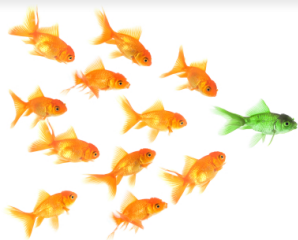


THE LEADERSHIP TOOLBOX

Welcome to the Leadership Toolbox – a reference focused on enhancing professional success. This is an on-going Bulletin designed to provide you with practical and useful tools, techniques and tips that you can immediately implement to increase your effectiveness. For this edition, we are going to focus on the skill of *influence*. For some, this skill comes naturally. For others, it takes a lot of focus and work to persuade another. But we all use this skill, or try to, on a daily basis to navigate our way through the maze of life.

AREA OF FOCUS: INFLUENCE



DEFINITION:

The power to affect, control or manipulate something or someone; the ability to change the development of something that fluctuates; the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways; an action exerted by a person or thing with such power on another to cause change; the effect of one thing (or person) on another.

BENEFITS OF DEMONSTRATING INFLUENCE EFFECTIVELY

Think about that definition – the power to change someone or something. That's pretty powerful! Leaders can either influence or manage others to get results. The most successful leaders know how to influence. Some people might hypothesize that the ability to influence people is the single most valuable skill in business today. The power of influence gives you an advantage to persuade others to adapt to your opinions, thoughts, beliefs and desired direction. The power of influence promotes action. We believe it's one of the most critical qualities of effective leadership.

ENHANCING THIS COMPETENCY

Tip: Earn Their Trust

If you want to influence others, you have to be someone that others can trust. The need for trust arises from our *interdependence* with others. We often depend on other people to help us obtain, or at least not to frustrate, the outcomes we want/need to obtain (and visa versa). For some, trust takes time to build and for others, they come trusting you until you let them down! You need to ensure you are demonstrating behaviors and speaking words that convey trust. You must keep confidences, walk your talk, follow through, occasionally perform actions for the greater good, be approachable, be transparent, be fair, be predictable, be patient, and be reliable.

Tip: Develop A Clear Vision

One quality that influential leaders share is that they have clear and motivating visions for the future that inspire others to act. A vision is simply a picture of an ideal state of what the inspirer wants to occur in the future. It is a fact that if someone has a clear vision with potentially positive consequences, people will often want to be a part of that vision and will work hard for its' achievement. Why? I would say that many of us are craving positive news, positive people and positive outcomes. There is plenty of information coming at us of the negative sort so it isn't surprising that people are craving someone with a way to attain positive outcomes. Try to have at least three positive reasons or outcomes when trying to influence someone to your position.

Tip: Get Out In Front

In order for people to follow you, they need to see you out in front leading the way. If you prefer to work in the background, find more ways to build your visibility. If you choose to stay in the background, people will give their attention to whomever stands in front and shares "their vision", even if it's not your or the organization's vision. Get out in front often and consistently, so people can count on seeing you there, especially when their motivation is waning. One way leaders often do this is to hold consistent meetings when you lead the discussion, provides updates, etc. This type of communication also ensures everyone has the same information at the same time.



Tip: Pay Attention To The Environment

Most of us work in a multi-tasking, multi-linked, changing environment that constantly demands our attention. It can take a lot of energy to focus on getting work done as well as be aware of what's going on around you. But it is critical that you remain somewhat cognizant of what's happening with the organization and the people. Why? If you don't, you may be blindsided by change that is or has occurred. Also, if people notice that you, especially if you are the leader, aren't aware of what's occurring in the organization, they are less likely to trust your words or follow in your direction. No matter what business you are engaged in, you will be continuously challenged by larger problems that could have been prevented if you had paid closer attention to the details. Take a few minutes each day to observe, ask questions and listen. Information and knowing how to use it effectively = influence.

Tip: Demonstrate Empathy

Empathy simply means to see a situation through the eyes of another or to walk in another's shoes. Simple behaviors you can implement are to actively ask questions and listen to the responses. Listen to understand the message from the speaker's point of view. Offer support and options. Empathy absorbs tension. Empathic statements, such as "I can understand why you would be upset over..." can assist in building influence as it shows you care and your listening. Other ways to demonstrate empathy are: don't finish others' sentences, don't interrupt, don't give advice, slow down – don't be in a hurry, give focused attention, and genuinely care about others. Remember, empathy doesn't mean you agree with another but rather, that you understand.



