Influence at Work
By Richard Moore

The perceived importance of interpersonal influence in organisational contexts is not new, with its roots in the philosophical writing of Aristotle. However, the non-hierarchical design of modern organisations has placed an increased premium on the study of leaders use of influence tactics to persuade without relying on management authority.

With their flatter structures, increasing need to change quickly and more complex interconnection of stakeholders, suppliers and customers, twenty-first century organisations need employees who can successfully influence others without the use of formal power or supervisory authority. Whilst technical skills related to job tasks have ever-shorter shelf lives, the ability of employees to influence each other to adapt has become a vital competence for organisations.

Understanding influence

The ability of leaders to influence others at work, to persuade colleagues to follow, has become a principal constituent of job performance. An effective understanding of influence at work enables leaders to improve selection decisions and employees and organisations to learn more about influence and have great success at work.

The key to effective influence, in a nutshell

Extensive MU sponsored research identified five abilities that can be said to relate to influencing ability at work with acceptable standards of validity and reliability. The five identified Influence at Work Factors were:

Influence at Work Factors	Influence at Work Factor Descriptors
Role Modelling	Setting an example and being authentic
Challenging	Disturbing, disrupting, and challenging others
Alliance building	Building alliances and coalitions
Emotionally connecting	Communication with warmth and emotion
Involving others	Encouraging others' participation

Importantly these abilities did not require formal power, supervisory authority or management instruction, rather they associate with the ability to influence others to freely change working practices.

Further research determined that across these five factors were twenty-one influence approaches. These twenty-one approaches represented an integrated summary of techniques used to persuade others in various studies (in an organisational context):

Influence Approach	
Adaptation of style	Emotional Appeal
Assertive Pitching	Enacting
Authentic Appeal	Expert Direction
Benefit Exchange	Information Exchange
Bridging	Ingratiation
Coaching	Personalisation
Coalition Building	Rational Appeal
Consultation	Reframing
Control	Targeted Help
Demand	Value others input
Disruption	

Improve your influence at work

If you want to be more effective in influencing others to change at work, investigate and develop these 5 behaviours.

Please contact us for more information about the study or the potential for application of the findings.

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