



Performance Advantage Systems

Influence2Win^{2™}

for

The Successful Leader

...First Earn Your Credibility...

How much effort do you spend trying to influence others? How successful are you?

Ed, a Managing Director in Germany for a global American Office Equipment Manufacturer, had initiated an idea for a new Line of Business. After successfully building and running this Line of Business for two years, the company for which Ed worked took over another American Office Equipment Manufacturer. As a result of the merger, Ed and his Line of Business were moved into one of the American subsidiaries of the newly merged company. The global team in which Ed was now a member was comprised of a male leader, one female and three male team members.

When Ed's new team leader learned that Ed would be joining his team, he was looking forward to Ed becoming a team member since he had garnered a well-deserved reputation as a business builder.

Ed had several congenial and productive phone conversations with his new team leader prior to traveling to the USA for a five-day team meeting. At that meeting, Ed made a positive impression and also incited some anxiousness. Why? He behaved the way he normally did. He was assertive with a no-nonsense direct communication style and, while having an amiable demeanor, he was predominantly task focused – all qualities that had served him well in the past. However, he had assumed that his significant accomplishments and reputation were all that were needed to be welcomed and immediately considered a respected team member in this new team. As such, he expected to be able to successfully influence decisions made at the meeting. It turned out that he was wrong.

While Ed knew that influencing is essential for leaders to be successful, he had not realized how challenging it also can be.

Influencing is essential since many leadership conversations involve influencing or being influenced.

Influencing is also challenging since many leaders do not understand what influencing is really all about and therefore approach it incorrectly – and often with some degree of trepidation.

Influencing is not about the leader getting something in the short-term - which means that influencing is not about:

- Manipulating which is about getting what we want without regard for the other person.
- Compromising and negotiating which is about both parties giving up something to get something.
- Persuading which is about pushing the other person to get what we want (which is what Ed found himself doing repeatedly and unsuccessfully at the meeting).
- Convincing which is about pulling the other person to our side to get what we want.

In other words, influencing is not one-sided. Nor is it something that should be done without regard for consequences. Most leaders know this which is the reason they approach influencing with some degree to trepidation.

Influencing is about all parties gaining and winning. Influencing is about building, deepening, and strengthening relationships so that you are in a position to create rapid buy-in to readily and successfully address evolving business issues, challenges, and opportunities. Influencing is about relationships that will serve you well over the long-term.

This also means that success in influencing is not positional since, as leaders, we have needs to influence the spectrum of people with whom we work – including upper management, peers, customers, as well as indirect and direct reports (at the meeting, Ed needed to influence both his new team leader as well as his four new team members). Since success in influencing is not positional, its success is contingent upon the credibility that the leader has with the person(s) to be included in the influencing relationship. Therefore, the initial decision that the leader needs to make is whether s/he has the needed credibility. (Ed did not even consider whether or not he had the requisite credibility since he assumed his well-earned reputation which had preceded him was all that was necessary). If not, no amount of planning or seemingly impeccable execution will make a difference. Conversely, when we do have the credibility, insufficient planning and imperfect execution, while not desirable, will not necessarily result in a closed door.

Credibility is an earned attribute. Credibility is about the confidence, trust, and respect that have been built - based on consistent positive experiences and results. While it is nice and impressive to have a reputation of credibility, since credibility is also *context-dependent*, you need to determine if you have the requisite credibility for each situation. (This is where Ed got into trouble. He did not have the credibility in this new situation. He needed to earn it.)

When you need to influence, generally, and for each new situation, you'll want to ask yourself (and maybe ask others as well) the reasons you are (perceived as) credible. Is it because you *consistently*:

- 1) Demonstrate your authenticity and appropriate judgment so that people know who you are and can trust you?
- 2) Assume accountability for meeting as well as missing your commitments?
- 3) Earn a high believe-ability quotient so that people respect and listen to you?
- 4) Demonstrate your character during difficult conversations?
- 5) Use your expertise, principles, and moral compass when addressing challenges?
- 6) Are composed under pressure?
- 7) Convey confidence through your communications, behavior, and presence?
- 8) Professionally express regret as well as appreciation?
- 9) Exhibit genuine interest and concern for others?
- 10) Provide value to the team/organization?

(Which of these capabilities are your current strengths? Which might you strengthen so that you are an even more credible resource in your organization?)

If you determine you have the needed credibility, you are ready to engage in the influencing strategic planning phase.

If you determine you do not have the needed credibility;

- In the short term, determine who in your organization does have the credibility and then partner with that person - so you can leverage their credibility - to engage in the influencing relationship with you.
- In the short, interim and long term, address the issues in the question(s) above that need improvement.

After two years of pushing and pulling and unhappiness all around, Ed left the team to accept a promotion as a vice-president. He started off his new global assignment without making any assumptions, and building his credibility by increasing his believe-ability quotient and exhibiting genuine interest and concern for others.

Actionable Intelligence:

Great leaders are often admired for the seemingly effortless way they engage people and create buy-in. Influencing is one of their keys to success. Do you have this key capability?

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