

influence

VERB: to affect or change someone or something in an indirect but usually important way; the act or skill of communication intended to induce belief or action

Like it or not, human psychology impacts our workplace. As an employee, you have the power – and in some ways, the responsibility – to use human psychology to the benefit of your clients and colleagues. To create a happier, healthier workplace, to encourage coworkers to support one another, and to help people reach their goals and be productive. Using influence can be learned and used adeptly and gently to assist clients, contractors and vendors to understand how they can best work with the company.

Using the skill of influence can also be called persuasion. Persuasion is perhaps one of the most misunderstood word in today's culture. People think of "Persuaders" as phoney people in suits, trying to convince people to do or buy something that only benefits the persuader themselves. But in reality, utilizing good influence is all about **helping people**. There are many reasons why being influential is an important professional development skill in business life. Most importantly, influence helps people take actions that will actually be in their benefit, despite the mental roadblocks they might have that prevent them from doing so. The bottom line is that many people won't buy your product or service, or even pay their bill unless they're influenced or convinced to do so. The same goes with vendors, business partners and investors.

Read on to discover the 5 ways you can impact your partners for their own benefit, using the power of influence:

Reciprocity When someone does something nice for us, a strong inner prompting tells us we now need to do something nice for them in return. When a salesperson gives you a free sample, you're more likely to buy a product from them. When someone does you a favor, you end up feeling like you owe them – even if it is a small favor, and even if you don't particularly like that person.

Commitment and Consistency Once we commit to something – especially publicly, like when we verbalize it to someone else, or post in on social media – we feel a deep need to stay consistent with that commitment. This is the essence of the principle of commitment and consistency. What's interesting is that the commitment has to be an inner choice in order for it to work. You can't command someone to commit to something. And what's more interesting is that the more effort it takes to commit to something, the deeper the commitment becomes.

Social Proof History has proven we are strongly affected by the thoughts and opinions of our peers. The opinions of our friends, family and passing acquaintances sway us so much more than even the best advertising campaign. It's why testimonials and case studies are so powerful in the sales process. We don't care that the company says this widget will save you 10 hours of work a week. But if Nancy, your tennis partner, tells you that, well, that's a different story. She wouldn't lie to you. She has no stake in whether or not you buy the widget.

If you've ever taken a CPR class, you'll see exactly how this works. Your CPR instructor tells you to point to a specific person and tell them to call 911 before you begin CPR. *Why point to a specific person?* Because if you don't, if you just shout, "Someone call 911!", everyone will stand around looking at each other, waiting to see if they need to do something. You can short-circuit that reaction by "assigning" people roles during an emergency.

Liking If we like someone, we are more likely to be influenced by them. Plain and simple. There are a lot of ways this principle plays out in our lives. IE ~ We have a positive psychological reaction when someone compliments us.

*Compliments spur us to respond positively to the one who gives the compliment.
The good cop/bad cop routine works because we like the "good" cop better than the "bad" one.
The recommendation of a friend or an endorsement of a celebrity we like tends to influence us to buy a product.*

Unity We tend to psychologically (and then physically and emotionally) categorize ourselves into groups with shared identities. When someone is part of that category with us, we believe they are "one of us," and we are more inclined to help and support them. When we are a member of a group where we feel a shared identity, our empathy grows. When other members of our group hurt, we hurt. One member influences another. With the principle of unity at play, we forget that other human beings are different from us. We are at one.

Approaching work issues with a sense of unity will alleviate an "us against them" mentality, which only makes interactions, especially challenging ones, much easier.

No matter what, remember that human psychology is at work with all the people who you interact with whether you're working with it or not. Learning and utilizing influence is not manipulation if you have the right motivation and frame of mind.

Using strategic influence for the benefit of your colleagues and partners, you'll experience a happier, healthier and more productive work life.



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