

**Michael Nir**

# **INFLUENCE and LEAD**



**A PRACTICAL GUIDE**

Michael Nir

# **Influence and Lead**

## **Fundamentals for Personal and Professional Growth**

Michael Nir

## Influence and Lead

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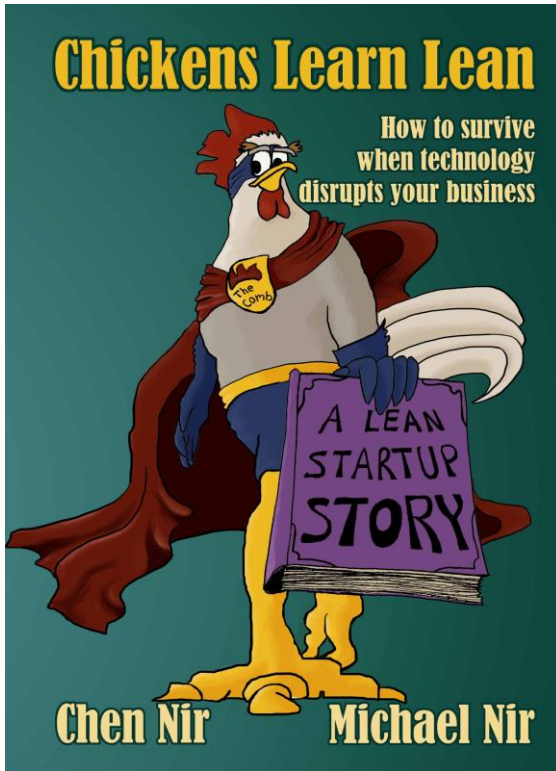
Influence and Lead

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## Preface

### Your value

You are the focus of attention in this book.

Over 15 years of helping clients realize their potential and exceed their expectations has taught me that the starting point is YOU.

**Your time is valuable — this book is concise;**

**Your understanding is crucial — this book uses practical examples;**

**Your results are important — this book contains valuable tools and techniques.**

The exciting portfolio of field-tested ideas in this book have been proven. These ideas will enable you to better manage and lead yourself and your team. **These ideas are also relevant outside business and provide the magic for growth in families, with friends, and in any social interaction.** For example, have you recently told your spouse that “someone should fix the sink,” or “someone should take out the garbage,” or maybe, “I will try helping you in a minute”? Maybe you told your children that their achievements are great but they forgot to visit their grandparents. Do you know **how these sentences break communication?**

The **direction of flow in this book is inward.** Starting from virtual and collocated team-related concepts of leadership and influence, moving gradually toward personal influence, motivation, and empowerment.

Are you looking for the personal aspects of leadership, motivation, and influence? You can skip to Chapters 4 through 7.

Breakthrough personal-growth exercises and personal development are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Specifically**, we start from theoretical team-leading foundations. In the first chapter, we learn that global virtual high performance teams revolve around four concepts: (1) relationships, (2) accountability, (3) networking, and (4) leadership. As you read the first chapter, reflect on how much these elements exist in the teams you lead.

The second chapter discusses the traits that the Team Leader needs to develop and display to build a high performance team.

The third chapter introduces the Tuchman Jensen team development five-stage model. The model includes specific practical insights that draw on many years of team-leading experience.

Reading the fourth chapter teaches about leadership without authority and informal power. Required steps of analyzing, communicating, and building a supporting coalition are illustrated.

The fifth chapter is all about NLP words of power for personal effectiveness in leading and motivating.

The sixth chapter is a bonanza of information that presents powerful exercises you can perform. I find that reading without exercising is like **eating a chocolate fudge sundae without any chocolate in it;**

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you have the general idea of the taste, but you miss the experience. In personal growth books, taking the time to carry out the exercises is essential. Make sure you invest the time required.

We conclude with a powerful tool that I have only recently added. I decided to give a sneak preview into the self-help book: *Personal Development: Marketing the Impossible Personal and Professional Five-Step Success Model*. Thus, in the seventh chapter, I included the first step from the five-step model; therein, we discuss how to liberate ourselves from the self-limiting stories of who we are.

This is another NLP concept that has deep roots in Gestalt therapy, the concepts of which appear within the context of this and other of my books as a guiding thread. Participants in the workshops I lead often ask me about Gestalt. While Gestalt psychology can be summed up by Kurt Koffka's phrase, "The whole is other than the sum of the parts," **Gestalt therapy** can't be explained at all. It is an experiential therapeutic approach delivered within wide guidelines, which can be widely implemented.

Actually, **no two Gestalt therapists treat the same way**. Gestalt therapy is so powerful and relevant to business that it is a shame not to understand its core guidelines.

It helps you in collaborating with colleagues, leading your reports, interacting with your manager, and making tough decisions. Because Gestalt can't be easily explained, I included short exercises to help you experience it.

