

HOW TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE



Get people's attention, change people's minds and be a positive influence

THE SOCIAL BRAIN

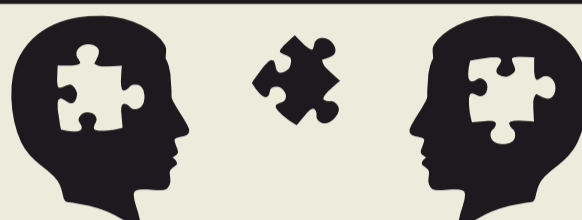
Influence is our capacity to produce effects on others through intangible or indirect means. It deals with the ways in which we pick up thoughts and behaviours from the people around us, often without even realising it.

"This inner sensation that we call 'mind' is profoundly social. What I do influences how you feel."
Dan Siegel

Influencing people is not a choice, but an unconscious instinct we all share. We influence each other all the time, whether we mean to or not. Understanding and managing your influence on other people is the first step towards using your influence positively and having a more considerate impact on others.

Much of this influence is emotional. We tune into each other's moods, mirroring body language and converging emotionally. In fact, we find it very hard not to be affected by the moods of people around us. We call this instinctive influence "emotional contagion".

BUILDING RAPPORT



We have more influence on each other when we are in "rapport".

Rapport is a shared state in which we tune into each other's moods and pay more attention to each other's ideas. People will be more influenced by you if you are in a similar mental, physical and emotional state to them. Once you have their attention, and they feel they have yours, you can express your emotions and lead them into a different emotional state. We call this "emotional leadership", and there are three stages to getting it right.

1. Read the room

To influence people effectively, first you need to be aware of your emotional context. This is partly about noticing other people's feelings and empathising with them, but it is also about understanding the reasons behind the feelings. Psychologists refer to this process as 'mentalisation': understanding what is going through someone's mind and relating that to their behaviour. If you don't understand why people feel the way they do, it will be harder to build rapport with them.

2. Tune in

Next, get in sync with them. When we interact with others, we tend to match their behaviour. If we are with happy people, we laugh and smile more; we breathe faster around anxious people. In fact, two people having a good conversation will have similar physiological profiles in just a few minutes.

You can build rapport with people by:

- matching gestures & facial expressions;
- controlling energy levels & tempo;
- sharing tone of voice & speed of speech;
- observing & adjusting your posture.

3. Express yourself

Once you have tuned into the moods of the people around you, you can start to influence them. Influential people excel at setting the emotional tone. Learn how to express your emotions well, and also how to manage your own moods. This is not just about being perpetually cheerful though: sometimes positive emotions aren't appropriate.

You can fake this for a while - what's called "surface acting" - but faking emotions is tiring and you can't do it forever. Instead, try to manage your moods proactively so you can be a positive influence on others.

WILLINGNESS OR ABILITY TO THINK

When you put an argument to someone, they can process it in two different ways. The '**peripheral route**' (**automatic processing**) involves less conscious attention, and relies on mental shortcuts. The '**central route**' (**controlled attention**) involves consciously hearing and processing arguments deliberately and thinking things through.

Most of the time - particularly when we are distracted or tired - we give peripheral attention to things and rely on quick rules of thumb to help us make decisions more quickly. Sometimes, though, we turn our minds to something and think it through in more detail. This variation in our attention is known in influence theory as our "**willingness or ability to think**".

POWERS OF PERSUASION

When people have limited time and attention, small things have a big influence. You can increase the impact of your messages with a few simple persuasion principles:

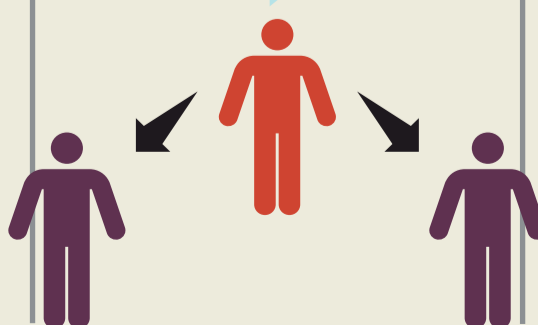
Authority. We often defer to leaders and experts, so highlight your knowledge and experience, show your credentials and gain support from authority figures.

Conformity. We look to other people for clues on how to act, especially in unfamiliar situations, so try to show that other people support your position too.

Consistency. We are more likely to support things we have previously supported, so link your message to previous commitments people have made, and seek support for small things before asking for more.

Think about the mood and energy of your audience and tailor your message to them. Don't give people complex arguments when they want simple answers.

"People will forget what you said.
People will forget what you did.
But people will never forget how you made them feel."
Maya Angelou



Reciprocity. We like to do favours for people we like, and we will usually try to repay what others give to us, so give people your time, attention and support before asking for theirs.

Scarcity. We attribute greater value to that which is rare. If we fear we might be missing out, we are more likely to act quickly rather than waiting, so highlight anything you have that is genuinely rare or exclusive.

Have something to say! People aren't stupid though. Peripheral cues can get people to listen to you in the first place, but once they start to engage their 'central route' it is important to have a convincing argument. In fact, the more you can get people's attention, the more long-lasting your influence on them is likely to be.

This free tip sheet was created by Mindapples to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out more about our apps, e-learning, webinars, face-to-face training and charitable work, visit www.mindapples.org.