

5 Ways To Increase Your Influence At Work

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Increasing your influence at work is unquestionably a great idea—to advance your career, sell your ideas, improve your results and (surprise!) [enhance your happiness](#).

And you need new strategies for influencing: Even if you were a pro at influencing in the past, the landscape of work has changed, and therefore the process for persuading, relating and connecting has shifted as well.

With the science of relationships, it's possible to enhance your influence and make terrific impact.

The Nature of Influence

Influence isn't just for salespeople—of course—it's relevant for every job and every role. It's making your case effectively or persuading someone to your point of view. It's the ability to affect change. It's building strong, authentic and trusting relationships which are based on mutual respect—which will serve you and others.

Your influence is greatest when people trust you, when they perceive you to have their best interests in mind and when they sense they have things in common with you.

And influence isn't the same as manipulation or coercion. In these cases, you're trying to control or trick someone—or even to bully them into doing what you want—which may not be best for them. On the other hand, with positive influence, you're sharing your views, respecting others and in turn, they're making their own decisions to support you, your ideas or your direction.

Why Now: A New World

But influence is different today, because the terrain is different—in terms of work and life. People report feeling lonely and [disconnected from coworkers](#). In addition, people say their work feels transactional and they don't feel a link with a broader purpose—or with their colleagues.

And these are correlated with happiness and wellbeing—because feeling a [sense of purpose](#) and connectedness are two of the primary elements which affect not only a sense of joy and satisfaction, but also your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Influencing well—based on building strong relationships—helps you and others feel a broader sense of meaning and interdependence—and the happiness and wellbeing which tend to result from these.

Pathways to Influence

A significant part of influence is the perception of proximity. People tend to build the strongest relationships with those they see most often and get to know best—so many of the approaches for influence are based on creating a sense of proximity—built both face-to-face and from a distance.

When you're working at a distance—even some of the time—communication is different, of course. It's harder to interpret intent accurately, it's tougher to build trust and strong bonds, and it requires more effort.

As a result of all this, there are the five primary considerations for reimagining relationships for greater influence.

#1 – Commitment

One of the first ways to build strong relationships and increase your influence is through commitment to a relationship. [True friendship](#) takes about [60 hours to build, according to research](#). But even if you're not seeking a BFF, you'll need to be intentional about how you invest time.

Stay in touch with your contacts. Invite them for coffee or lunch or a one-on-one. Get together when they're in town. Reach out and share articles or ideas you know will interest them.

Also consider reciprocity. The strongest relationships—both personal and professional—include back and forth exchanges. When you have a relationship with someone and they initiate connections, be sure you do as well—or they will get a strong message you don't value time together. Also consider the ways you share information.

Trust is also built with reciprocity in terms of your sharing. You open up about something, and then they do in turn. This kind of sharing over time tends to build trust—and transparency is the fuel for a trusting relationship.

You can also demonstrate commitment through your attention. With everything coming at people today, attention is a scarce resource. But by giving your attention, you build your influence. When you're together with someone on the phone, on video or in person, be fully attentive. Put away your devices and don't multitask. People can tell when you're distracted. Instead, when you're truly present, you're demonstrating you value a person and your relationship with them.

When you make a commitment to a relationship, stay in touch and invest time, you also demonstrate authenticity. You're not just trying to achieve a quick hit of selling something or racking up your number of LinkedIn connections. Instead, you're demonstrating your genuine interest in a relationship.

Know that your [network isn't just a game of numbers](#). You may have thousands of contacts on your social platforms, but you also need people you can call when you need help, who will aid you in a business relationship, who will advocate for you, or support you. These kinds of relationships are created with a meaningful level of commitment.

#2 – Consistency

Another part of building relationships and your influence is consistency. You'll want to commit to making the effort and investing time, but also in making the investment *regularly*. Your influence will be greatest when you play the long game—and maintain connections over time. Rather than a flash in the pan, you'll want to check in routinely.

Consistency is also about how you show up. People prefer others who are predictable—who behave consistently over time. As an example, research has demonstrated that people prefer a poor leader who is consistent rather than a leader who is inconsistent—kind or attentive one day and aloof or demeaning

the next. People don't trust what they don't understand, and consistency is a large measure of how people grow accustomed to who you are and how you relate to them.

