

# Influencer – The Power to Change Anything

***Richard Pound explains why he believes that the most important capacity all of us possess is our ability to influence behaviour – the behaviour of ourselves and others – and provides a proven approach to literally make change inevitable.***

Every aspect of our world, our communities and our personal lives is driven by how people behave. Every outcome or result we experience is because people behave in certain ways. All the challenges and problems we face, exist because people are behaving in inappropriate or unacceptable ways. These problems - from overcoming addictions, sticking to a diet, creating corporate culture change, improving quality, reducing accidents, increasing sales, eliminating unnecessary patient deaths, reducing project failure rates, to stopping global warming – will not be solved until we can get people to change their behaviour.

Therefore, we all need to be full-time influencers. Whether we are a parent, a husband, a wife, a manager, a leader, a team worker or a neighbour, we need to be able to influence the behaviour of others. Unfortunately, most of us have no systematic and consistently successful way of influencing people. We typically use our favorite methods – verbal persuasion, a polished PowerPoint presentation, a memo, a policy – and when this doesn't work, we resort to threats or punishments or learn to cope – and then find ways to deal with the after effects and consequences of the bad behaviour. It's analogous to parking the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff and dealing with the casualties, rather than trying to stop people from jumping off in the first place!

The principles of *Influencer: The Power To Change Anything*, changes all this. During the last fifty years, a handful of world-class scholars have learned how to solve profound and persistent problems that others have given up trying to solve. For instance, individuals are overcoming addictions; companies are creating cultures with terrific safety, quality, and customer-satisfaction; social workers are reducing criminal behaviour; and whole countries are eradicating widely-shared, anti-social behaviour right along with plagues and diseases.

Influencer is a very powerful model for changing behaviours, that motivates and enables people to behave in new ways, and consequently overcome and eliminate profound, persistent, and resistant problems. Here are some simple tips and techniques that can help you change anything.



## **Change the Way You Change Minds**

Change starts with a change of mind. To encourage others to adopt new behaviours a person must believe two things: first that they *can* do it, and second that it will be *worth* it. If they don't believe these things, then why would they even try to adopt the new behaviour?

So, how do you get others to believe that they can change their behaviour and that it will be worth it? First rule: never rely on verbal persuasion or other coercive techniques. Instead, create a personal experience. When others personally experience the new behaviour and the resultant consequences, they are far more likely to believe what's actually happened to them than they are to believe what you say will happen to them.

Take others on a field trip where they can watch the target behaviours in action. For instance, when employees at an automobile production plant didn't believe their Japanese competitors actually produced more per employee; executives flew a team to Japan where they watched their competitors in action. Now they believed. Senior healthcare executives were tasked with exploring and analyzing the root causes of individual and avoidable patient deaths that occurred in their hospital. They could not delegate the task, and this personal experience of seeing the impact of their organisations behaviour on the patient's families, was a key factor in changing their own behaviour and saving more than 100,000 lives in US hospitals.

When others won't or can't take the field trip, create a vicarious experience. Tell a vibrant and believable story that breaks away from cold facts and figures and transports individuals into the circumstances you're trying to explain. For example, the auto workers who traveled to Japan returned and told their coworkers the whole story about the Japanese production line.

### Find Vital Behaviours

Masters of influence understand that key results stem from changing a handful of vital behaviours. Instead of selecting the trendiest technique or solution, they go to great pains to locate the few behaviours that matter by studying those who have succeeded in the face of failure.

For instance, how do you get employees to meet project deadlines? You could ask them to fill out detailed plans or assign more project managers. It turns out neither approach is successful. However, if you study companies that deliver their projects on time and to budget, you'll discover a vital behaviour that leads to the difference. In these successful companies, people speak up the moment they are given a deadline that can't be met. This behaviour alone solves chronic failure to deliver.

## Use the Six Sources of Influence to make change inevitable

To overwhelm your profound and resistant problem, you need to use all six sources of influence that motivate and enable people to behave in new, healthy ways.

### Source 1 - Make the Undesirable Desirable

Humans seek pleasure and avoid pain. So, when tasks are repetitive, painful, or boring, find a way to make them more desirable by either changing the task itself or helping people view it in a new way. Individuals who take pleasure in their work tie it to core values and human consequences. For example, help people see how a job, although not particularly interesting, is intimately tied to customer satisfaction or patient safety.

