

The Ten Influencing Strategies You Need Most **by Sally Ward, Ward Leadership** **www.leadership.com**

The ability to build and manage relationships is the number one success factor in business and life. You've undoubtedly worked with people who approach relationships from a vantage point of control and a paternalistic stance of knowing more or better. True power, however, is acquired through influence, not mandates or control.

Imagine these scenarios:

A younger colleague comes to you with a dilemma and asks for your help.
Do you:

- recommend a solution that you're confident will work?
- ask what she has tried so far, what options she sees, and what the impact of each might be?

You're convinced that your organization must merge with another in the next 18 months in order to create economies of scale and remain a viable competitor in the marketplace.
Do you:

- develop a comprehensive plan and present it, complete with facts and figures?
- articulate a rationale, involve others in the fact-gathering, planning and decision-making process, and lay out a communication strategy?

You've been promoted to replace a well-liked leader who left to take a position elsewhere. You're on fire with ideas that you believe will improve results, and you're anxious to make your mark quickly. But you're running into resistance from those who think things were running just fine as they were.

Do you:

- forge ahead with changes? After all, you have the authority and you're confident that you can improve the bottom line.
- invest the time first to meet with key players, learn what motivates them, and find out what is working well and what could be working better?

Ten surefire strategies will enable you to build influence:

Speak to the ear that can hear you. In other words, consider what will get the attention of those you wish to influence, and craft your message accordingly.

Plan your messages in advance. Thoughtful preparation will ensure that you are delivering the right message in the right way. Write out key points, then re-visit them later to see how you can make them more compelling. Anticipate possible objections so you can respond without losing your balance.

Present statistics to support your case , show what others are doing, and what has worked.

Research; document; be able to articulate the trends in your field and potential impacts and opportunities.

Paint a picture with storytelling. A human interest story will capture attention and enhance your case.

Be a Connector. Become a trusted source for connecting people with others who are the best at what they do. Offer high-quality resources generously and you'll brand yourself not only as a go-to person but as someone who represents excellence.

Build rapport first. Listen. Demonstrate interest in the relationship. Trying to influence too quickly can create roadblocks.

Do a good turn that was not expected. A pleasant surprise such as offering a referral, mentioning a useful website, or an making an introduction will inspire others want to help you as well.

Exude core confidence. Be passionate about your work, your values and vision, and making a positive difference in whatever you do. Nothing is more attractive.