The cognitive bias of recency also plays a role here. People tend to keep top-of-mind what has just happened and things which have occurred further in the past are farther from awareness—so you build relationships by staying in touch regularly and therefore staying in recent memory.

Another relevant cognitive bias is a familiarity bias—in which people tend to have greater acceptance for those who are more familiar to them—and they are more influenced by them as well. This points to the concept of cadence: Strive to see people with regularity. Perhaps you want to see someone at least once a month or once a quarter. For professional or sales relationships, in particular, you might plan for check-ins so you don't lose track of someone in the crush of so much to do and so little time. Prioritize relationships and plan for a cadence of contact.

#3 – Curiosity

Curiosity is also a foundation for great relationships, and it's the basis for empathy as well. When you're curious, you're genuinely interested in someone else's point of view. And you're humble—knowing your opinion isn't the only one—and that others will have important perspectives based on their unique experiences.

Likeability is also a key element of influence. When people like you more, you'll be more persuasive—and your likability comes in part from how you make people feel. In fact, research has demonstrated people's view of you is often based more on how you make them feel about themselves, than how they feel about you. Or, said differently, how they feel about you is based on how you cause them to feel about themselves. Curiosity works for you, because you learn and grow and connect, but it also works for others because it reinforces their feeling that you value them.

Interestingly, curiosity, humility and fallibility are also linked with credibility. You need to establish competence and expertise, but then you enhance credibility by being open about what you don't know and about where you wonder. Once you've demonstrated a level of knowledge, you are wise to communicate that you don't know everything—and that you also have areas where you seek input and differences of opinion.

When you're curious, you're sending a message that you value other's views and that you're open to learning from them.

#4 – Continuity

Continuity is also important to relationships and to influencing. Continuity is constancy over time—repetition, cycles of contact and meaning that continue beyond a quick one-time contact.

[Work is a great place to establish continuity](#) of relationships for a few reasons. First, you get to know people over a period of months or years. Even if you work with someone for only a year or two, you see them day-after-day and you may work with them on a project today and again in a few months, given the focus of your work.

In addition, work relationships tend to feature ebbs and flows—also good for relationship building. You see people on days when they're on top of the world and you can celebrate together. And you see them on days when they may be struggling—and you can offer support.

Work also gives you the opportunity to interact on tasks, but also personally. You roll up sleeves together on a project, but also chat with them at the coffee machine—learning about how their new baby is sleeping, how their elderly parent is faring or whether their offer was accepted on their new house—all fodder for meaningful connections.

Another way interesting way to consider continuity is based on its relationship to electricity in which it represents a closed circuit or a complete flow. When you're building relationships and increasing your influence, give thought to how well you follow up and follow through. Responsiveness, accessibility and follow through are strongly related to influence. You don't need to be available 24x7, but you'll want to get back to people quickly and be accessible through various channels.

#5 – Collective

Another way to influence is through your teamwork with others. Statistically, people are more likely to be influenced by you when you're associated with someone they already know or when you've been recommended by someone they know. “A friend of a friend” is apt—people are more likely to trust those whom their friends also trust. Given this, ask others to introduce you if you're

seeking to build a new relationship. And nurture your network by doing the same for your contacts.

As you're building influence, also manage relationships among teams. In sociological terms, you can compare a dirt path of relationships to superhighways. With a dirt path, you might have a relationship with one other person. You walk a small dirt path back and forth in your ongoing relationship with each other.

But a more powerful level of influence is built with superhighways in which you and members of your team have plenty of relationships across departments and with multiple others across organizations. You have a lot of touchpoints among many people—enhancing influence for the whole group. You positively embed and entangle within a team, department or organization.

Creating Perceived Proximity

The Latin roots of the word “influence” are “to flow into,” so you can think of building your influence by maintaining ongoing, two-way flows in your relationships that persist over time.

Consider increasing your influence with both intent and intentionality. Your intent is for genuine, authentic relationships—and you'll be intentional about how you invest time, effort and attention in relationships—resulting in terrific influence and all the benefits that arise from it.