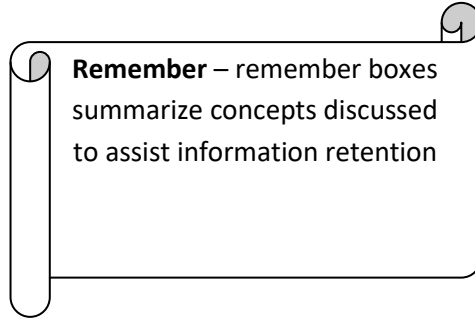
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I really hope you will enjoy this book.

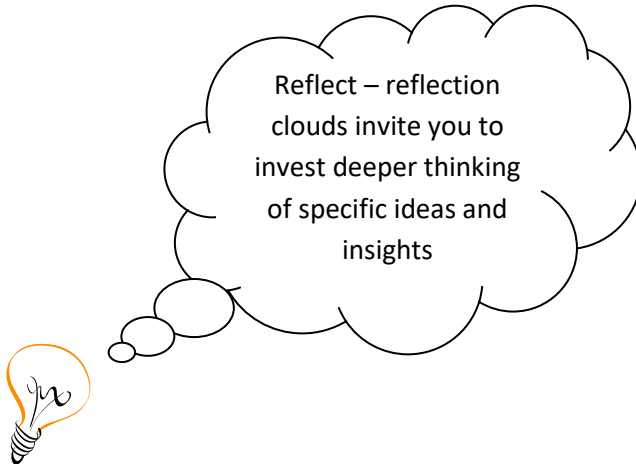
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**For your enhanced reader experience, we use the following interactive tools in the book:**



**Thinking Alerts** – thinking alerts are boxed and highlighted regions in the text which emphasize and highlight important take-aways and exercises to use in the ‘real’ world. I recommend reading these twice and taking notes for future reference



**I truly hope you like this book!**

Read on and enjoy!

## **A bit about the author**

**Michael Nir - President of Sapir Consulting LLC** - PMP, Scaled Agile Consultant - has been helping clients overcome business challenges and achieve their potential for over 16 years. He is passionate about Gestalt theory and practice, which complements his civil and industrial engineering background (M.Sc. and B.Sc.) and contributes to his understanding of individual and team dynamics in business. Michael authored bestsellers on [Influencing, Agile, Teams, and Leadership](#). His experience includes significant know-how in the telecoms, hi-tech, banking, R&D environments and petrochemical & infrastructure industries. He develops creative and innovative solutions in Agile project and product management, process improvement, leadership, and team building.

Michael's professional background is analytical and technical; however, he has a keen interest in human interactions and behaviors. He holds two engineering degrees from the prestigious Technion Institute of Technology: a Bachelor of civil engineering and Masters of Industrial engineering. He has balanced his technical side with the extensive study and practice of Gestalt Therapy and "Instrumental Enrichment," a philosophy of mediated learning. In his consulting and training engagements, Michael combines both the analytical and technical world with his focus on people, delivering unique and meaningful solutions, and addressing whole systems.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Virtual – High performance teams

## **Virtual, High Performance Teams**

Since ancient history, the challenges and advantages of leading and managing a team have been recognized. One can imagine that successful human endeavors based on collaborative efforts were in effect founded on well-performing teams.

That is not to say that management by coercion did not have its debut; however, teams based on mutual respect, empowerment, motivation, trust, and collaboration tended to outperform teams that were based on coercion, fear, and punishment.

The better performance of these teams was usually expressed in military and social victories, e.g., the Roman army, the U.S. Army in the war of independence, the British Army in World War II, the Greeks at the battle of Salamis, and the developed Italian city-states of the Renaissance era.

If global companies are increasingly pressed to advance their foundations as learning organizations, the role of the leader is effectively synchronized as a knowledge-sharing oversight. Responsible for relationships, accountability, and networking of a team, leaders are also representatives of company policies, processes, and procedures.

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The foregoing looks at the four main concepts in contemporary discussions on global virtual high performance teams: (1) relationships, (2) accountability, (3) networking, and (4) leadership—inborn and learned.

## **Relationships**

Global managers often ask about best practices for structuring virtual teams. Relationships are of keen interest to successful team managers as recruitment, motivation, and retention of the right people is the basis to sustainable growth as common purpose, shared values, and collaborative communication are certain to follow (AICPA, n.d.). Leaders exhibiting a commitment to lifelong learning and development of process-oriented teams as a significant asset are especially adept at recognizing latent talent that can be reinforced through training.

