

Need Influence? Read Below!

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

How often have you heard someone say to you, "You need to be more influential?" When we hear that request, often we don't know how to address the issue. From a communication standpoint, three issues are critical to making a powerful impression on others. People need to:

- Understand your ideas
- Accept them as appropriate
- Trust you as being honest and credible

Understand your ideas

When you are presenting your initiative, people have to follow your logic. One point logically has to lead to another. Ideas have to be well supported. You have to provide the data and analytics to make people comfortable moving forward. Decision makers are risk adverse; they do not want to make a mistake. Although most of us provide the metrics, we may provide too many details. We may also bury our thoughts in long convoluted sentence structures, leaving executives confused and unable to provide a decision. If you present a simple, well documented solution, you increase the likelihood of having real impact.

Accept your points as appropriate

Leaders accept your points as appropriate if they fit into the identified initiatives for the year. They expect you to do your homework and know what those key ideas are. For example, if the company's thrust is to grow business in emerging markets and your idea shows how to do that, it is likely your idea will be considered. On the other hand, if your plan is to develop a marketing campaign around a product that is considering a faltering brand, you probably won't be successful, unless, for example, you can show a trend among the 35-45 year olds for loyalty to products that they loved in their youth. Speakers who show influence always connect the dots. They don't expect their listeners to do it.

Trust you

People need to trust a speaker as a "straight shooter." Some people are trusted because they have many years of experience and truly understand the business. Their reputations precede them. Others whose reputations are not well known are trusted because they "appear" confident. Their body and voice show that they believe in what they are saying. They stand erect, look people in the eye, gesture in a meaningful way and sound passionate. They easily answer tough questions and sound sure. The speaker who "hems and haws" and reads from notes or slides is not likely to get a positive reception.

While a lot of factors come into play when influencing others, from the perspective of communication, do not overlook the importance of presenting a simple, well supported argument, tying your ideas to the company's critical issues and delivering them with confidence and conviction. People will never give a nod of approval to someone who rambles, hasn't done his homework or looks or sounds tentative.

***Question:** Share what has helped you to be influential. We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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