

Effective Communication

# Exercising Influence

‘Exercising influence’ – the most popular program in its field all over the world – was developed by Barnes & Conti, USA. It attracts more than ten thousand participants a year. The program was launched by ICG Hungary in 2009.

Human communication generally has three fundamental aims: to learn or to inform, to relate to others and to influence others. Communication may start with one aim in mind and later may shift to another one.

Influence is more than good communication. Communication moves information. When we influence other people we attempt to move ideas into action without being forceful or commanding.

**‘Power lasts ten years, influence not more than a hundred.’**

Korean proverb

Without communication there is no influence but we can communicate without exerting influence. The purpose of influence behavior is to encourage others to take action. Whereas power is a set of available resources, influence is a set of skills and actions that sets power into motion. People accept being influenced by others if they are respected and offered a choice.

**Our definition of influence: encouraging people to take action without using direct power.**

Influence must not be mistaken for competition. It is a two-way process involving mutual relationship, which develops between parties. Every time we exercise influence on somebody

we shape the next encounter, making it easier or more difficult.

## Approach to exercising influence

If we want to exercise influence effectively we have to be trustworthy, thus our approach or attitude has to be in line with our behavior. It does not matter how skillful or experienced we are, if we have hidden motives others regard our behavior manipulative.

Therefore the right approach to effective influence is based upon the following assumptions: ‘The other is capable of taking action that will support to achieve my goals.’ ‘The other person deserves my respect.’ ‘I am willing to be influenced by the other.’

## Building relationship and getting results

Effective influence does not happen accidentally. An effective influencer is aware of the complexity of every influence situation and knows, that careful planning and strategic thinking should precede such a situation. The framework of an influence situation includes (see figure):

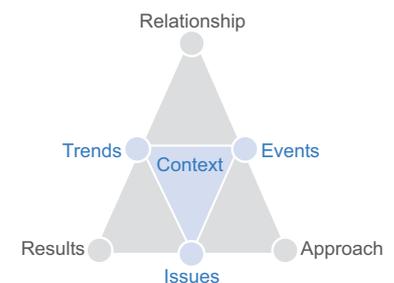
**Results:** long term objectives, unambiguous goals, issues to be ad-

dressed, and what the influencer aims to achieve.

**Relationship:** importance and history of the working relationship, current situation and expected future.

**Context:** individual or organizational issues, preferences, attitudes; priorities and impact of national, regional, professional and organizational culture. The context includes trends, events and issues of the external environment.

**Approach:** Regarding a particular situation results, relationships and context have to be investigated, then tactics have to be defined and only then can you choose the appropriate behavior.



Finally, in order to be able to influence successfully two factors, relationship building and getting results have to be in line with each other. A successful influencer has to see both factors as essential. If we favor any of them over the other we might get results in the short run, but it will leave us in a weaker position with the other person in the long run. If we put increased emphasis on the relationship hoping that results would come along, the relationship will suffer. If we prefer results over relationship, the results will soon evaporate.



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'Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone.' (Reinhold Niebuhr)

## Tactics and behaviors

Influencing is a complex process and requires a complex set of behavior. In our program we extensively use a model that strengthens our knowledge on influence and could be a starting point to conscious self-development. The model is based upon a wealth of research, study and observation, as well as on many years of teaching experience. This model has helped managers of all levels, employees in key positions and teams to acquire and improve their organizational skills which were essential to influence effectively.

Regarding the nature of direct influence, it can be either *expressive* or *receptive* (sending or receiving). Expressive behavior conveys essential and direct messages to others. The aim of the receptive behavior is to get information and ideas from others, to encourage them to take action, to cooperate and/or to get involved. Both types of behaviors are needed in almost all influence opportunities. When we want to be efficient influencers we have to apply appropriate tactics and behaviors. For that purpose we need to give careful consideration to the goal we want to achieve, the nature of the relationship and the context surrounding the influence opportunity.

It may occur that we have to suspend influence temporarily, or that we need a break or a turn to a different tactic. If, for example, we feel that there is no achievement, we may step out of the situation but we have to tell our partner that we are coming back later. Beyond leaving the situation we may

apply other influence tools, such as modeling, demonstrating, story telling, recommending books or articles, or inviting a third party into the process.

## Two-day training program

At the beginning of the program the participants get to know what attitude is required in an influence opportunity, what model is applied and what aspects have to be considered beforehand. After that, similarly to a fitness program, the participants will 'measure' which of their 'influence muscles' have to be strengthened. This is supported by a 360° online questionnaire which has to be filled in before the program starts. There are a lot of influence behavior practices in the program, eg. the so called 'isometric exercises' on the first day. The objective of the second day is to integrate newly acquired skills into the participants' behavior. They exercise how to apply what they've learnt to their own influence situations, from preparation to implementation. This is done in trios, where participants give feedback to each other using the 'stop-and-go' method and well defined criteria. Learning is really quick and intensive, and it is complemented by a professional 150-page manual and an 'influence wheel', an enthusiastically welcomed instrument.

László Szalay, from ICG Hungary, has been a trainer and consultant in organizational development and management training for 25 years and is a certified trainer of Exercising Influence.

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Change-Management für einen guten Zweck.



## ICG unterstützt Mama Afrika

Viele Hotels an der Nordküste von Mombasa haben zugesperrt. Der Tourismus ist rückläufig und das wirtschaftliche Umfeld wird schwieriger. Die verminderte Kaufkraft der einheimischen Bevölkerung, die im hohen Maße vom Tourismus lebt, wirkt sich auch auf die Mama Afrika-Projekte aus. Es braucht derzeit vermehrte Anstrengungen und Kreativität, um die Geschäfte auf einem ertragreichen Niveau zu halten. So betreibt Patrick mittlerweile drei Geschäfte (Motorrad-Taxi, Möbeltischlerei und Internet-Café), um den Rückgang zu kompensieren.

Emmily und Mbetsa haben ihren Dorfladen und ihre Imbissstube um drei Gästezimmer und eine Hühnerzucht erweitert. Außerdem haben sie begonnen, auf ihrem Maisfeld einen Brunnen zu graben. Fünf Meter tief ist derzeit das Loch. Weitere 20 Meter müssen noch mit der Hand gegraben werden. Beide waren übrigens im November in Graz. Eingeladen vom Grazer Businessforum, haben sie dort in einem Interview über ihre Erfahrungen als afrikanische Unternehmer berichtet.

Mehr unter: [www.mamaafrika.at](http://www.mamaafrika.at)



Mbetsa und Emmily blicken optimistisch in die Zukunft.