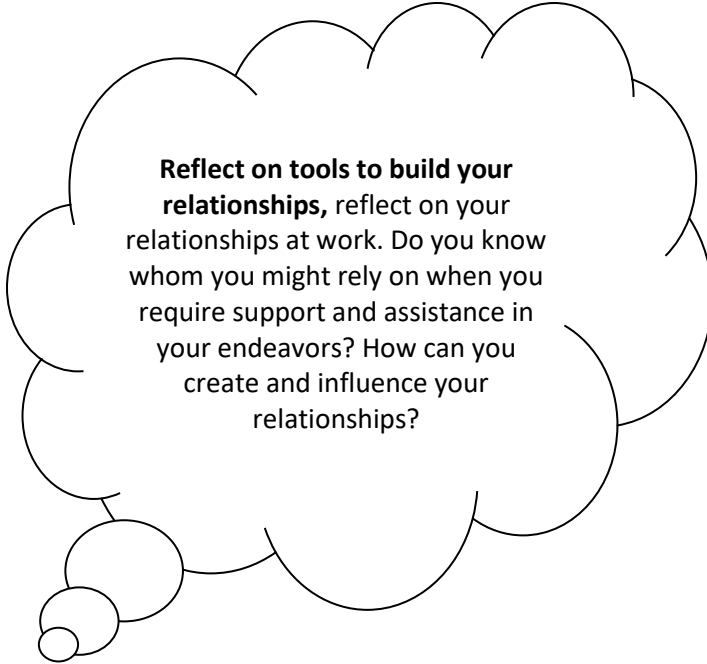
This challenges the traditional notion of managers focused solely on productivity, revenue, and profits. Through collaborative problem-solving approaches, human capital is turned into an individual sense of ownership. Ownership means that team members acknowledge responsibility for work and its results as a facilitator or strategist joined in collaboration. By setting up ownership of functions within a project or process, virtual global team leaders set the pace for a high performance work environment, rather than one characterized by mechanical obligation.

Companies and institutions with well-defined structures and governance rules can also create better relationships with employees and other team members involved in virtual projects by



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encouraging self-directed groups, open knowledge forums and self-reporting instruments in process assessment models.



In his remarkable book, *Psychology of Persuasion*, Dr. Cialdini presents six influence methods: reciprocity, commitment, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity.

**Reciprocity:** As humans, we generally aim to return favors, pay back debts, and treat others as they treat us.

According to the idea of reciprocity, this can lead us to feeling obliged to offer concessions or discounts to others if they have offered them to us. This is because we're uncomfortable with feeling indebted. For example, if a colleague helps you when you're busy with a project, you might feel obliged to support his/her ideas for improving team processes. You might decide to buy more from a supplier if they have offered you an aggressive discount. Or, you might give money to a charity fundraiser who has given you a flower in the street.

**Commitment** (and consistency): Cialdini says that we have a deep desire to be consistent. For this reason, once we've committed to something, we're then more inclined to go through with it. For instance, you'd probably be more likely to support a colleague's project proposal if you had shown interest when he first talked to you about his ideas.

**Social Proof:** This principle relies on people's sense of "safety in numbers." For example, we're more likely to work late if others on our team are doing the same; we're more likely to put a tip in a jar if it already contains money; and we're more likely to eat in a restaurant if it's busy. We assume that if other people are doing something, then it must be okay. We're particularly susceptible to this principle when we're feeling uncertain, and we're even

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more likely to be influenced if the people we see are similar to us. That's why commercials often use moms, not celebrities, to advertise household products.

**Liking:** According to Cialdini, we're more likely to be influenced by people we like. Likability comes in many forms: people similar or familiar to us, people who compliment us, or people we simply trust. Companies that use sales agents from within the community employ this principle with huge success. People are more likely to buy from people like themselves, from friends, and from people they know and respect.

**Authority:** We feel a sense of duty or obligation to people in positions of authority, which is why advertisers of pharmaceutical products employ doctors in their campaigns and why most of us do most things our manager requests. Job titles, uniforms, and even prestigious accessories—like cars or gadgets—can lend an air of authority and can persuade us to accept what these people say.

**Scarcity:** This principle says that things are more attractive when their availability is limited or when we stand to lose the opportunity to acquire them on favorable terms. For instance, we might buy something immediately if we're told it's the last one or that a special offer will soon expire.

**Thinking Alert: the two most effective and accepted in the business setting,** which are mostly viewed as non-manipulative, are commitment/consistency and reciprocity. **Commitment and consistency** tend to be tactical, used to secure completion of activities by asking a person to commit to a certain course of action. **Reciprocity is strategic in nurturing relationships.** It can be used to build rapport toward a long-lasting and trustful relationship.

As Cialdini explains, our civilization is built on the concept of reciprocity. Trade is based on the concept, and any exchange of presents in a social gathering is a form of it.

My most celebrated presentation focuses on “**Convincing the bear: Influence without authority,**” which emphasizes the importance of making meaningful reciprocal interactions with people. In the modern matrix organization, where hierarchies are blurred, maintaining a network of reciprocal relationships is crucial to getting the job done.

