ACRL ACTIVE GUIDE

Influencing Without Authority

Melanie Hawks

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ACRL ACTIVE GUIDES

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GUIDE OVERVIEW

How can library professionals gain support for their ideas, develop collaborative relationships, and become recognized leaders—regardless of position or title? Library organizations are full of people with talent, insight, energy, and ambition who don't necessarily possess the formal power to make and implement decisions. Even those in management roles often find that their authority comes with limitations. Working effectively in the library profession means finding ways to reach and lead people who are not required to listen or follow. This active guide is designed to help you develop the skills you need to influence peers, library administrators, college and university faculty, students, and external stakeholders.

PREFACE

Do you want to gain support for your ideas and cooperation from others—without being able, or required, to pull rank? Do you feel like you struggle to be heard despite your talent, insight, and energy? Do you wish you could play a stronger role in shaping the work of your library?

You don't need authority to make things happen. But you often do need people. Influencing colleagues, administrators, campus faculty, and external stakeholders is a core competency for any library professional who wants to accomplish important goals.

Why should others listen to or rely on you? What do you need to know about the people you want to influence, and why do their perspectives matter? How can you present your ideas with the greatest impact? This Active Guide will ask you to work through these and other questions designed to help you discover the most useful strategies for expanding your sphere of influence.

INTRODUCTION
Influence and Authority

One of my least favorite teachers required all of his students to maintain a notebook containing not just our assignments but also the very detailed instructions for each assignment. He would project his original typewritten version onto the classroom wall so we could meticulously hand-copy it into our three-ring binders. We were graded on the extent to which we had accurately recorded his words and marked down for any omissions or errors. His fastidiousness was matched only by his inflexibility; he enforced classroom rules with little regard for extenuating circumstances or adolescent development.

I faithfully copied down his instructions and then tried to turn in assignments that matched those instructions precisely. After I was sent to the vice principal's office for asking a classmate to stop cracking his knuckles, I stayed quiet during class. But when the school year ended, I dropped my notebook into the garbage can next to his desk and never spoke to him again.

The best teachers I had did more than enforce the rules, deliver the instructions, and grade the assignments. The best teachers I had changed my life. They drew out the talent and goodness within me. They made me work and they made me mad and sometimes they even made me doubt myself, but they never made me feel less than their equal. One gave me a Charlie Brown dictionary for reading the most books in my first grade class. One promised he would attend commencement for the first time in years if I didn't follow through on my (half-serious) threat to drop out of college in the last semester. One gave me an A- on a paper and explained that she only gave As for extraordinary work; I earned an A on the next paper by completely changing my writing style. (The more concise and eloquent sentences in this book are her legacy.)

And that is the difference between influence and authority. Authority demands; influence invites. Authority seeks compliance; influence seeks cooperation. Authority gets things done; influence shapes decisions about what to do.

All of my teachers had authority by virtue of their position: they had the socially-recognized responsibility and right to instruct me, grade me, and discipline me. My best teachers also educated me. They guided my choices by understanding me and showing me how to become smarter, more persistent, and more confident.

If your position comes with any authority, you've probably discovered its limits. Authority can work remarkably well in the short-term or when there is little conflict over what to do or who is in charge. It can fail totally when you need to build relationships, make complex decisions under ambiguous conditions, or encourage creativity. Although most libraries are still structured hierarchically, many function (or aspire to function) as participative or team-based organizations. A tremendous amount of advocacy, professional development, and innovation is accomplished not by some institutional mandate but by people cooperating in voluntary associations and informal groups. Regardless of what position you hold, much of your success in the library profession will depend on your ability to enlist the support of others—by influencing rather than commanding.

Reflection Questions



How would you describe the differences between influence and authority? Do you see any similarities?

How do you tend to respond to authority? Are you comfortable exercising it?

USING THIS BOOK

This book is divided into three sections. The first introduces some of the foundations of influence: ethics, psychology, and power. These concepts should permeate your understanding and interpretation of the tools and approaches you will learn in later sections.

The second section explores the essential components of the influence process: your audience, your message, and you. Whether you hope to influence in a more explicit way (by speaking/writing directly to others) or in a more subtle way (through your actions over time or by building relationships), focusing on these components can help you consciously manage the process to get the best outcome. Through structured activities, you will have a chance to apply the ideas in this section to a specific situation you want to work through. You will probably get the most benefit from these activities if you do all of them with one example in mind.

The final section looks at influence in the context of particular settings and relationships. Influencing senior leaders is different from influencing peers. Controversial issues and difficult conversations require careful attention to language. Our desire for success or fear of failure can lead to mistakes if we do not invite outside perspectives. Reflecting on the questions posed in this section will help you tackle some of the trickier aspects of implementing your influence strategies.

When you finish reading, you should have a solid understanding of both the theory and practice of influence as well as a plan for getting started.

Defining Your Situation

You can use this Active Guide as a workbook to help you develop influence strategies for a specific situation. To get started, take a few moments to define what that situation is. Your answers to some of the

questions below might change as you read, reflect, and complete the more focused activities throughout the book. For now, just try to capture your initial thinking.

