, the consumer products executive, was managing a new facility and line of innovation in China. Because none of his trusted advisers had ever even been to that country, he reached out to the head of R&D at a major life-sciences organization that had undertaken a similar effort.

Capitalize. Last, make sure you're using your contacts as effectively as you can. Are there people you rely on in one sphere, such as political support, that you could also use to fill a need in another, such as personal development? Could you get more out of some relationships if you put more energy into them? Our research shows, for instance, that high performers at all levels tend to use their information contacts to gain other benefits, such as new ideas. Reciprocal relationships also tend to be more fruitful; the most successful leaders always look for ways to give more to their contacts.

Alan, a top executive at a global insurance company, realized that although he had a good network, he was still making decisions in relative isolation. He failed to elicit insights from others and, as a result, wasn't making enough progress toward his goals. So he started inviting his more-junior contacts, who were informal opinion leaders in his company, to lunch and asking them open-ended questions. These conversations led him to streamline decision making and uncover innovation deep within the firm's hierarchy. "When I met with one lady, I was stunned at a great new product idea she had been pushing for months," Alan says. "But she hadn't been able to get the right people to listen. I was able to step in and help make things happen. To me the right way to be tapping into people is in this exploratory way—whether it is about strategic insights or just how they think I'm doing on some aspect of my job. That's how I get to new ways of thinking and doing things, and I know it makes me much more effective than people who are smarter than me."

A network constructed using this four-point model will build on itself over time. In due course, it will ensure that the best opportunities, ideas, and talent come your way. 🍀

Rob Cross is the Edward A. Madden Professor of Global Business at Babson College. **Robert Thomas** is a managing director of the Accenture Institute for High Performance.

HBR Reprint R1107P

FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

Learn to Love Networking

by Tiziana Casciaro,
Francesca Gino, and
Maryam Kouchaki

HBR, May 2016

Product no. R1605J

Many people hate it, but in today's world, networking is a necessity. The good news is that an aversion to it can be overcome. The authors offer four strategies for getting excited about and more effective at building relationships.



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Succeed in New Situations

by Keith Rollag

HBR, December 2015

Product no. R1512J

Surprisingly, many professionals stumble in new situations because they haven't mastered three basic yet critical getting-to-know-you skills: introducing themselves, remembering names, and asking questions. Rollag, a professor at Babson, offers tactics to help you navigate new situations more confidently.

SPRING 2017



“Warmth is the conduit of influence: It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas.”

Connect, Then Lead
—page 42

LEADERSHIP

30 | What Effective General Managers Really Do

John P. Kotter

A gap has existed between the conventional wisdom about how managers work and the actual behavior of effective managers. Business textbooks suggest that managers operate best when they carefully control their time and work within highly structured environments, but observations of real managers indicate that those who spend their days that way may be undermining their effectiveness.

In this HBR Classic, John Kotter explains that managers who limit their interactions to orderly, focused meetings actually shut themselves off from vital information and relationships. He shows how seemingly wasteful activities like chatting in hallways and having impromptu meetings are, in fact, quite efficient.

General managers face two fundamental challenges: figuring out what to do despite an enormous amount of potentially relevant information, and getting things done through a large and diverse set of people despite having little direct control over most of them. To tackle these challenges, effective general managers develop flexible agendas and broad networks of relationships.

Their agendas enable them to react opportunistically to the flow of events around them because a common framework guides their decisions about where and when to intervene. And their networks allow them to have quick and pointed conversations that give the general managers influence well beyond their formal chain of command.

Originally published in 1982, the article's ideas about time management are all the more useful for today's hard-pressed executives. Kotter added a retrospective commentary in 1999, highlighting the article's relevance to then-current concepts of leadership—ideas that are still topical today.

HBR Reprint 99208

42 | Connect, Then Lead

Amy J.C. Cuddy, Matthew Kohut, and John Neffinger

In puzzling over whether it's better to be feared or loved as a leader, Machiavelli famously said that, because it's nigh impossible to do both, leaders should opt for fear. Research from Harvard Business School's Amy Cuddy and consultants Matthew Kohut and John Neffinger refutes that theory, arguing that leaders would do much better to begin with "love"—that is, to establish trust through warmth and understanding.

Most leaders today approach their jobs by emphasizing competence, strength, and credentials. But without first building a foundation of trust, they run the risk of eliciting fear, resentment, or envy.

Beginning with warmth allows trust to develop, facilitating both the exchange and the acceptance of ideas—people really hear your message and become open to it. Cultivating warmth and trust also boosts the quantity and quality of novel ideas that are produced.