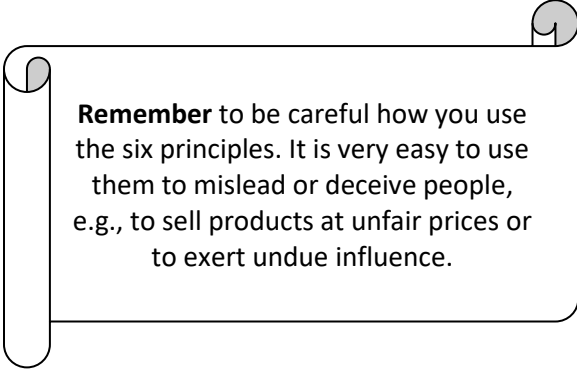
Naturally, this is applicable in political and social interactions and even in families. One should differentiate, though, between the types of accepted exchanges, which are the basis of the reciprocal interaction. It is mandatory to pay at the restaurant for a great meal; thus, we reciprocate with the food and service with hard currency, an accepted form of payment for the exchange. This will not work well for reciprocating a holiday dinner with your mother-

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in-law, who happens to be a great cook. Standing up and saying “Jenn, you’ve outdone yourself, this was awesome now let’s have some dessert” and throwing \$200 cash on the table would probably receive a poor response.

We know this social etiquette very well, which is why we bring flowers or a bottle of wine to a dinner. This is—as the Bangkok street peddlers say—“Same, same, but different.”

We spend days searching for the proper reciprocating presents that are just right in size, cost and appropriateness to the event. In the business setting, we usually reciprocate in favors: you do something for me, and I’ll do something for you. It is how modern business works. Politicians know this very well, and there is a thin line between bribing and reciprocating.



**Remember** to be careful how you use the six principles. It is very easy to use them to mislead or deceive people, e.g., to sell products at unfair prices or to exert undue influence.

When you're using influencing methods, make sure you do so honestly; be completely truthful and persuade people to do things that are good for them. If you persuade people to do things that are wrong for them, this is manipulative and unethical. It's clearly wrong to cheat or lie about these things; in fact, this can be fraudulent. A good reputation takes a long time to build, but you can lose it in a moment.

### **Accountability**

Team purpose and established ownership functions assist leaders in building a culture of accountability (AICPA, n.d.). Ethics and governance structure provide rule elements to high performance team foundations. This dialectic between individual ownership, team purpose, and organizational policy is in effect; the binding factors enable virtual team leaders to establish clear guidelines to make decisions throughout tenure as a principal in the process. From planning to execution of work processes, global virtual teams present unique challenges. Regularly scheduled team meeting protocol enhances the influence of rule-bound thought processes in team interactions.

Virtualization of work has led to new models of communication and actionable methods of deploying activity. Leaders facilitating team responsibilities must link accountability to motivation in order to be highly effective.

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Managing diversity is utilitarian in this sense because it means that leaders embrace and capitalize on the unique strengths and differences of individual team members for the “greater good” of the group. In order to attain optimum performance as a team, coherence in professional values and goals is sustained through team member camaraderie; acknowledgement and respect for one another; and compensation, promotion, and professional development opportunities.

To increase chances of performance success, use a RACI **tool** to manage accountabilities.

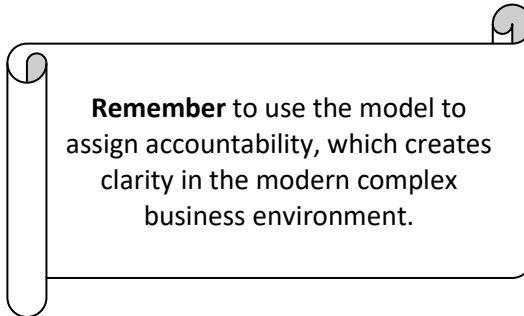
**Did you know?** The RACI model is a powerful tool utilized to define roles and responsibilities. In general, you match up roles and responsibilities with processes, activities, and tasks. RACI is an acronym for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed.

**Responsible:** The buck stops here. Whoever is responsible must make sure that the process operates as planned. The **R** owns the process, problem, or project.

**Accountable:** This is the person who is delegated the task of completing the activity. This person supports the person who owns the **R**.

**Consulted:** This person usually has in-depth knowledge of the process in question and must approve all major decisions.

Informed: The people in this group need to be informed of activity taken, but not necessarily consulted in decisions made.



## Networking

How organizations are “creating a climate for inter-organizational networking through people management” is addressed in Jolinka and Dankbaar’s (2010) assessment of innovation output in correspondence with competitiveness and profitability. According to their findings, the most effective team-building practices in creation of virtual networks of practice are: (1) recruitment and selection; (2) training and development; (3) rewards and recognition; (4) supervisory support; (5) rules regarding knowledge disclosure; (6) time pressure; and (7) collaborative programs and projects (Jolinka & Dankbaar 2010). Mutual participation seems to be the key factor in adoption of an efficient system for recruitment



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and retention of high producers. Nonetheless, there is imminent change on the horizon.