Who do you want to influence? *specific person/group?*	
What do you hope to accomplish? *specific outcome?* *short-term goal?* *long-term goal?*	
Why does this matter to you? *purpose? values?* *external pressures?*	
How do you think you need to influence? *explicitly? subtly?* *through words? through actions?*	
Where and **when** do you need to influence? *particular setting or time?*	

FOUNDATIONS OF INFLUENCE
Ethics

Participants in workshops I conduct often want to discuss what makes influence different from manipulation. My own belief is that manipulation is simply the unethical use of influence strategies that are themselves neither good nor bad. While all of the strategies in this book can be used in an ethical way, you will have to decide for yourself whether any of them cross the line for you in a particular situation.

Most people can intuitively sense what constitutes unethical behavior. If something makes you uneasy or violates your core values, you probably shouldn't do it. But sometimes our ethical dilemmas don't lend themselves easily to "follow your conscience" advice. And sometimes we need to check our immediate instincts and inclinations against an external set of criteria.

Here are some criteria I use to help me decide whether I am behaving ethically when seeking to influence others. These criteria are based on well-established ethical principles and represent the ideals to which I aspire. You can adapt this list based on your own study of ethics, your values and ideals, and the lessons you have learned from experience.

Honesty: Are you being truthful about facts, potential consequences, and other pertinent information?

Authenticity: Are you representing your beliefs, attitudes, and motives sincerely?

Intentions: Are you trying to accomplish something that benefits others, or just you?

Consequences: Are you asking people to sacrifice their own well-being for your benefit? Will anyone be harmed by cooperating with you?

Respect: Are you treating others as individuals with rights and needs, or are you using another person as a means to an end?

Transparency: Can your goals and methods stand up to scrutiny? How would you feel if your actions were published on the front page of the newspaper?

Reflection Questions



What (if any) criteria would you add to the list above?

Some people believe there is a fine line between influence and manipulation. Where do you see the line? What might make an influence attempt ethical or unethical?

Psychology

What do the following examples tell us about influence?

> *Last summer, I asked my neighbor to water some plants while I was out of town. She quickly agreed and asked for nothing in return. Yet when I returned from my trip, I gave her a small gift.*
>
> *A colleague and I recently arrived at our library one morning and discovered the fire alarm sounding. We entered the building and went to our offices because none of our coworkers were evacuating.*
>
> *I ask employees at my library to sign up to attend in-house training sessions, even when there is no limit to the group size.*

The process of influence depends largely on unwritten social rules. Our ability to influence others today is rooted in the same principles that enabled early humans to create civilizations. When applied in an honest and ethical way, these principles contribute to our trust in each other; trust allows us to work together to achieve common goals (or at least pursue individual goals without fear of injury). Social psychologist Robert Cialdini has described six such principles of influence in detail in his book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* and more concisely in his *Harvard Business Review* article "Harnessing the Power of Persuasion."

According to Cialdini, the more we understand these powerful principles, the less vulnerable we will be if others seek to manipulate us. The more we use them as the basis of our ethical influence attempts, the more we will gain support and cooperation from others.

Reciprocation

Cialdini claims that our relationships are always based to some degree on exchange; we give so that we may get, and when we get, we feel obligated to give in return. When I brought my neighbor a gift, I was operating

under the principle of reciprocation. Although I knew she was happy to do me a favor, I wanted to bring our relationship into balance by doing something nice for her as well. I also hoped that my gift would signal a spirit of gratitude and cooperation on my part, thus increasing the chances that she would be willing to help me again in the future if needed.

Social Proof

Social cues tell us what behavior is acceptable/unacceptable, appropriate/inappropriate, safe/unsafe. When we are unsure what to do, we look to others, especially others who are similar to us, for guidance. The power of social proof is so strong that it can even outweigh other indicators—such as a blaring fire alarm. My colleague and I ignored the alarm in our library because our peers were also ignoring it. We assumed the building was safe on the basis of other people's behavior (and luckily, that assumption turned out to be correct).

Consistency

We tend to trust people more when they behave consistently and do what they say they will. Knowing this, we ourselves are more likely to continue a course of action we have previously committed to through actions or public stances. Cialdini claims that commitments made in writing strongly increase the likelihood of follow through. This is why I ask my coworkers to sign up for training even when I have unlimited space available. Sending me an e-mail is a deliberate action that requires them to go "on record" as interested in participating.

Liking

We are more easily influenced by people whom we like. A friend's opinion or request carries more weight than a stranger's. Cialdini's research shows that we feel more bonded toward people who are similar to us—people who share our values and beliefs as well as people who resemble us demographically. In addition, we react positively to people who seem to like us and show appreciation for us.

Authority

Cialdini uses this term to mean expertise, not formal or political power. A physician who tells us to change our eating habits will have more influence than a sales clerk. Experts can offer credible information and explanations for pursuing or avoiding a course of action. This principle depends on others recognizing and accepting our expertise—this type of authority is earned, not assumed.

Scarcity

Things that are hard to get are more desirable than things that are readily available. People listen closely to exclusive information. They act quickly when time is limited. They go to great lengths to avoid losing existing resources or benefits. While Cialdini emphasizes that we should not use the principle of scarcity as a means of threatening or deceiving people, we can use it to increase others' motivation to pay attention and respond favorably to us.

