



Influence Without Authority

Whitepaper

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Introduction

A basic concept of leadership is that the leader influences those around him or her to accomplish a goal. The goal is presumably an end that both the leader and the follower community thinks is important and worth achieving. The core question is: How does the leader influence followers to create and implement the change?

The ability to influence springs from the notion of power. Power can be formal as established by:

- One's position in an organization, such as a person's spot on an organizational chart
- A leader's ability to generate rewards for a follower's actions
- The leader can leverage his or her power base to coerce the followers

In addition to these three forms of power, there is another form of influence that is extraordinarily important and one that we at Pink Elephant are seeing in greater numbers. Informal leadership is the ability of an individual to assume the mantle of an informal leader, who has no authority, that can accomplish great things through personal power. Roles such as Business Relationship Managers, Project Managers, Process Owners and even Consultants are prime examples of leaders who must influence others without any direct authority. This paper explores three important concepts that underlie an informal leader's ability to influence.

1. Build A Network Of Allies

Allan Cohen and David Bradford in their book *Influence Without Authority* described a need for identifying and building strong working relationships with individuals and groups who can be important to a current or future project or initiative. Finding these individuals is not difficult. One just needs to look around to find those who are key to getting things done in the organization or is the go-to person when someone is seeking advice. They may also be the person who has or controls key resources or potentially is the person who has been important before in clearing roadblocks or just has a knack for getting things done. These individuals can be a critical resource or ally to the informal leader when a need arises. Take note that the ally may be the individual who the leader will attempt to influence or may be useful support the leader needs in their influencing efforts.



The key to building an ally network is building working relationships with your potential allies BEFORE the need rises to the surface. Relationships will be built on trust and a sense of mutual support. To build trust, focus should be on learning as much as you can about your future ally. Find out what is important to them. Also, be upfront with your potential ally and discern what you and your ally might want out of a relationship. Remember, the relationship building process requires two to be successful. Taking the time to look at the world around you from your ally's shoes is terribly important.

2. Negotiate & Persuade

The importance of building a cadre of allies is that at some point you will work together to get something done. Remember that you have no power or authority to leverage in seeking aid and assistance from your ally network in achieving your goal. Instead you will call upon your powers of persuasion to negotiate a resolution that is a win-win for both you and your ally.

The power of negotiation is as much about the means or how to get there as it is to the expected end result. Negotiations require a constructive approach to ensure your ally views you as a peer and not as an adversary. Above all, the negotiating process is one where you work through any perceived conflicts or constraints to reach an agreement that works and feels right for both parties. Successful negotiation and persuasion will call on your communication skills to effectively listen (stop talking); being attentive to what the other person's body language is telling you and realize that every person has a different way of approaching social situations. For instance some individuals want only the answers or the facts, whereas others want to talk things out in a collegial manner. Whatever your partner's negotiating style is, be aware of how your style matches up (or not) with others in the room to avoid potential conflict or confusion.

3. The Power Of Reciprocity

The end result of the negotiation is hopefully a positive exchange between you and your ally. A principle of reciprocity is that in the exchange both parties benefit. In other words, you get something you need and your ally does as well. Important to the reciprocity principle is that there is an exchange for something you need today that trades on a previous favor or good deed that you have done in the past for your ally. A bit of a favor quid pro quo where the benefits that your ally received from your past favor is exchanged in the present for what you need. The psychology of reciprocity suggests that it will be very difficult for your ally to turn down your request as they will feel indebted to you for your past actions that were a benefit to them.



With relationship building, the idea is that you build up a reciprocity “bank account” with your ally that can be called upon when the need arises. This account is created through past deeds and actions that build the layer of trust. The deeds could be small things such as helping out on a project without being asked, or sharing important information that you have but would be key to decisions that your ally has to make. There are multiple forms of exchange currencies that can be added to your reciprocity account that require little effort on your part but will pay off in a major way in the future. It is possible that you may never draw down on the account but the goodwill and trust that will come from your unselfish acts can be paid off in ways that might be difficult to imagine or predict today.

Conclusion

Influencing without authority is likely for those who think and plan ahead. Stay in tune with key folks that can be called upon and begin building trusting relationships. Go out of your way to build up your reciprocity bank account by doing good without prompting. Remember that influence is an exchange between partners in a trustful relationship. There may be a need to negotiate and persuade others to see your point of view but it is far easier to shift opinion when you are negotiating from a position of reciprocal strength not from an organizational power base.



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About The Author

Jack Probst has a diverse management, business and technical background, and he delivers strategic process consulting and advanced Service Management training and education programs as a Principal Consultant for Pink Elephant. An ITIL® Expert, Business Relationship Management Professional® and Distinguished Service Professional, Jack has an abundance of knowledge in the ITSM sphere. Jack has served as the President of itSMF USA and is recognized as knowledge expert in the ITSM industry. In addition to his vast ITSM knowledge, Jack enjoys spending time learning how objects such as vacuums, tube radios, and Arduino robots, operate.

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