

How to Influence when you're not 'the boss'



How do you get people 'on side'; get people to work with you on projects or pieces of work when you are not their immediate line manager? This is often called 'Influence without Power' and it can be a tough challenge when invariably these people are busy, stretched and have a million other priorities they're working on – just like you!

So, how do we positively influence people to work willingly with us?

1. You'll get precisely nowhere if people don't trust you. Read the [Five Ways Leaders Build Trust](#) if you think that is an area you need to work on.
2. Relationships are key. I've written in previous articles about building relationships ([Hate networking?](#) Read on). If you're 'too busy' to make time to connect with others, to hear about what is important to them and to get to know them as human beings, you're missing a big opportunity. One of the most successful people I worked with last year took time each week (normally an hour for coffee) to build new connections inside and outside the organisation. His goal was to listen (a hugely important skill – if you talk too much and don't listen you are unlikely to get people to work with you – they will simply switch off); to learn more and to get to know others on a 'human' level. Given that 'people buy people' and 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' he has no problem getting people to support him on some challenging projects.
3. Know how your natural influence style works for you and against you and try to understand other people's style. Your preference might be to influence through highly creative ideas, energy and the art of 'the possible'. You're excited and energised but someone with a more analytical, logical preference may be unable to see what you are trying to achieve. So how can you help her 'get it' so she will work willingly with you? You need to be able to appeal to both logic and emotion!

4. Consult, don't dictate or threaten. Ask: 'How can we work together on this given our competing priorities?' If it's all about you, and your agenda, people are unlikely to support you.
5. Celebrate success, evaluate what worked and what didn't and don't forget to thank people for their support – in short, don't forget the small things that can make such a difference to whether those same people will want to work with you again.

For a really practical read on how to improve your influencing skills, I recommend [Developing Your Influencing Skills](#).