Reflection Questions



Which of these six principles would you feel most comfortable using? Why?

Which would you feel least comfortable using? Why?

Power

Why are some people more influential than others? In 1977, organizational development expert Rosabeth Moss Kanter published an article describing how people in large organizations acquired power—that is, how they got themselves into positions where they could influence large numbers of people. Thirty years later, her findings can provide us some insight into how to expand our sphere of influence and move to higher levels of responsibility.

What Kanter discovered can be summarized in two simple statements: *do the right things* and *cultivate the right people.*

What Are the Right Things?

Dependable Role Performance: Do the job you've been hired to do, and do it well. Otherwise, you probably won't be given the chance to prove yourself in other areas. Credibility is currency in organizations where expertise and follow-through are highly prized. Make sure you are seen as competent, knowledgeable, and reliable even in the most routine aspects of your work.

Extraordinary Activities: You must also be willing to engage in what Kanter describes as unusual or non-routine activities. In her studies, these included occupying a new position; managing a substantial change; and taking substantial risks. Simply joining several teams or participating in a project is probably not sufficient. Find or create opportunities to do what no one else wants or is able to do. Push yourself out of your comfort zone and take on real challenges.

Visible Activities: People have to know what you're doing if it's going to have any impact. If your work isn't already high profile, make it so. Present at staff meetings; do a poster session at a conference; hold a brown bag discussion session for your colleagues.

Relevant Activities: For your work to be meaningful, other people must see it as relevant to important organizational goals or problems. Make sure you direct your efforts toward activities that make a difference: improved services or processes; significant cost savings; effective use of new technologies. Invest time in finding out what's most important—read your organization's latest strategic plan, know what customers are saying, and pay attention to the decisions that administrators make.

Who Are the Right People?

Peers: Given the complexity of most work and the high rate of change, you probably need the support and cooperation of your peers to get anything done. In addition, good collegial relationships can help you establish a reputation for interpersonal skills and build up a network for future support.

Subordinates: When Kanter wrote in 1977, it was probably a more radical notion that people who do not appear to have much power (people with lower salaries, less impressive titles, and smaller scopes of responsibility) might play a major role in others' success. Having good relationships with people on the front lines—the people who keep the library running—is not optional if you want to know what is going on and implement changes successfully. If you are a supervisor, you probably already know that your job is easier when the people who report to you have high morale and are loyal to you. The people you supervise have the capacity to make (or break) your reputation, work as a cohesive group, back you up when you're under pressure, and achieve extraordinary results for the organization. Don't underestimate how much you need their support and good will.

Superiors: A mentor or sponsor in a high position can give you access to information, opportunities, and other influential people. Find a successful leader within your organization who is willing to share expertise and experience with you. This doesn't have to be a director or vice president; an influential team leader or department head can be just as great an ally.

Reflection Questions



What do Kanter's findings have in common with Cialdini's?

What kinds of activities might be the "right things" to increase your power?

Of the three groups listed above (peers, direct reports, superiors), which do you have the strongest relationship with? The weakest?

How can you cultivate relationships with people in an ethical way?

YOUR AUDIENCE
Starting in the Right Place

When you rely on influence rather than authority, you give people choices: whether to listen to you, whether to be swayed by you, whether to cooperate with you. It is therefore in your best interest to put your audience first throughout the influence process.

Early in my career, I worked in a homeless shelter. One of my mentors, a professional social worker, passed on some wisdom she had received from one of her mentors. It has stuck with me all these years because I have found that it applies in any situation where I want to influence another person. The wisdom she shared was this: start where the client is."

When we care about others or feel strongly about an issue, we may be tempted to impose our views and values on the people we are trying to influence—the client, or audience. We end up communicating with those people as though we are looking into a mirror.

For example, most library professionals would probably agree that learning to conduct a thorough research process is a critical component of a college education. But an undergraduate who has less than 24 hours to research, write, edit, and hand in a paper is not in a place to appreciate the virtues of intellectual curiosity and discovery. An effective reference interaction with this student will not look the same as an effective reference interaction with a student who has begun the process three weeks before the paper's deadline. If we are truly starting where the client (student) is, we are defining "effective" on her terms, not ours. Effective to this student might mean fast, or hassle-free, rather than thorough.

Does this mean that to be successful communicators we simply give people whatever they want or demand with no regard for anything else? Let's consider our hypothetical student on a 24-hour deadline. You

may have actually worked with a student in this situation. Which of the following messages do you think would most influence her to view the library as a good place to get help?

> *You really waited until the last minute, didn't you? If you'd started sooner, you wouldn't be in this mess.*
>
> *Well, there are several options for finding the kinds of current, peer-reviewed articles your professor probably wants you to use. Let me show you how to use a few of our databases.*
>
> *Let me show you how you can get some full-text articles you can cite without wasting a lot of time looking at things that aren't relevant to your topic.*

The third example helps the student accomplish her immediate goal—to get the paper done quickly—while still providing her with quality resources and a small amount of instruction. You don't have to sacrifice your professional standards to give her what she needs in the moment. If she feels you have been helpful in this situation, she will be more inclined to seek help in the future—hopefully with a little more lead time.