As Luftman and Kempaiah (2007) explain, the U.S. national demand for tech workers is so high that it is on the verge of exceeding the supply. Sourcing and retention of tech workers that can be easily be lured away by compensatory benefits and increased independence in international and outsourcing contracts is a continuous threat. U.S. mobile specialists, like other IT workers, are also moving offshore to Australia and Britain to benefit from higher wage outsourcing employment contracts.

At a time when most sectors are down in performance, virtual teams comprised of this type of human capital are at an all-time premium. Leaders are at a disadvantage, constrained by finance and technological updates.

Not surprisingly, careful attention to global virtual team management trends is an assumed priority within new market strategies. The stakes are just too high to ignore.

**Thinking Alert:** use dynamic interactive experiences to increase the networking within the team. These can be led activities and exercises with the virtual team. No more than a few minutes at a time: short exercises enhance interaction and build trust as the team follows through the exercise. I'd be happy to share with you some ideas for trust building exercises, just drop me an email.

## **Is Leadership inborn or learned? The case for situational leadership**

When I facilitate three-day leadership workshops, usually before lunch break of the first day this question is raised. It emerges from the table on the farther right corner of the room that has been quiet, listening attentively but refraining from questions. They participated during the morning icebreakers but then receded to the comfort of the corner. During my occasional strolls, I urge them to comment and question, and it is partially fruitful. And then—bang!

The question is asked. Almost blurted in a half-apologetic tone; the person is almost sorry for asking. He didn't intend to cut my line of reasoning and the progress of the workshop, but he just had to ask. We are discussing leadership concepts and the great man theory of leadership, and it seems proper to ask. This question can be phrased in many ways, but it usually looks like this: "Can leadership be learned at all? Aren't leaders natural, either you have it or you don't?"

The ramifications of the question are dire indeed. It is probably one of the toughest to tackle in leadership workshops. After all, if the answer is a resounding yes, leadership is a genetic trait, why are we spending the time on leadership training? Heck, if the answer is yes, why should we have human resource departments? What is the use of coaching and mentoring? Why are we reading all the

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leadership books? And why the heck am I sitting in a leadership training session?

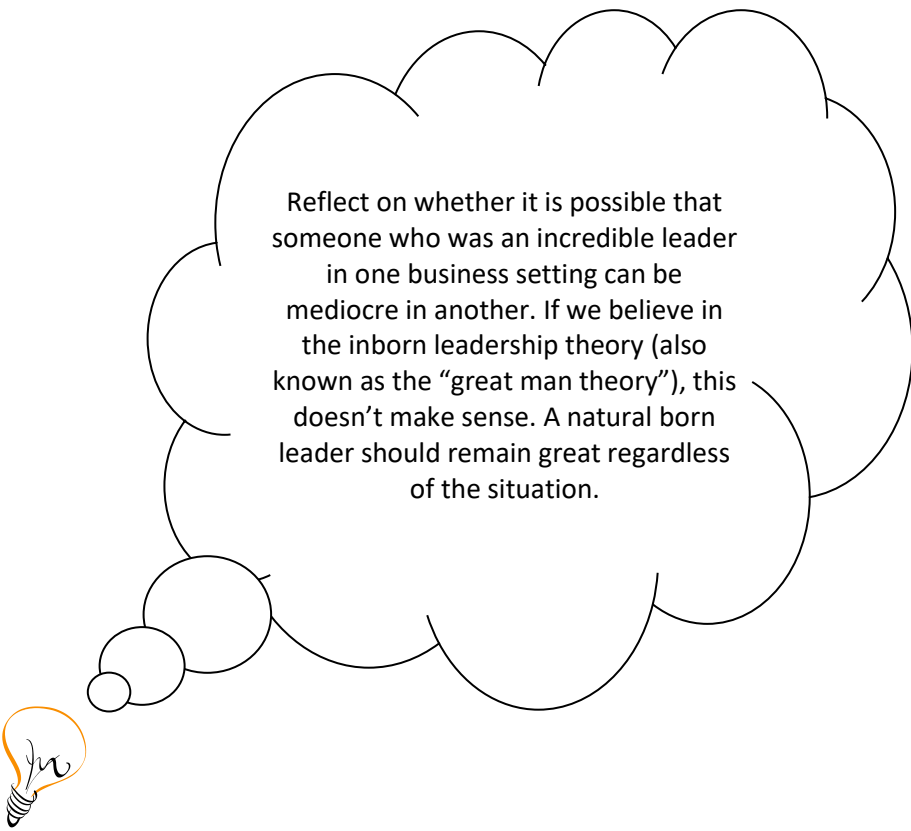
And it seems so right. The yes answer seems so correct. If we look around us, it appears to be the true answer. If someone is a leader, to the observer, his/her leadership seems natural and inborn.

Often, it is very comforting to perceive leadership as an inborn trait because it gives people an excuse to step down from leading in complex business environments. This way, we can let someone else, someone more suitable who has the correct DNA to lead, take over.

Yes seems to be the right answer until you stop and reflect. What do you think? Is leadership a capability learned or is it inborn?