Tip: Find Your Voice & Be Heard

Once you know your vision, share it with others. Again, hold regular meetings and share information as well as ask questions. When speaking with others, be informed, factual, clear and concise. Don't talk for too long. Use bullet-point type information. Be courteous, constructive and persistent. Let your words recognize others' needs and concerns and priorities. If people can't hear you or don't the opportunity to hear and understand your vision, they will listen to someone who does have a voice.

Tip: Balance Flexibility & Firmness

Each one of us tends to be more comfortable standing firmly in a position or for a principle while others of us tend to appreciate showing flexibility. If you push for something too much or too hard, the strength of that approach may become your greatest weakness. If you are too wavering, people won't trust you to follow through. Effective influence is knowing which approach to use and when, knowing how hard to push or how flexible to be. There is no right or wrong, it's a matter of being aware of your environment and demonstrating balance. As kids will say... "If you need to win all the time, it may be no fun to play with you."

Tip: Choose Your Battles

This tip really correlates with the one above. Not everything needs to be a big deal. Try to keep your focus on the vision or big picture, both individually (as in what is best for you) and for the department or company as a whole. One of the general realities of influence is that we need to be willing to give, compromise and let some things go. If you find you are choosing battles at work, then digging in and sticking them out until the bitter, miserable end, you may want to re-think your tactics. While you may think people see you as tenacious and dedicated, you may actually come off as an aggressive bully. Any few will let themselves be influenced by a bully. Many would rather sabotage a bully's vision than help to attain it. How can you determine which battles are worthy of fighting for? Fight for those battles that are worth the wounds and pain. Most are not.

Tip: Prioritize

Prioritizing is not just about helping people understand the urgency and importance of something. Prioritizing is about making the best use of your, and others, time and resources. It is particularly important when time is limited and demands are seemingly unlimited, a situation many of us are familiar with. Prioritizing is about making the environment a place where people can be effective and successful in getting important and meaningful work done. There is no exact science to prioritizing, but there are several tips that should help you become a more effective at prioritizing.

- **Make a list:** Only list crucial tasks. You don't need to list routine tasks (like lunch) or menial tasks (like checking your email). This may seem obvious but you'd be surprised at how many people try to organize their tasks in their head. You'll often find that you feel a lot better just getting everything out so that you can see it in one place.
- **Consider time constraints:** What absolutely needs to get done today and what can wait until tomorrow or next week. Everything may be important eventually, but some things are more important now.
- **Consider people constraints:** All things equal, move things that other people are waiting on to the top of the list. Don't burn others out by overloading them too long with critical tasks. Soon, they won't perform at all.
- **Consider the consequences:** Which tasks are critical and which are not? Try to work on a balance of both.
- **Re-prioritize as necessary:** Priorities change. As they do, update your list. It will give you, and others, a sense of control over the situation.
- **Remove unimportant items:** Is there something on your list that you always push to the bottom and never end up doing? Then get it off the list. It doesn't belong there.

Tip: Keep Your Friends Close and Your Enemies Closer

Lets face it – most of us have people at work that try to promote us and also, those that may try to sabotage us, especially within competitive work environments. A friend will not to harm to you or your vision, they will protect. However, your enemies look to do you harm so you must always know where they are and what they are doing. This means monitor the movements of those that you may not trust so that you are not "surprised" in the end.

Tip: Use Effective Negotiation Skills

Negotiation is intended to resolve disputes, to produce an agreement upon courses of action, to bargain for individual or collective advantage, or to craft outcomes to satisfy various interests. Negotiation outcomes are measured by two criteria: *results* and *effects on relationships*. A successful negotiation happens when we achieve our objectives in terms of results and keep the relationship, at least, within cooperative limits. Depending on how good you are at negotiating with others, people will or will not respond positively to your requests, and they will or will not support you and your vision.

QUOTES ON INFLUENCE

The chains of a habit are generally too small to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.

Samuel Johnson

You don't have to be a "person of influence" to be influential. In fact, the most influential people in my life are probably not even aware of the things they've taught me.

Scott Adams

Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.

Napoleon Hill

The greatest ability in business is to get along with others and to influence their actions.

John Hancock

There is no influence like the influence of habit.

Gilbert Parker

You cannot antagonize and INFLUENCE at the same time.

John Knox

TO RECEIVE PAST BULLETINS...

If you are interested in reviewing past Toolbox Bulletins, visit:

<http://www.lynn-and-associates.com/Bulletins.html>



If you are in interested in talking with Lisa or Jim on how to implement any of the tips, tools or skills within this or other bulletins, please feel free to contact us anytime!

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We hope the information presented in this bulletin has been practical and helpful. Please let us know what you think and how it could be improved or if there is a topic you would like us to talk about in an upcoming newsletter. Make it a productive day!

The Lynn & Associates Team