Starting where your audience is doesn't mean that you stay there. It just means that you account for another person's reality and try to see the situation through her eyes. This empathetic, realistic approach will probably get you further than any other. Looking though another person's eyes allows you to identify the kinds of messages and offer the types of information, evidence, or support that will most influence her.

Choosing a Target

One of the goals of the shelter where I worked was to move people out of homelessness. All shelter residents—single men, single women, and families—were assigned to work with a case manager and develop a plan to move toward self-sufficiency. However, a certain percentage of our single men had a high recidivism rate: they would stay in the shelter for a few weeks, leave, and return months later. This meant that some of our case management resources were being misused; forcing a self-sufficiency plan on people who did not want one (or even buy into the concept as we defined it) only led to waste and frustration.

Once we better understood that the people in our shelter wanted and needed different things, we redesigned our services. Our 30-day program allowed single men to stay in the shelter for up to a month without having to see a case manager. They could leave at the end of that term or stay longer and begin to work on a case plan. This allowed us to focus our resources where they were most likely to see results. It also provided us an opening; when some residents chose case management instead of being compelled to comply, they were more amenable to working on a plan.

Approaching your audience empathetically and realistically requires you to define whom you are trying to influence. Some would-be influencers make the mistake of assuming that their audience consists of everyone within the sound of their voice. The most effective communicators rely on more nuanced definitions of audience. For example, political campaign strategists often divide voters into three different groups.

Group		Strategy
Supporters	Agree with you and can be counted on for votes/cooperation	Don't alienate; use to reach fence-sitters
Fence-Sitters	Have not yet taken a firm position and might be persuaded in either direction	Target; appeal to needs, goals, and values
Opponents	Disagree with you and are unlikely to be persuaded in your direction	Minimize impact

By identifying fence-sitters as the **target audience**, the strategists can focus their attention on the group most likely to be influenced. Identifying a clear target audience for your own influence attempts can help you focus your efforts where they will be most likely to pay off. Your target will depend on your goal—what are you trying to accomplish?

If you are trying to promote a new on-campus document delivery service, for instance, your target audience should consist of people who spend the most time on campus. If you are trying to satisfy existing users with this service, your target audience should consist of people who use materials the most heavily. However, if you are trying to bring in new users with this service, your target audience should consist of people who rarely or never use library materials.

Beyond Demographics

The success of the shelter's 30-day program hinged on what now seems like an obvious realization. Although our residents shared some things in common, they were not all alike simply because they were homeless or because they were men. Your target audience—whether a group or an individual—may fall within a more-or-less demographic cluster: new employees; senior leaders; campus faculty; library subject specialists. You can make some general assumptions about your audience on this basis;

new employees have different needs than veteran employees. Factors such as your audience's age, educational background, and geographic location can help you decide everything from the questions you ask to the style of language you use.

There is more to your audience than a set of generalized and somewhat superficial characteristics, though. Advertising professionals sometimes strategize in terms of a **conceptual target** rather than a demographic one. The 1996 US presidential election popularized the term *soccer mom*—a conceptual target representing middle-income suburban mothers whose busy schedules revolve around family activities. A conceptual target takes into account the audience's personality and motivations. The student who is writing her term paper on a 24-hour deadline has different motivations than the student who is writing his weeks in advance. The librarian who loves teaching probably has a different personality than the librarian who avoids it at all cost.

Conceptual targeting can help you see the people you want to influence as they see themselves. This in turn helps you appeal to your audience's needs, desires, and self-image.

How do you know what your audience's needs, desires, and self-image are? How can you gain insight into another person's personality and motivations?

> **Observation**: Pay attention! Watch how your target behaves over time. Note what your target says about important issues. Look for cues in the choices your target makes about time, money, and energy.
>
> **Conversation**: Listen! Ask questions about your target's interests and goals. Learn how your target feels about your ideas.



ACTIVITY
Understanding Your Audience

Answer the following questions about the person or group you are trying to target. Remember to think from your audience's point of view, not just your own.

Target Who are you trying to reach and why?	
Demographic Description What do you know about your target's general characteristics (age, education, position, etc)?	
Conceptual Description What do you know about your target's personality and motives?	
Needs What does your target believe he/she needs?	
Desires/Goals What does your target believe he/she wants?	
Self-Image How does your target see him- or herself?	

YOUR MESSAGE
Knowing Your Purpose

I once worked with a less-experienced colleague whom I wanted to influence. I felt that he had high potential but lacked some of the qualities he would need to be successful. My goal was clear: I wanted to help him increase both his knowledge and his confidence. So I gave him positive feedback when he performed well. I gave him resources he could use to expand his knowledge base. I debriefed with him to help him reflect on his development. The message I consistently sent was, "You can do this." But I never actually said those words to him. I simply kept that message in my own mind and used it as a guide.

Whether we realize it or not, we always have an audience; we are always sending messages through our choices, actions, and words. If you want to expand your influence, consider carefully which messages you want to send and plan your choices, actions, and words accordingly.

You may not overtly deliver your message in the sense of explicitly writing or saying it, but you should still be able to sum it up succinctly, much like an implied thesis. A clear goal for what you hope to accomplish and a strong thesis will keep you focused on your purpose.