If leadership were inborn, how would you explain the familiar situation that I am positive you have witnessed: great leaders who had been able to turn around a business unit are transferred to revamp another business unit? But, in the new environment, they are not so great. They aren't able to perform as they were able to before. Their reports resent them, their manager evaluates them poorly, and their colleagues shun them.

What happened?



Reflect on whether it is possible that someone who was an incredible leader in one business setting can be mediocre in another. If we believe in the inborn leadership theory (also known as the “great man theory”), this doesn’t make sense. A natural born leader should remain great regardless of the situation.

Now, you see, leadership cannot be all inborn; certain leadership elements are learnable, especially in the present ever-changing global environment.

Contemporary approaches in leadership have abandoned the concept that leadership is an inborn trait. Rather, the concept of situational leadership has emerged. Situational leadership articulates that effective leaders are the ones able to change their

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behavior according to the situation at hand. It identifies leadership styles relevant to specific situations.

According to research, the characteristics of situational leadership are **empathy, active listening**, and a **propensity to understand** complex human and team interactions.

The challenge in leadership is all about applying the proper situational behavior. We have to analyze the situation and shift from our **incumbent approach toward a situational approach**, to the style that the situation warrants and that will lead to the optimal outcome. By integrating and implementing ideas of situational leadership in our work place, we become better leaders. However, transforming the leadership style to a situation requires awareness and practice.

In Sweden, for example, participative-collaborative leadership styles rule, even when the situation necessitates other leadership styles. At times, when a forceful dictating style is essential, such as in a crisis scenario, business leaders who aren't trained in situational leadership fail to adapt. I often witness it when conducting an exercise in which a team has to reach an agreement that provides individual and team scoring in a limited time. The contemporary collaborative leadership style that is so common nowadays fails to deliver an acceptable solution, which also provides the team with a maximum score.

Without altering the leadership pattern, the participants are stuck in their limiting styles. Understanding that different situations require different styles is essential in effective leadership, and **yes** it can be learned.

The prominent situational leadership model is the Heresy-Blanchard model. It defines four team maturity situations. Each situation has a corresponding leadership style that is best suited to lead the team. The style is characterized in terms of the amount of Task Behavior and Relationship Behavior that the leader provides to the team.

**S1: Telling** is characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of the individual or group and provides the what, how, why, when, and where to do the task;

**S2: Selling** is where the leader is still providing the direction, but he or she is now using two-way communication and providing the socio-emotional support that will allow the individual or group to be influenced to buy into the process;

**S3: Participating** is about shared decision-making; the leader is providing less task behavior while maintaining high relationship behavior;

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**S4: Delegating** is when the leader is still involved in decisions, but the process and responsibility have been passed to the individual or group. The leader stays involved to monitor progress.

In the workshops I facilitate, I assist leaders in assessing their propensity toward a certain style. Most of us have a preferred style with which we are comfortable. This style works best in certain situations, but fails to deliver results in others. After all, **no one style is considered optimal for all leaders to use all the time.** Effective leaders need to be flexible and must adapt themselves according to the situation.

**Thinking Alert:** You can easily assess your style by asking people around you and receiving their feedback. In workshops, this is done through intense team interaction and exercises. Four leadership styles are mapped to four situations. In the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory, the situations are actually defined as maturity levels, M1 through M4.

- **M1:** the team lacks the specific skills required for the job at hand. They are unable and unwilling to do or to take responsibility for the job or task. (According to Blanchard, “The honeymoon is over.”)
- **M2:** the team is unable to take on responsibility for the task being done; however, they are willing to work at the task. They are novice but enthusiastic.

- **M3:** the team is experienced and able to do the task but lacks the confidence or the willingness to take on the responsibility.
- **M4:** the team is experienced at the task and comfortable with their ability to perform it well. They are able and willing not only to do the task but also to take responsibility for the task.

Maturity Levels are also task-specific. A person might be generally skilled, confident, and motivated in their job, but would still have a maturity level M1 when asked to perform a task requiring skills he or she doesn't possess.

In leadership training, the face-to-face interaction challenges the participants and creates a realistic yet safe environment to experiment. Initially the leaders assess their preference and receive feedback from others. Then, an interactive scenario for interaction between leaders and teams is role-played. The leaders initially know which maturity is within the team and need to adapt their style to the team.

Performance is assessed and areas of improvement are highlighted. A video might be used to capture the leadership behaviors and accentuate on them. This is the first practice step.

The blind experiment exercise follows. In this high difficulty level, leaders are required to handle a team without knowing the team's



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maturity. The leaders must assess during the interaction and adapt to the team members' behaviors. This exercise is fun and extremely beneficial.



### **Remember to Influence and lead, one must**

1. Manage the relationships and foster trust; remember the power of reciprocation in building long-lasting relationships;
2. Make sure you manage accountability, use a tool such as the RACI matrix for managing accountability;
3. Increase networking by short exercises; and
4. Know your leadership style and increase your leadership range.

