



Dimensions of Influence

The Right Influence Skills Program?

Four dimensions of “influence skills” exist, so clients can now differentiate between these levels to optimize target populations’ expertise. Each dimension is “necessary but not sufficient,” so each requires a different learning solution.

1) Substantive Influence- The influence idea itself must be compelling, well-documented, accurate, sound in business rationale, and clearly conveyed. This entails task level training, but is also addressed by “influence message” formats or templates (e.g., “Hook-Point-Value” or “Idea-Action-Value,” etc.).

2) Core Interpersonal Influence- Many influence courses teach fundamental communication skills, such as Listening and Speaking skills to gain Agreements (Ridge Training), or Advocacy and Inquiry skills with “push” and “pull” tactics (Forum, Barnes and Conti, Situational Management Institute, etc.). Whether discrimination learning oriented (drilling discrete terms and skills), focused on platform presentation skills, or achieving broad interaction skills, this level targets the interpersonal domain as the influence building block.

3) Style-Based Influence- A higher level of influence astuteness entails style-based influence. Most often, this involves communications-oriented style models (e.g. Ridge Training, Wilson Learning, Tracom Corporation, Persona Global, etc.). Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI) and the Whole Brain model (the Hermann companies) address how we perceive, decide, learn, or think. Other style-based models include Enneagrams, Personalisis, DISC, and Psychological Associates. All entail “flexing” to achieve harmonious and productive interaction, appeal to style-based preferences, and reduce style-based tensions that might interfere with an idea’s acceptance, regardless of it’s substantive validity or interpersonal effectiveness in communicating the idea.

4) Strategic Influence- Until recently, very little structured training has existed on the strategic dimension related to four (4) “P”s increasingly impacting one’s degree of influence, regardless of how effective one is in the previous three levels of influence (Substantive, Interpersonal, and Style-Based):

* *Politics*- Navigating within the political arena is essential for knowing the unwritten rules, the real way decisions are reached, and handling sabotage/deception.

* *Power*- Knowing who officially holds formal or informal power, knowing how to speak truth to power, respecting ego and turf, lobbying ideas to stakeholders, and challenging ideas are vital in today’s complex, turbulent, and volatile organizations.

* *Perception*- The role of perceptions in how decisions are made is critical for optimal influence, so savvy, agile leaders know how to know their own and their team’s corporate perception and reputation— fair or unfair, accurate or not— and how to consciously craft a plan to alter negative perceptions. A cornerstone of effective ethical politics is “impression management.”

* *Promotion*- Astute leaders never over-promote their contributions or take undue credit for ideas and outcomes, but they also avoid becoming the “best-kept secret” in their companies. “Balanced, High-Integrity Self-Promotion” and promoting one’s team is a hallmark of the politically savvy, strategically influential leader.

Hopefully, this analysis and break-down of INFLUENCE as a waste-basket, general competency will assist consultants and their corporate performance improvement clients to better explore the optimal learning solutions for their target populations, leadership competency models, business problems and performance gaps. One can count on one hand the number of proven, research-grounded, structured leadership development programs addressing the *Strategic Influence* dimension.

Organizational Savvy, with its impressive client list, Wall Street Journal best seller text (*Survival of the Savvy*, 2004, Free Press), and *Organizational Savvy Online Assessment* (360 Multi-Rater or Self-Assessment formats) has made a significant impact on many organizations seeking to build leadership bench strength, develop influence prowess, increase the practice of ethical politics, cultivate high-integrity corporate cultures, and curb overly-political or unethical players and disastrous scandals.

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