ACTIVITY
Clarify Your Purpose

I want my audience to

Know: _____

Feel: _____

Do: _____

In 25 words or less, my message is

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will deliver my message

☐ explicitly

☐ implicitly

The WIIFM

Imagine that you are interviewing an applicant for a job. Which of the following statements would you find more compelling?

> *You should hire me because I can help you serve users more efficiently.*
> *You should hire me because I really need this job.*

The first statement appeals to your goals. The applicant is signaling that he has something to offer you. The second statement is purely focused on what the applicant wants from you, not on what he can offer.

If you want to influence others, especially if you want them to contribute resources such as time or money, you will need to attend to the WIIFM: *What's In It For Me*?

The principle of reciprocation suggests that people will be more willing to give when they believe that they will gain something in return. Several years ago, I facilitated a series of user focus groups at my library. Marketing research firms offer focus group participants cash in exchange for their time and information. We couldn't do that, but we did offer our participants something else they valued: faculty got the chance to tell us how we could better serve them; students got free pizza.

I am not suggesting that people are so selfish and uncaring that they must be bribed into cooperation. But there is no point in doing all the work to identify and understand your audience if you aren't going to use what you learn. Showing people how they will benefit from an idea or a proposed course of action allows you to tap into their strongest motivations.

In collaborative environments, WIIFM might more accurately be thought of as WIIFU: *What's In It For Us*? Your goals will often intersect with your audience's, particularly if you hold common professional or personal values. Finding and emphasizing common ground can strengthen relationships in good times and defuse tensions during times of conflict.



ACTIVITY
Focusing on the WIIFM

How can you frame your message to appeal to your audience's interests? Using the same message you identified in the previous section, imagine that you are speaking directly to a member of your target audience. Describe how your idea, proposal, request, etc. will do the following:

Tell me how your idea, proposal, or request will...	
Meet my needs	
Fulfill my desires	
Achieve my individual goals	
Achieve our shared goals	

Appealing to Reason

At two different jobs I held previously, I felt tremendous frustration over what I perceived as clear-cut cases of uneven workload distribution. Some of us in the department were carrying a disproportionate amount of the responsibility compared to others. I wanted to express my concerns to my managers and ask for the work to be divided up more evenly. I did not, however, want to come across as complaining, tattling, or trying to avoid work.

In both cases, I decided to let objective evidence make my case for me. I showed my managers the numbers from the departments' planning and tracking documents. These numbers proved that some people had twice or even three times as many assignments as others—and that the people with the highest number of assignments were also tackling the most demanding ones.

If you are trying to persuade your audience to pursue a specific course of action, especially one that involves making difficult decisions, you can use objective evidence and analysis to provide a cogent rationale. If your own emotions are running high, as mine were when I felt my coworkers were not doing their fair share, taking a logical, methodical approach can keep those emotions in check and guard against errors in judgment.

Numbers, or quantitative measurements, allow you to make comparisons and gauge success. They can also help you develop a "snapshot" of reality that lets your audience see patterns or trends that otherwise might go unnoticed.

Use numbers when they matter. Quantitative measurements are important when decisions are being made about how to allocate scarce resources, for instance. Recognize that numbers alone leave many questions unanswered—you can count how many people are in the building, but that tells you nothing about whether those people are getting what they need.

Facts can help you find/create common ground. Information that is known, or at least verifiable, to all will put you and your audience on an equal footing.

Use facts to back up assertions or ideas that your audience might be skeptical of. Remember that people can draw different conclusions from the same set of facts.

Transparent reasoning lets you show your audience how your evidence fits together and why you are advocating a certain position or action. Revealing the links between your data, assumptions, and conclusions helps others follow your line of thought.

Use transparent reasoning when you need your audience to understand how you have arrived at a belief or point of view. Making your reasoning visible means that others may identify some flaws or challenge your logic. Do not use this strategy if you are unwilling to consider other perspectives or change your mind in light of new information/ideas.



ACTIVITY
Transparent Reasoning

Practice making your reasoning visible to others by answering the questions below as they apply to your message.

What have you concluded—what do you believe is true? What do you believe is the proper course of action?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What numbers and facts did you consider in coming to this conclusion?

What assumptions have you made about those numbers and facts?

How do your numbers, facts, and assumptions come together to support your conclusion?

Appealing to Emotion

A library director needed to raise money to renovate an aging, outdated building. She was fortunate to have an ongoing relationship with the family who had donated the original construction funds—and whose name graced the building. To illustrate the need for a renovation, the director photographed portions of the building: open spaces that remained empty and virtually unusable due to their lack of wiring; large service desks that served few patrons but could not be easily removed or scaled down; dark corridors that led nowhere. She presented an album of these photos, with explanatory captions, to a representative of the family who had agreed to meet and discuss funding needs.

Funding a renovation takes more than a photo album and a single donor. The director understood this. But she also understood the power emotions have to influence people. The photographs told a story: a story of a building whose grandeur had faded with time and whose usefulness was diminishing day by day. This was not a happy story, especially to the family whose name was etched in stone on the building's exterior.

Stories are one way to connect emotionally with your audience. Stories are inextricably bound up with culture—humans have relied on them for thousands of years to instruct, remember, inspire, and entertain. We are predisposed to pay attention to stories and look for meaning in them.