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# CHAPTER TWO

## Building a High Performance Team

## **Building a High Performance Team**

From developing a vision to staying focused on short- and long-term goals, from talking about the tough stuff to having fun whenever possible, these traits help project leaders build high-performance teams. Which ones do you already do well, and which ones might you work on?

### **Develop a Vision**

More than anything, team leaders of high performance teams are visionary leaders. They don't start by looking at where their team is; they start by looking at where they want their team to be. Based on that, they work their way backward to figure out how to get there.

A vision is a picture of where you want to get to, not the path to get there. It's what the team will look like when it's reached its goal. But just having a vision isn't enough; the team leader must become infectious with the vision, getting the team to buy into it and make it their own. The vision may start with the leader, but it doesn't end there. That vision becomes the team's vision, not just the leader's vision.

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Slogans are a great method to communicate visions—something short that encapsulates the vision and gives the team something to buy into. One of the best was created by Herb Kelleher, former CEO of Southwest Airlines. His vision, and the slogan that went with it, became the yardstick by which every decision in his corporation was made. Everyone from the boardroom to the back room understood that slogan and bought into the vision that it contained.

Kelleher's slogan was, "We are THE low-fare airline." You don't even have to be in the airline business to understand that; all you have to do is read it. New employees could have as much understanding of corporate culture and philosophy as the most experienced manager just by understanding that simple phrase. It captured the vision that Kelleher had for Southwest Airlines, making it something that everyone could buy into.

While not every vision is shared so eloquently, every leader should strive to do so. The clearer and more simply the vision is stated, the easier it is for team members to buy into it.

### **Be Genuine**

High performance team leaders don't live in an ivory tower separated from their loyal subjects. They are part of the team and know when to open up and lower their guard with their team members. They aren't trying to project an image that they're

perfect; they are willing to show their own vulnerabilities, especially if it can help another team member. This actually helps them gain the respect of their team, much more so than trying to appear flawless.

Exhibiting vulnerabilities requires self-confidence and being able to laugh at one's own mistakes. People who have to appear perfect often feel that way because they lack self-confidence. Yet, being willing to open up and be vulnerable can do more to make a team come together than standing aloof will.

### **Talk about the Hard Things**

Every team has difficulties; the question isn't whether they'll crop up, but how to deal with them when they do. Team leaders of high-performance teams recognize those difficulties and the problems behind them. They are willing to talk about the tough stuff, even though it's uncomfortable to do so. Their goal is always to work through the problem, gaining victory for the team.

Some leaders try to avoid conflict. All this does is make the problem fester, like an infection. That infection will eventually cause the team to become "sick" and dysfunctional. While nobody enjoys the conflict, going through it is essential.

One of the difficult things that leaders have to do is to confront non-performing team members. There are many reasons why a team member might not be performing up to expectations, and it's

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the leader's responsibility to find out the cause and do whatever is necessary to fix it. Sometimes, that means finding another team where the team member might fit in better.

That non-performing team member can sabotage the efforts of the entire team if not addressed. They may be the type of person who causes division, or who craves the limelight, or even one who rejects any leadership. Regardless of their problem, if it's not dealt with, it's like a plague eating away at the team.

### **Know how to Listen**

Communication is a two-way street. Many leaders speak first and then, if there's time, they'll listen. Not so for team leaders of high performance teams. They know how to listen and generally listen to their team members before speaking. Remember, leadership in a high performance team is a collaborative effort. These leaders don't see themselves as "the boss" whom everyone is there to serve. They see themselves as facilitators, allowing their team to take its own direction.

An important part of this is listening. Everyone wants the opportunity to be heard, even the most junior member of the team. When these team leaders listen, they make the team members feel more important, as if their contributions are critical to the team.

Sometimes, it's not enough just to listen; the team leader has to get others to listen as well. A positive environment can't happen if team members are negative toward one another. It's the team leader's place to put an end to this as soon as it starts. Maybe the idea that a junior team member is putting forth won't work and won't be acted on, but they should be encouraged to express it nevertheless.

### **Ask Good Questions**

Questions are a valuable tool. The right sort of questions can direct somebody to look in directions they never intended, to find the answers they so desperately need. Besides using questions to direct people, team leaders use questions to keep themselves abreast of what is happening in their team.

It has been said that because we have been given two ears and only one mouth, we should listen twice as much as we talk. Listening is an art form, and **asking questions is a tool to active listening**. Yet, asking a question without listening to the answer is one of the fastest ways of showing a team that you don't care about them. Good questions have to be followed by attentive listening.

### **Be Dependable**

Good leaders have to be dependable. If the team is going to learn to depend on one another, it has to start with learning that it can



## Influence and Lead

depend on the leader. That means that the leader must carry through on whatever he or she says. If it proves impossible to complete what has been said, the leader must explain why or he or she will lose credibility in the eyes of the team.

