Influencing Without Authority
Guess what….? You're in the Selling Business

To be successful at your job, you must be able to:

- “sell” an idea or project
- persuade coworkers or peers to provide support and/or resources, or
- get people to do something that they may not necessarily want or need to do.

In fact, in Dan Pink’s recent book ‘To Sell Is Human’ his analysis showed that about 70% of roles in involve ‘selling’. So whether you know it – or like it – you are in sales.
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Understanding Authority

And most of the time we need to influence people who we do not have any formal authority ‘over’.

We can think about formal authority as that vested in our role (through a JD for example) – whether that be a permanent team, a team brought together for a specific purpose or purely based on our position in the hierarchy.

Once upon a time, we could rely on formal authority to get things done. Organisations are much more complex – and employee expectations about how they’re managed have changed forever.

We can think about informal authority like our currency in the eyes of others.

And it changes – for example with one stakeholder you might have a high currency around your technical knowledge, while with another it could be your ability to build relationships. You may know people in your organisation who don’t necessarily hold senior positions, but people listen when they talk because they possess a certain currency the organisation values.

So the bottom line is – understand your authority and currency within the system.
Influencing People Just to Get Something Doesn't Cut It Anymore

Leadership without influencing – isn’t (leadership). But how we do it is critical in today’s context.

Some influencing models seem to be primarily focused on an exchange between the person doing the influencing and the person being influenced. I think this view is too simplistic and may in fact create a transactional mindset – “I’ve got something you value so lets do business!”

This is only part of what we need to think about.

Engagement Model

A robust influencing engagement model should guide us to:

1. Be clear about what I want
2. Understand the present context (being politically savvy)
3. Identify the right people who I need to influence and who can help along the way
4. A clear plan of action
5. Engagement

We have developed an Engagement Model that incorporates the key aspects of influencing as we see them.
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What Should I be Focussing On?

**Guide:** The Engagement Model serves as a guide to ensure that all critical aspects of influencing people are considered. It avoids the awkward interactions where neither party are particularly clear on ‘what’s on the table’ or what the respective agendas might be.

**Understand:** It ensures – first and foremost – that we truly understand the context in which we operate. My experience is that it doesn’t matter how senior or experienced managers are, one or more steps are usually missed with predictable negative outcomes. By reflecting and seeking to answer three questions in each of the five areas, we can save ourselves a lot of heartache, pain, frustration and re-work.
Act: Finally, it helps ensure that our actions are going to actually make a difference. Because influencing and change are so inter-connected many of the same traps are present. The way we act and engage key people in the conversations that matter will largely determine the outcomes. And by the way, people watch us very closely to see how we engage with others (particularly when loss is involved) to determine how they will engage with us when it counts.
Are You the One Getting in the Way?

Finally, it is worth reinforcing one of the questions in the Diagnose phase: “What have I caused as part of the system?”

You are no doubt passionate about your project, initiative or crusade. But don’t let your love for your initiative get in the way of your effectiveness. It is pretty common for people to become overly-invested to the point where they can’t see another way forward. We need to have the presence of mind to ‘zoom out’ (look at the bigger picture), take a breath and reflect on how you are complicit in the current state – the good, the bad and the ugly.

When you’re able to engage in a much more neutral way and talk about the collective benefits, only then will your influencing strategy truly take flight.
If you’re interested in learning more about these programs and how we may be able to work with you to achieve outstanding results, then you can call us on 1300 100 857 or email: support@theleadershipsphere.com.au.