Use stories that will resonate with your audience. Focus on settings, characters, and situations that are familiar or interesting to those you want to influence. Original stories about real people or places that are relevant to your situation will probably be the most effective. Avoid hackneyed stories or obvious morality tales.

Sensory experiences also produce strong emotional responses. Sensory inputs such as sights, sounds, and smells are processed in a fairly primitive part of the brain that is also associated with emotional processing. A

photograph of a puppy may make viewers sympathetic to the plight of abandoned pets. A piece of classical music playing in the background may make listeners feel relaxed. A fresh-brewed pot of coffee may make a visitor feel at home.

Use sensory inputs to set a tone and reinforce your message. Be mindful of your audience's tastes and preferences. Because images, sounds, and scents create such powerful reactions, choosing the wrong ones could be disastrous.

Metaphors transfer the emotional associations we have with one thing to another. Comparing a computer program to a virus suggests that the program is dangerous. Describing a space within the library as a commons suggests that the space is vibrant and democratic.

Use metaphors to create a bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Remember that some terms can have both positive and negative emotional associations. Don't assume that your audience shares your enthusiasm for cats or your dislike of SUVs.



ACTIVITY

Appealing to Emotion

Identify several ways you could connect with your audience's emotions. Fill in as many of the boxes below as possible.

What will your audience find:			
	Familiar	**Appealing**	**Meaningful**
Stories tell stories that will get your audience's attention and reinforce your message			
Sensory Experiences find images, sounds, and other inputs to establish a mood or stir feelings			
Metaphors use metaphors that create associations in your audience's mind			

The Call to Action

I logged on to my library's staff intranet last week and noticed a new widget on the main page: *Digital Collections Calendar. Available for purchase here.* Curious, I clicked the link and was taken to a new page: *Purchase a Digital Collections Calendar*. It was clear what the authors of these Web pages wanted me to do. They even explained how I could cooperate with their request (*To order, just select your quantity and click Order Now*) and what that would cost me (*Each calendar is $18*). Fifty-four dollars later, I had a great example to use for this section of the book.

A call to action urges your audience to do something. Not just know something, believe something, or appreciate something. Do something.

The whole point of influence, after all, is to encourage behavior that you want others to adopt. Without a call to action, you risk others misunderstanding, or even completely missing, your intentions.

The clearest call to action is direct: *Purchase a Digital Collections Calendar. Sign up to attend the Webcast. Return books here.* The more straightforward your transaction, the more it is a matter of simple exchange, the more amenable your audience will be to such overt messages. When your request is more complicated, such as when you are asking for long-term commitments or addressing people who have significantly more power than you do, your call to action may need to be less direct.

Balancing clarity with subtlety is no easy task. Consider using one, or a mixture of, the strategies below to help you deliver a call to action without alienating your audience.

Question	*Would you be willing to try this out?* *Do you think my ideas sound workable?* *Would this help you get what you're looking for?*
Recommend	*Based on the task force's findings, we recommend the following next steps*
	I've had some experience in this area, and I can tell you what's worked best for me
Delegate	*I'd like you to experiment with this for a while and let me know how it goes*
Challenge	*This is going to be hard, but I know you can do it*
	We have a chance to do something great here; let's take advantage of it



ACTIVITY
Delivering a Call to Action

In 25 words or less, what do you want your audience to do?

_____

_____

_____

Practice delivering your call to action in each of the formats described in this section. (For now, don't worry about whether you would actually use each of the formats. Just experiment with different ways of saying the same thing.)

Direct	
Question	
Recommend	
Delegate	
Challenge	

Which of the practice statements you wrote above would you actually use and why?

YOU
Making a Personal Commitment

I once considered becoming a high school English teacher. In one of the secondary education classes I took, a guest speaker described his job as an English teacher at a nearby rural school. In addition to his teaching duties, he coached sports teams, advised extracurricular clubs, and basically lived his life surrounded by students, helping them however and whenever he could. One of my classmates remarked that this job didn't sound anything like what we were in class to learn. I'll never forget the teacher's response: *"Do you want to teach English, or do you want to teach kids?"*

I spent the rest of the semester asking myself that question and realized that I wanted to teach English. I wasn't interested in the kids (or the teacher's lifestyle) as much as I was the subject and the learning process in general. I quit the education program and found other, more suitable avenues for pursuing my interests.

Nothing you do to influence others will matter much unless you are personally committed to the ideas you espouse. Commitment extends beyond abstract belief. Commitment is concrete; it is visible in decisions and actions, especially under adversity. Commitment means being willing to extend yourself and do the hard work of turning ideas into reality. And sometimes, commitment means accepting the consequences of holding a different view or taking an unpopular stand.

Reflection Questions



How committed are you to the ideas you espouse?

How do you show that commitment?

What are the limits of your commitment—what you are unwilling or unable to do?

Assessing Your Credibility

My cousin once coached a boys' baseball team made up of teenagers from affluent families. Convincing them to take time away from their many academic, extracurricular, and social activities to practice proved nearly impossible. As a result, the team performed poorly on the field and lost every game in the beginning of the season. And then my cousin saw an opportunity. During one game, the umpire made a controversial call in the other team's favor. My cousin rushed out onto the field to argue. In between angry shouts and accusations, my cousin whispered, "Throw me out of the game." Confused, the umpire asked him to repeat himself. "Throw me out of the game." The umpire obliged. Suddenly, a group of disinterested, half-hearted boys transformed into a passionate, unified team. No one was going to treat their coach that way! They came back to win the game, and they faithfully showed up to practices for the rest of the season.