The best way to gain influence is to combine warmth and strength—as difficult as Machiavelli says that may be to do. In this article, the authors look at research from behavioral economics, social psychology, and other disciplines and offer practical tactics for leaders hoping to project a healthy amount of both qualities.

HBR Reprint R1307C

50 | The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents

Julie Battilana and Tiziana Casciaro

Change is hard, especially in a large organization. Yet some leaders succeed—often spectacularly—at transforming their workplaces. What makes them able to exert this sort of influence when the vast majority can't?

The authors tracked 68 change initiatives in the UK's National Health Service, an organization whose size, complexity, and tradition can make reform difficult. They discovered several predictors of change agents' success—all of which emphasize the importance of networks of personal relationships:

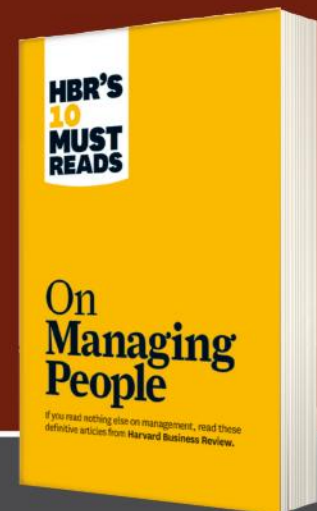
- Change agents who were central in the organization's informal network had a clear advantage, regardless of their position in the formal hierarchy.
- People who bridged disconnected groups or individuals were more effective at implementing dramatic reforms. The resisters in their networks did not necessarily know one another and so were unlikely to form a coalition. Change agents with cohesive networks, in which all individuals were connected, were better at instituting minor changes. Their contacts rallied around the initiative and helped convince others of its importance.
- Being close to people who were ambivalent about a change was always beneficial. In the end, fence-sitters were reluctant to disappoint a friend. But close relationships with resisters were a double-edged sword: Such ties helped push through minor initiatives but were a hindrance when attempting major change.

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56 | Managing Authenticity: The Paradox of Great Leadership

Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones

Leaders and followers both associate authenticity with sincerity, honesty, and integrity. But while the expression of a genuine self is necessary for great leadership, the concept of authenticity is often misunderstood, not least by leaders themselves. They often assume that authenticity is an innate quality—that a person is either genuine or not. In fact, the authors say, authenticity is largely defined by what other people see in you and, as such, can to a great extent be controlled by you.

In this article, the authors explore the qualities of authentic leadership. To illustrate their points, they recount the experiences of some of the authentic leaders they have known and studied, including the BBC's Greg Dyke, Nestlé's Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, and Marks & Spencer's Jean Tomlin.

Establishing your authenticity as a leader is a two-part challenge. You have to consistently match your words and deeds; otherwise, followers will never accept you as authentic. But it is not enough just to practice what you preach. To get people to follow you, you also have to get them to relate to you. This means presenting different faces to different audiences—a requirement that many people find hard to square with authenticity. But authenticity is not the product of manipulation. It accurately reflects aspects of the leader's inner self, so it can't be an act.

Authentic leaders seem to know which personality traits they should reveal to whom, and when. Highly attuned to their environments, authentic leaders rely on an intuition born of formative, sometimes harsh experiences to understand the expectations and concerns of the people they seek to influence. They retain their distinctiveness as individuals, yet they know how to win acceptance in strong corporate and social cultures and how to use elements of those cultures as a basis for radical change.

HBR Reprint R0512E

66 | The Decision to Trust

Robert F. Hurley

Surveys have shown that 80% of Americans don't trust corporate executives and—worse—that roughly half of all managers don't trust their own leaders. Mergers, downsizing, and globalization have accelerated the pace of change in organizations, creating a crisis of trust that didn't exist a generation ago.

Leaders who understand how trust is built can actively influence its development, resulting in a more supportive and productive work environment and, not incidentally, a competitive advantage in the war for talent. Building on research in social psychology, and on his 15 years of experience consulting on trust, the author has developed a model for predicting whether trust or distrust will be chosen in a given situation. It helps managers analyze ten factors at play in the decision-making process. Hundreds of top executives have used it to diagnose and address the root causes of distrust in their work relationships.

Some of the factors in the model relate to the decision maker: How tolerant of risk, how well-adjusted, and how relatively powerful is he or she? Others relate to the specific situation: How closely aligned are the interests of the parties concerned? Does the person who is asking to be trusted demonstrate competence? Predictability and integrity? Frequent and honest communication?

