

## Influencing

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Influence is the power to have an important effect on someone or something. You influence someone else causing a change in their thinking or behavior. Some common synonyms of influence are authority, credit, prestige, or weight. Positive influence is the impact you have on another person (and yourself) by pointing out strengths and virtues. Effective influencing skills reflect the ability to bring people to a way of thinking about a certain topic without force or coercion and while also acknowledging their thoughts and opinions.

There are many strategies or approaches to influencing others.

- You can **partner** with them to arrive at an outcome that is mutually beneficial. This requires clarity on desired outcomes as well as true collaborating skills.
- You can **coach** someone by asking them insightful questions to help clarify their thinking, thus influencing their actions and decisions.
- You can **negotiate** with intentional give-and-take to arrive at an outcome influenced by those negotiables.
- You can tell **captivating** stories or paint a captivating vision that draws people in, influencing their buy-in and participation.
- You can **direct** others to do something because laws, regulations, policies, or contracts dictate such a directive. The person doing the directing generally has hierarchical authority or is a known, credible subject matter expert.

The last method of influencing others is often referred to as **selling**. It can also be thought of as **influencing through options**. This is the one often used in organizations when you want to make a definitive decision based on facts and weighing multiple possibilities. It requires you to take a more systemic approach considering pros and cons, not only for your functional responsibilities, but also for the organization as a whole. Here is a template for using this options-based influencing style.

## Template

<b><u>Option 1:</u></b>	
<b><u>Pros:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<b><u>Cons:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b><u>Upside Opportunity:</u></b>	
<b><u>Downside Risk:</u></b>	
<b><u>Benefits:</u></b>	
<b><u>Estimated Costs:</u></b>	

You would complete this template for as many options as you are presenting. Ideally, the person that has done or led the research would present the options as well. The expectation is that, in addition to presenting the options, they would also be prepared to give their recommendation on which option to choose and the basis or criteria used to recommend a particular option. It is not unusual to arrive at a hybrid option through discussion and the input of multiple stakeholders.

This option-based influencing style is also very helpful when you are guiding your team in the transition from “order taker” to “owner” of the direction of their respective functions. Even at more senior levels, cultures may have evolved into directive-based leadership styles resulting in leaders becoming order takers rather than accountable, strategic thinkers. A common phrase reflecting this kind of culture is, “Just tell me what you want, and I’ll make it happen.” When shifting to

the owner-based leadership style you would communicate your expectations that your functional leaders (at all levels) bring you recommendations that are fact-based, well researched, and provide the greatest benefits to the organization.

Generally speaking, since different kinds of organizations have different stakeholders as well as different nomenclature you want to consider key elements in the context of your recommendations. Here is a starting list of key questions that might be considered a checklist:

- Does it increase revenue?
- Does it improve profit or margins?
- Does it improve productivity?
- Does it improve quality?
- Does it align with our Mission? Values? Strategy?
- Does it improve customer/stakeholder satisfaction?
- Does it improve time to market?
- Does it create or enhance competitive advantage?
- Does it increase market share?
- Are there legal, regulatory, compliance, contract, or audit requirements to consider?
- Does it take into consideration the impact on other parts of the organization or enterprise?

Setting an expectation that this template is to be used for all major decisions, projects, initiatives, proposals, or recommendations will begin to change the way people think and bring their ideas forward. It also allows you to hold them accountable for true leadership of their respective functions or areas of responsibility. In the words of Steve Jobs, “It doesn’t make sense to hire [or promote] smart people and tell them what to do. We hire smart people so they can tell us what to do.”