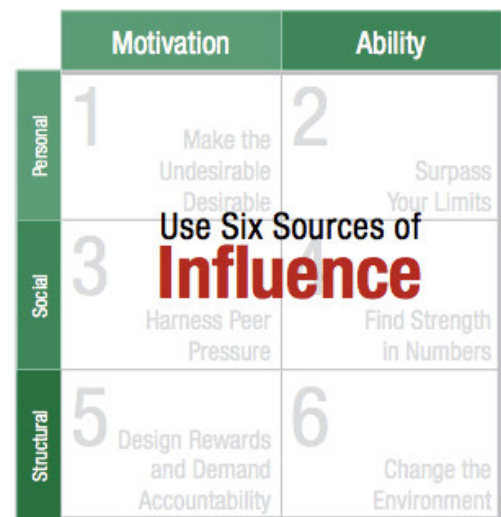
### Source 2 - Surpass Your Limits

When individuals fail to comply with a procedure or aren't doing what we ask them to, we assume it was because they didn't want to do the task. In truth, many problems stem from a lack of ability. Often, people simply don't know how to do what's required.

Research shows that most forms of expertise or talents that we thought were genetically determined are actually a function of careful practice. The best performers aren't smarter or faster, they are however better trained. Before you assume it is peoples' motivation, check for ability problems, and where required, teach them new skills using the latest principles of deliberate practice.

### Source 3 - Harness Peer Pressure

Start every intervention by first identifying opinion leaders. Ask others who they listen to – not just formal opinion leaders, but anyone across the organisation. Then involve these opinion leaders in the change process. Have these opinion leaders go through training, sit on project teams, support communications efforts. Let the opinion leaders lead the way, and you can use peer pressure and the social support network to support change, not stifle it.



#### **Source 4 - Find Strength in Numbers**

Do others help you do what you need to do, or do they prevent you from doing the vital behaviour. When you want to change, find those people who can provide you with the information, help or resources to do the vital behaviour. Reward people who pitch in when others need help, and make the most of this social capital and collaboration.

#### **Source 5 - Design Rewards and Demand Accountability**

As you identify new, healthier behaviours, build them into the formal reward system. Don't reward activity, reward vital behaviours. Teach individuals what they're expected to do, measure if they do it, and then reward success. Equally important to rewarding people is holding others accountable who fail to embrace the change. People will judge what you value as leaders by what you measure and reward – and behave accordingly.

#### **Source 6 - Change the Environment**

Finally, don't forget the power of the environment. Space determines who collaborates. The closer people are to one another, the more likely they'll collaborate. Data determines what people get excited about. If you want people to get excited about the customer, provide them with accurate and detailed customer data. In short, before you work on changing people, first look at changing the space, data stream, work flow, systems, machinery, or other *things* that, once changed, will stay changed forever.

Our typical approach to influencing others is to use just one or two of these six sources of influence – we train people (Source 2) and we reward people (Source 5) – and then we are surprised when this doesn't work. The best influencers have found that if you can marshal a comprehensive set of strategies covering all six sources of influence, you can improve the chances of success ten fold.

### **But can you really change anything...?**

When answering this question, consider the following thought. When did we become so cynical and start believing that only bad behaviours were inevitable? When did it become the norm to believe that we are powerless to change bad and negative behaviours? If bad behaviour is happening today, and causing bad results, it is because we have unwittingly assembled all six sources of influence to lead to results like obesity, failed organisational change efforts, global warming, or project failure. We have unintentionally aligned all six sources of influence to cause these bad behaviours to exist. And yet, if those six sources change, then we will change. They are the reason we do what we do.

In the face of profound, persistent and resistant problems, Influencers use experience to change people's minds about current bad behaviours; they identify a handful of vital behaviours that when changed, will solve the problem; and they use six sources of influence to profoundly influence people to enact the vital behaviours every time, all the time—making change virtually inevitable. With this approach, the most persistent and pervasive problems give way to solutions and take people and performance to the next desired level. Influencer really is the power to change ANYTHING.

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