Sue, a relatively new VP of sales, used the trust model to manage her relationship with Joe, an employee nearing retirement who was not performing well in a new sales role. Fearing for his job, Joe wasn't initially inclined to trust her. Sue took concrete steps to communicate openly with Joe, explore other options for him, and show concern for his well-being. When Joe was transferred, he let his former colleagues know how pleased he was with Sue's handling of the situation. As a result, the level of trust increased in Sue's department, even though it was experiencing major change.

HBR Reprint R0609B

76 | The Necessary Art of Persuasion

Jay A. Conger

Business today is largely run by teams and populated by authority-averse baby boomers and Generation Xers. That makes persuasion more important than ever as a managerial tool.

But contrary to popular belief, the author asserts, persuasion is not the same as selling an idea or convincing opponents to see things your way. It is instead a process of learning from others and negotiating a shared solution. To that end, persuasion consists of four essential elements: establishing credibility, framing to find common ground, providing vivid evidence, and connecting emotionally.

Credibility grows, the author says, out of two sources: expertise and relationships. The former is a function of product or process knowledge and the latter a history of listening to and working in the best interest of others.

But even if a persuader's credibility is high, his position must make sense—even more, it must appeal—to the audience. Therefore, a persuader must frame his position to illuminate its benefits to everyone who will feel its impact.

Persuasion then becomes a matter of presenting evidence—but not just ordinary charts and spreadsheets. The author says the most effective persuaders use vivid—even over-the-top—stories, metaphors, and examples to make their positions come alive.

Finally, good persuaders have the ability to accurately sense and respond to their audience's emotional state. Sometimes, that means they have to suppress their own emotions; at other times, they must intensify them.

Persuasion can be a force for enormous good in an organization, but people must understand it for what it is: an often painstaking process that requires insight, planning, and compromise.

HBR Reprint 4258

88 | Harnessing the Science of Persuasion

Robert B. Cialdini

If leadership, at its most basic, consists of getting things done through others, then persuasion is one of the leader's essential tools. Many executives have assumed that this tool is beyond their grasp, available only to the charismatic and the eloquent. Over the past several decades, though, experimental psychologists have learned which methods reliably lead people to concede, comply, or change. Their research shows that persuasion is governed by several principles that can be taught and applied.

The first principle is that people are more likely to follow someone who is similar to them than someone who is not. Wise managers, then, enlist peers to help make their cases. Second, people are more willing to cooperate with those who are not only like them but who like them, as well. So it's worth the time to uncover real similarities and offer genuine praise.

Third, experiments confirm the intuitive truth that people tend to treat you the way you treat them. It's sound policy to do a favor before seeking one. Fourth, individuals are more likely to keep promises they make voluntarily and explicitly. The message for managers here is to get commitments in writing. Fifth, studies show that people really do defer to experts. So before they attempt to exert influence, executives should take pains to establish their own expertise and not assume that it's self-evident. Finally, people want more of a commodity when it's scarce; it follows, then, that exclusive information is more persuasive than widely available data.

By mastering these principles—and, the author stresses, using them judiciously and ethically—executives can learn the elusive art of capturing an audience, swaying the undecided, and converting the opposition.

HBR Reprint 7915

98 | The Uses (and Abuses) of Influence

Robert Cialdini, interviewed by Sarah Cliffe

The ability to persuade others to contribute to your efforts is a key skill for managers, for team members—for anyone who wants to elevate the probability of success. Research by leading social scientist Robert Cialdini has found that persuasion works by appealing to certain deeply rooted human responses: *liking, reciprocity, social proof, commitment and consistency, authority, and scarcity*. In this edited interview with HBR's executive editor, Cialdini expands on the six principles of persuasion and how leaders can make effective, authentic use of them in everyday business situations. He also previews findings from new research on the ethics of influence and how dishonesty affects individuals and the organization.

HBR Reprint R1307F

104 | Are You In with the In Crowd?

Art Kleiner

At the core of your company, there is a group of people who seem to call the shots—or, rather, all the shots seem to be called for their benefit. This core group can't be found on any organization chart. It exists in people's hearts and minds. It comprises the people whose perceived interests and needs are taken into account as decisions are made throughout the organization. In most companies, talking explicitly about this group is taboo; its existence seems to contradict the vital corporate premise that we all have a common stake in the firm's success.

In the best organizations, the core group can be a resource: Members represent the unique values and knowledge that distinguish their companies. When core groups display independence, creativity, and power, the rest of the company follows. Such behavior on the part of the company, in turn, creates value for shareholders, especially over the long term. But because of the core group's enormous power, members need to make themselves aware of the signals they send, both intended and unintended. For better and for worse, the core group reinforces whatever it pays attention to. A core group member who casually mentions a product might well discover three weeks later that someone has spent \$1 million introducing it.

