



Change processes that work for people



Change Management Templates Applying The Practitioners' Masterclass

Exercising Influence Without Authority

Exercising Influence Without Authority

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Exercising Influence Without Authority

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There are many situations where we are not in charge, we do not have formal authority and yet we need to resolve things and get things done.

In change management there are often situations - especially political situations - where as change leaders and change managers we cannot force people to do things and we do not have formal authority to influence outcomes and often there is resistance and sometimes conflict.

This where the power of informal networks matters, in change management this really is one of the most powerful conflict resolution tips - the power of influence without authority - the influence that is gained by the practise of "the law of reciprocity".

Here is a 6-step model:

(1) Assume everyone is a potential ally

- ❑ This is a more constructive mind-set than assuming an adversarial approach. It is all too easy to stereotype people and project our own experiences and feelings on to the other guy. As somebody once said; before criticizing a man - and making assumptions about his motivations, walk a mile in his shoes.
- ❑ There will be occasions when you need something or support from a person who has no formal obligation to cooperate with you.
- ❑ A good place to start is to begin by reviewing what you know about that person to see if there are areas of overlapping interests that could form the basis of an alliance.

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- ❑ You always have something in common with the other person - you are both human beings. As Dale Carnegie advised in "How to win friends and influence people", become genuinely interested in other people - as people, encourage others to talk about themselves, be a good listener, always talk in terms of the other person's interests.

(2) Clarify what you want, when and why

- ❑ It is important to be very clear about what you want from a potential ally. Be very clear about your organisational goals and your personal goals - which may not be the same thing.
- ❑ You also need to be clear about your priorities and the order of your priorities, and timescales - what your short term and long-term goals. Is your focus task oriented and you are prepared to jeopardize or sacrifice a relationship or is your focus on preserving or improving a relationship?

(3) Understand the other person's situation

- ❑ It is extremely useful to understand - or attempt to understand - the organisational influences, pressures and requirements of a possible ally.
- ❑ Once you focus on this you can directly and indirectly ascertain a lot of information about the other person's situation. Find out what they care about.

(4) Identify the trading currencies

- ❑ You will probably have a reasonable idea of what a potential ally can do for you, but it is useful to assess what you bring to the table.
- ❑ We often have more resources than we may realise.
- ❑ This all about identifying "secondary currencies" - that is things that have a higher perceived value to the other person than they do to you. This could be relationships, knowledge, connections, information, influence or any one of many things. This is why understanding what matters to the other person is so important.

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- ❑ There is one secondary currency that we all have, and that is to be aware of and sensitive to the other person as a human being and to look for and implement ways of building a connection. We all have insecurities and needs for approval and recognition. Change leaders who exercise high levels of emotional intelligence and self-awareness will nearly always find ways of connecting with people.

(5) Building and utilising relationships

- ❑ The first aspect of this is the nature of your relationship with the other person. Is it good, bad or indifferent? If it is anything less than good, then clearly you are going to need to invest time and energy in building trust and credibility.
- ❑ The second aspect of developing and dealing with relationships is the preferred communication style of the other person. Do they like lots of analysis and facts and figures, or are they visual and appreciate graphics, power-points multi-media, or are they kinesthetic and prefer to engage themselves directly and physically in what you are seeking to communicate

(6) Knowing when the time is right to trade

- ❑ Once you have undertaken the analysis of the other person's situation and what is important to them, identified "trading currencies" and assessed and where necessary improved your relationship, then (and only then) are you in a position to "trade" with the other person - when the time is right.
 - ❑ The timing will be dictated by their attraction and need for what you have to offer balanced against your need for what they have to offer. Other factors affecting the timing and nature of the "trade" will be the organisation's culture and the unwritten rules about "how things get done around here" and bluntly how many risks you are prepared to take.
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