My cousin gained something that day that no amount of cajoling, pleading, or demanding could have earned him: credibility. His players saw how far he was willing to go to back them up. They saw that he was subject to rules and discipline, just as they were. They saw him as their champion, not as the guy nagging them to work harder.

Your audience's perception of you can either help or hinder your influence attempts. For the sake of helping you assess and enhance your credibility, consider the following four factors.

Consistency: Leadership expert Warren Bennis has conducted research suggesting that most people would rather follow someone with whom they disagree, but who is consistent, than follow someone they mostly agree with but who is not consistent. Consistency matters so much to your credibility because it allows others to feel secure. When you are consistent, you are knowable; people can anticipate your reactions and the positions you will take. Consistency also demonstrates that you have integrity; when

your actions match up with your words, people can observe that you mean what you say.

Competence: When you seek to influence people, you are asking them to trust you. It's easier to trust someone who is capable of handling the situation. Competence could mean that you have actually demonstrated ability in a certain area; it could also mean that you possess the credentials or expertise others view as necessary.

Caring: Caring works in tandem with competence. You might be the world's leading expert in a particular field, but if people perceive you as being only concerned with yourself, your influence will remain limited to that field. However, if people perceive you as someone who cares about the well-being of others, your influence can extend beyond your area of expertise.

Similarity: In general, we have a positive bias toward people we perceive as being most like us. This does not mean that we are hopelessly prejudiced against people who are unlike us or that we should abandon our efforts to create diverse workforces. It does mean that your chances of getting through to people are higher if you share values, experiences, or even superficial characteristics.

Enhancing Your Credibility

My cousin the coach started out with minimal credibility; he was just another adult placing demands on a group of jaded teenagers. He could have resigned himself to a losing season. Instead, he looked for and took an opportunity to change the way his players saw him. You can also find opportunities to change the way your audience sees you.

Be open to influence. Remember the principle of reciprocation—give what you want to get. Take a lesson from principles of leadership: good leaders make a point of never asking their followers to do anything they wouldn't. Ask for input. Listen to feedback. Change your mind. Show people the same level consideration and cooperation you hope for.

Find an ally. Someone must have credibility with the people you want to influence. Ask that person to help you understand your audience better. Get his support for your ideas. Collaborate with her on projects that your audience will notice.

Deliver the goods. Soon. As Kanter discovered, nothing builds credibility faster than action. Move quickly to give people some tangible proof that you can meet their needs or make things happen. Even simple acts such as following up on a question or volunteering for an undesirable assignment can highlight your willingness and ability to help.

Show some vulnerability. No one is perfect, so trying to project such an image is pointless and counterproductive. Acknowledging some of your mistakes, limitations, and challenges will demonstrate a level of self-awareness and honesty that most people find reassuring. Letting your guard down a little also signals to others that you trust them—which in turn may increase their willingness to trust you.



ACTIVITY
Credibility Audit

How does your target audience perceive you relevant to each of the four credibility factors? Rate yourself *the way your audience most likely sees you.* If your audience has no basis for rating you in one or more of these areas, mark "Neutral."

Inconsistent **Neutral** **Consistent**

Incompetent **Neutral** **Competent**

Uncaring **Neutral** **Caring**

Dissimilar **Neutral** **Similar**

Are there other factors that you think will affect your credibility with your audience? If so, what are they?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you rated yourself "Neutral" in any of the factors, how could you move yourself further over to the right-hand side of the continuum?

If you rated yourself toward the left-hand side of the continuum for any of the factors, what if anything could you do to enhance your credibility with your audience?

THE CONTEXT OF INFLUENCE

The influence process is complicated by the realities of organizational life. Sometimes you need to influence people who have significantly more power than you do. How can you get their attention? What will help you get your ideas across to people who don't have to listen and who are used to being listened to? Sometimes you need to influence others who might be sensitive to suggestions or talking about certain subjects. How can you present your ideas without alienating or offending them? Sometimes you will want to succeed so badly that you will be frustrated with others who do not seem to care. How can you still include those people and keep your own emotions in check?

Influence happens within a context. The more you are attuned to that context, the greater chance you have of choosing strategies that are both realistic and appropriate.

Influencing Up the Hierarchy

Despite our aspirations to be participative, collegial, and democratic, most of us still work in fairly traditional hierarchies where a few decision makers at the top control resources and set priorities. Influencing senior leaders presents its own set of challenges. Their time and attention is limited, and they sometimes do not realize what is happening at "ground level." They also answer to people above them in the institution's hierarchy who may have different perspectives and priorities.

You stand a better chance of having your ideas heard if you use strategies that account for this audience's distinctive outlook. The strategies listed below are based on my notes from a panel presentation on "Influencing Up" that I organized for a new library managers' workshop several years ago. Our panel consisted of senior leaders and administrators from academic libraries.

Bring solutions and alternatives.
People are generally more receptive to hearing these than they are to problems or complaints. Be prepared to offer ideas about how to move forward.

