

# Exerting Influence Without Authority

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## ABSTRACT

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Have you struggled with getting people to do what you want when you have no authority over them? This feat seems nearly impossible. But there is hope! Not only is it possible, exerting influence without authority is one of the core skills of effective leadership. Learn how to use influence to go beyond mere compliance and gain enthusiastic cooperation from teams and individuals.

## AUDIENCE

Tell reviewers who will benefit most from this submission

This talk is particularly useful for those who are early in their career, including first-time leaders, scrum masters, project managers, and project leads, though anyone who wants to refresh their skills for influencing others will benefit.

## INTRODUCTION

Do you imagine that if you could only get a promotion, you could start getting people to do what you say? I have some bad news for you...

Positional influence (being a boss) is the most overrated of all forms of influence. People spend a lot of their careers working and waiting for it and when it happens, they are disappointed with how little they gained (and how much time they wasted not learning to influence in other ways). Lateral leadership (influence) lets you start

influencing now, building skills, networks and coalitions that will help you throughout your career.

In this session, you'll learn important tips that will help you get the resources you need to carry out that important effort, access key players whose cooperation you need, and achieve the central purpose of managerial work: getting things done through other people. We will dive into six closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing capabilities:

**1. Expertise Influence:** It's not what you know and it's not who you know. **It's who knows what you know.**

There are many ways to maximize your expertise influence so that you aren't the best kept secret in your organization. You can:

- Use your company's discussion channels to pull together subject matter experts on a topic and have them close at hand.
- Coach and mentor others to build followership.
- Take on special projects to get yourself known as someone who can achieve great things across organizational boundaries.
- Set up brown bag speaking engagements both for yourself and others to create visibility about your subject matter expertise and leadership.

**2. Accountability:** Having a reputation for accountability is critical because plum roles and special projects only go to people who are seen as accountable. Develop a reputation for being accountable in your organization by:

- Delivering more than what was asked for
- Speaking up in meetings
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Offering solutions to problems
- Taking ownership
- Driving solutions

3. **Networking:** Consider the ways that having a broader network will increase your ability to influence others:

- Cultivate a broad network of relationships with people inside and outside your company – and don't neglect virtual colleagues.
- Remember that everyone is an influencer to an extent, so make sure each interaction you have results in a positive impression.
- Doing something helpful for someone else creates a sense of shared purpose – and sparks reciprocity.
- Building a network does not mean you must agree with everyone – but you must be respectful in your disagreement.
- If networking doesn't come naturally to you, create a personal discipline through which to acquire this capability. Reach out to one new person per week, and at the end of the year, you will have increased your network dramatically.
- The friendships you make will make your work more rewarding.

4. **Constructive Persuasion and Negotiation:** Many leaders wrongly view persuasion and negotiation as tools for manipulation. But conducted with an eye toward mutual benefit, they can vastly enhance your influence.

- To make persuasion constructive, ensure that you're **partnering** with the other person, rather than trying to win. Find a solution together.
- Find a seasoned colleague within the company who can serve as a confidant and brainstorming partner.
- Observe others as they use these skills and try to mimic what you see other leaders do. Note how will each technique works and iterate and hone them until they're your own tools.

5. **Consultation:** Contrary to popular belief, big decisions aren't made in the big meeting.

- If you are responsible for leading an outcome, don't wait until the meeting to "ta-da!" your solution.
- Visit the people whose buy-in you need far in advance. Ask their opinions. Get their ideas as well as their reactions to your ideas.
- Don't skip this step because you think it's not as important as completing the deliverable. It's actually more important than that deck you're slaving over.

- Then use this feedback to craft a proposal that takes everyone's feedback into account. Something everyone will say yes to!

6. **Coalition Building:** Several people who are collectively advocating an idea exert more influence than a lone proponent. By building coalitions, you gather influential people together to form "a single body of authority." To assemble a powerful coalition, begin by asking yourself:

- Who will be affected by the change you're proposing?
- Whose "blessing" do you need?
- Whose buy-in is crucial?

To know who you need to influence, you must be **organizationally aware**, not focused only on your own functional silo. Observe: Who makes things happen? Who do people go to for advice and support? Who tends to build roadblocks to new ideas and changes? You gain a sense of these things through observation, informal contact, and casual get-togethers with colleagues. Take advantage of these opportunities and go influence your colleagues!

## OUTCOMES/CONCLUSION

Attendees should leave with an understanding that influence skills can be learned and practiced, and that there's a framework for considering how to build influence within an organization. You can become a leader regardless of your role in the organization, and once you are leading, people see you as a leader, and often reward you with the roles you seek.

## PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

I spoke last year at GHC and would be delighted to speak again this year if my talk is selected.

## REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography:

- <https://hbr.org/2008/02/exerting-influence-without-authority/>
- <http://www.beleaderly.com/ask-jo-influence-without-authority/>
- <https://www.safaribooksonline.com/blog/2014/10/09/influence-without-authority/>

This section is required and should not be solely based on personal experience.

## BIO

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**Presenter 1 Name, Title, Company**  
Presenter 1 Bio



**Presenter 2 Name, Title, Company**  
Presenter 2 Bio