If you do not know who constitutes the core group in your organization, or what the members stand for, you may find that leading will be extremely difficult—even if you are ostensibly the person in charge. If you want to move the organization in a new direction, you may need to explicitly challenge the core group. Otherwise the rest of the organization will not go along.

HBR Reprint R0307G

112 | The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why

Deborah Tannen

Most managerial work happens through talk—discussions, meetings, presentations, negotiations. And it is through talk that managers evaluate others and are themselves judged. Using research carried out in a variety of workplace settings, linguist Deborah Tannen demonstrates how conversational style—that is, how we communicate—often overrides what we say, affecting who gets heard, who gets credit, and what gets done.

Tannen's linguistic perspective provides managers with insight into why there is so much poor communication. We all think the way we talk is “natural,” but in fact language is learned social behavior, and therefore what is natural depends on where and how you were raised. Gender plays an important role. Boys and girls learn different linguistic norms through play with other children of the same sex. The result is that women and men tend to have different speaking styles, much like people who grew up in different cultures.

Tannen traces the ways in which women's styles can undermine them in the workplace, making them seem less competent, confident, and self-assured than they are. She analyzes the underlying social dynamic created through talk in common workplace interactions—for example, when ideas are exchanged in meetings, when people take credit or give feedback, or when managers try to establish their authority. She argues that a better understanding of linguistic style will make managers better listeners and more effective communicators, allowing them to develop more flexible approaches to a full range of managerial activities—such as how they run or participate in meetings, how they mentor or advance the careers of others, and how they evaluate performance.

HBR Reprint 9977

124 | Making Relationships Work

A conversation with psychologist
John M. Gottman

Unless you're a hermit, you can't avoid relationships. And your professional career certainly won't go anywhere if you don't know how to build strong, positive connections. Leaders need to connect deeply with followers if they hope to engage and inspire them.

Despite the importance of interpersonal dynamics in the workplace, solid research on the topic is only now beginning to emerge—and psychologist John M. Gottman, cofounder of the Gottman Institute and formerly executive director of the Relationship Research Institute, is leading the way. His research shows that how we behave at work is closely related to how we behave at home.

Few people understand personal relationships better than Gottman, who studied thousands of married couples for more than 35 years. He and his colleagues used video cameras, heart monitors, and other biofeedback equipment to measure what goes on when couples experience moments of either conflict or closeness. By mathematically analyzing the data, Gottman has provided hard scientific evidence for what makes good relationships.

In this interview with HBR senior editor Diane Coutu, Gottman emphasizes that successful couples look for ways to accentuate the positive: They try to say yes as often as possible. Even thriving relationships, however, still have room for conflict. Individuals embrace it as a way to work through essential personality differences. Gottman also points out that good relationships aren't about clear communication—they're about small moments of attachment and intimacy. Still, he warns, too much of a good thing can be a menace in the workplace, where simple friendships can spill over into emotional affairs.

HBR Reprint R0712B

130 | A Smarter Way to Network

Rob Cross and Robert J. Thomas

The adage “It's not what you know, it's who you know” is true. The right social network can have a huge impact on your success. But many people have misguided ideas about what makes a network strong: They believe the key is having a large circle filled with high-powered contacts. That's not the right approach, say Cross, of UVA's McIntire School of Commerce, and Thomas, of the Accenture Institute for High Performance. The authors, who have spent years researching how organizations can capitalize on employees' social networks, have seen that the happiest, highest-performing executives have a different kind of network: select but diverse, made up of high-quality relationships with people who come from varying spheres and from up and down the corporate ladder.

Effective networks typically range in size from 12 to 18 people. They help managers learn, make decisions with less bias, and grow personally. Cross and Thomas have found that they include six critical kinds of connections: people who provide information, ideas, or expertise; formally and informally powerful people, who offer mentoring and political support; people who give developmental feedback; people who lend personal support; people who increase your sense of purpose or worth; and people who promote work/life balance. Moreover, the best kind of connections are “energizers”—positive, trustworthy individuals who enjoy other people and always see opportunities, even in challenging situations.

If your network doesn't look like this, you can follow a four-step process to improve it. You'll need to identify who your connections are and what they offer you, back away from redundant and energy-draining connections, fill holes in your network with the right kind of people, and work to make the most of your contacts. Do this, and in due course, you'll have a network that steers the best opportunities, ideas, and talent your way.

HBR Reprint R1107P



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