Put it in writing.
Senior leaders cannot always keep track of every request or idea that comes their way. Give them something they can read and refer to when it is most convenient.

Keep it short.
Your first communication should be in the form of an executive summary or brief list of facts/concerns/recommendations. Use bullet points and leave plenty of white space on the page for easy reading. Try to fit everything onto a single sheet or within the viewable space of an e-mail message.

Focus on the big picture.
Limit your information to what is most essential. Don't provide a lot of details, contingencies, and background. Start out at the 30,000-foot level; if senior leaders want a closer view, they will ask for it!

Use facts & objective data.
Make a logical, business-driven case for what you want. Demonstrate *with evidence* how your request will save time/money, increase customer satisfaction, or solve an important problem.

Don't try to bluff.
If you are missing or unsure about some information, be honest. It is better to admit what you don't know than lose credibility by having someone else discover it. When asked for information you don't have, say you will investigate—and then be sure to follow through.

Ask, don't tell.
Make sure that your tone is assertive but tactful. Avoid telling senior leaders what they should do; make a request or provide a recommendation instead.

Reflection Questions



Which, if any, of the strategies above have you found useful in working with senior leaders?

What additional strategies have you found success with?

What kinds of strategies would you avoid when influencing up, and why?

Influencing with Tact

What if you have to give bad news, disagree with someone, or express an unpopular opinion? Brown and Levinson (*Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*) suggest two possible delivery approaches: bluntness or politeness.

According to these authors, bluntness works best when both parties agree that the situation is urgent (*We need to evacuate the building*) or when the speaker's statement/request is simple and will obviously benefit the listener (*You've got the wrong date listed; it's actually the 22nd*). It also helps if the speaker has a lot of power in relation to the listener (*We will not accept grant submissions past the deadline*).

The obvious trouble with bluntness is that it can be interpreted as a sign of rudeness or disrespect. The less-obvious problem is that bluntness limits the listener's options. In the second example above, once you've pointed out the wrong date, the listener must respond by either fixing the mistake or leaving it. This may be fine in clear-cut cases of right and wrong or when the stakes are low. But let's consider another example. Suppose you are a member of a search committee. You feel strongly about hiring one candidate, but you know that the committee chair favors another.

Blunt Statement: *We should hire Phyllis. She's more qualified than Oscar.*

This sets the chair up to either accept or reject Phyllis. There's no middle ground. If the chair is open-minded, he or she might ask you to explain your reasoning. However, if the chair feels like you're challenging his/her authority or forcing the issue, you might find yourself cut out of the decision-making process.

Politeness strategies help us in two ways: they show respect for the listener while preserving his/her autonomy. A polite statement or question usually allows for a range of options, as in this example.

***Polite Statement**: I think both of the candidates are qualified, but I also think Phyllis could offer us some things that no one else could.*

This statement doesn't make a demand on the listener; it invites discussion. There are times when you will need to be blunt, but there are times when deliberately using a politeness strategy will increase your chances of being heard.

The table below demonstrates several strategies you can use to turn blunt statements into polite ones.

Blunt Statement	Politeness Strategy	Polite Statement
Nobody understands what you're saying.	Uncertainty	*I'm not sure everyone understands what you're saying.*
Passing on a problem employee to another supervisor is unethical.	Hint	*Passing on a problem employee doesn't seem fair to the other supervisor.*
The faculty will hate this new policy.	Hedging	*There's a chance some of our faculty won't like this new policy.*
Staying open all night will benefit our students.	Vagueness	*It could be beneficial to some students if our hours were more flexible.*
You really need to work on some team projects so people don't wonder what it is you do here.	Association Clue	*If you worked on some team projects, other people would appreciate your skills and expertise more.*

Reflection Questions



Where/when do you think politeness is a necessary or useful strategy?

Where/when would you choose bluntness over politeness?

CONCLUSION

Reading, reflecting, and completing activities is a necessary part of learning to influence, but it is only one part. The most significant learning will happen when you begin experimenting with real people in real situations. Some approaches and tools will be more relevant than others, and sometimes authority is the only thing people will respond to. Keep these simple suggestions in mind as you discover what works (and what doesn't).

Be flexible. You may need to try several different strategies with your audience before you have the impact you seek.

Be realistic. You can't expect to turn your strongest opposition into your greatest supporter, at least not right away. Focus on taking small, achievable steps.

Be persistent. Don't give up at the slightest hint of failure. Learn from your mistakes as well as your successes.

Be optimistic. The ideas in this book can work for you. You can influence others. It just takes time and practice to see results.

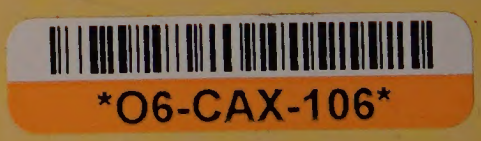
In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky advises us to always choose "humble love" over force. I try to remember this great wisdom when I feel confused or frustrated by other people's actions. Why won't they listen? Why won't they take my advice? Why won't they just behave themselves? Humans are wonderfully, if maddeningly, complicated. Empathy is so often the sword that cuts the Gordian Knot. When in doubt, ask; understand; appreciate. And then invite.

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