

When You Can Only Influence

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Robert Cialdini, author of *Weapons of Influence* and *The Psychology of Persuasion*, is a leading expert in the area of influencing. In his books, he identifies critical principles that generate desirable change. We have grouped his key points under three headings. To be influenced, people must:

1. **Understand your argument**— What that means is you must be logical and insightful. Everything has to add up. Your points should be easy to follow, especially if the listener needs to make a change, such as discontinue a campaign or revise projections. The language you use must be clear. You cannot leave listeners wondering what you mean. For example, “The fire communicated to the next building.” (Does that make sense to you?) OR “The ideology is for an uptic baring further de-velopment of the economy.” (What does this mean?) Finally, if listeners are to understand your argument, you must be concise. Burying your points definitely works against you.
2. **Accept your argument**— People will accept your argument if they see it as consistent with the direction they are already following or the commitments previously made to them. Also, they are more willing to take a recommended action if they see evidence that others similar to them are following your suggestions. For example, if a cross functional team is already making plan adjustments, they will be more open to it. Finally, they will accept your argument if you provide proof from several sources, such as Margin Minder, Business Warehouse or A.C. Neilsen and have anchored it to their business drivers.
3. **Trust you**— People prefer to say yes to those that look confident and people they like. Thus, you need to work hard at developing rapport and building a relationship. You can't take an existing relationship for granted. Peo-

ple also trust those to whom they attribute relevant authority or expertise. Obviously, if you have ten years of experience as a business analyst or senior engineer, sales and marketing will see you as an expert. Lastly, people trust those who go out of their way to provide data not requested or to offer services above and beyond what is typically done.

Influencing others can seem daunting, but when you pay attention to these key principles, it is easier than you think.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.