People will do much more for a leader that they trust. In the military, one of the highest compliments an officer can receive, especially from an experienced sergeant, is “I’d be willing to follow you into battle.” Whether we see it or not, our team’s activities are a form of battle. We need our team members willing to follow us into that battle and win. That means that they have to trust us, which can only happen when we prove ourselves dependable.

Being dependable also means speaking clearly to team members. Most people can see right through a lot of the lies and misinformation that management passes out. While they may not be able to see what the truth is, they’ll know the false when they see it. Being honest with the team is another form of dependability. It causes them to learn that they can trust what you say and that you’ll stand behind it.

### **Know How to Have a Good Time**

Everyone likes to have a good time. That’s a necessary part of team building. Leading a high performance team means leading them in having a good time together as well. However, they never do so at the expense of another person, especially another team member.


Sarcasm and other cutting comments have no place in team fun because they have the potential to hurt somebody.

Having fun doesn't have to come at the expense of the team's goals. Many work activities can be made fun, and much of that has to do with how we approach those activities. If we approach them as something that we're going to do together as a team, we set the tone for making them fun.

### **Be Goal Oriented**

Goals are the compass that directs the team. Regardless of what team activities are being undertaken, a high performance team leader keeps them goal oriented. It may be the team's ultimate goal or intermediate goals that will help the team reach that ultimate goal; it's still a goal and the team leader will keep it in focus. They'll also ensure that their team keeps it in focus.

This doesn't mean that the leader has tunnel vision. Team-building activities may seem to some like a waste of time, but those team-building activities are necessary to forge the team into a high performance team. Therefore, including them in the team's work schedule is helping the team reach its goals



Reflect on your leadership behaviors. What can you improve?



### **Remember – to Influence and lead:**

- Develop a vision
- Be genuine
- Talk about the hard things
- Know how to listen
- Ask good questions
- Be dependable
- Know how to have a good time

Michael Nir

# CHAPTER THREE

## **The Power of the Tuchman Jensen analysis**

## The Power of the Tuckman Jensen Analysis

Tuckman and Jensen describe four principal stages of team development and interaction as occurring in a fairly linear process: forming, storming, norming, and performing; in 1977, a fifth stage was added: adjourning. The model claimed that teams evolve and mature from stage to stage.

The specific stage has typical team behaviors and interactions. Later work by experienced experts in teamwork claimed that the stages tend to overlap one another.

### The Forming Stage

*The illustrative behavior of this stage is the initial search for commonalities among team members and a false sense of harmony.*

The first stage in the Tuckman and Jensen Model is **forming**. This initial stage is a time during which the team members become acquainted with one another. They need to agree on purpose and goals and begin setting “ground rules” for the task and for the team’s interactions and accepted behaviors. You might recall your own experience when you met your future colleagues for the first time.

**Remember!** The forming stage of team development is characterized by a high degree of ambiguity and insecurity as members get to know each other, determine the group's roles and goals, and decide who will be the team leader if one has not been appointed.

At this point, mutual trust might be relatively low, team members tend to behave quite independently, and some team members might be holding back to see who takes charge and how. When there isn't an assigned project manager or team leader, a leader will eventually emerge and fill the group's need for leadership and direction.

### ***Leading the Forming Stage***

Leaders usually need to be directive and supportive during the forming stage, they can help facilitate this initial stage by providing a time and place (e.g., a discussion workspace) for team members to engage in introductory social interactions, such as icebreaker activities. Icebreakers help participants become acquainted with one another and begin building trust within their small group. The following are icebreaker ideas for powerful teams to enable team building in the forming stage.

### **Exercise Ice Breaker #1: "Stranded"**

This is a good icebreaker for collocated teams: Suppose you are stranded on a remote island. Collectively decide what items you

would have brought with you, had you known that you were going to be stranded for an extended period. Note: Each team is only allowed one item per person. So, the number of items will vary depending on the total number of participants per team. This exercise helps teams to learn about one another's values and it promotes teamwork and fosters collaborative problem solving.

### **Exercise Ice Breaker #2: Virtual Team Interviews**

This exercise initiates the forming process as team members learn about one another. Once teams are divided, the members should interview each other by asking questions about a designated topic. Example starter topics, include

- Tell me about your past or present job(s).
- Share a hobby.
- Find a mutual hobby.
- If you could choose any job in the world, what would it be, and why?
- What are your career goals?
- Where is your favorite vacation destination and why?

### **Exercise Ice Breaker #3: Imagine that**

This is a good icebreaker for virtual teams, and there are a few variations on how it can be structured.




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- Ask team members to share a favorite travel photo but not name the place. Team members ask questions and try to figure out where the photo was taken.
- Ask team members to share their favorite photo and teammates engage in dialogue about the picture.
- Ask team members to post a current photo of themselves and engage in dialogue with one another about the photo.

### **Exercise Ice Breaker #4: Finish the Sentence**

Have each person complete one of these sentences (or come-up with other sentences):

- The best job I ever had was...
- I always like to...
- The riskiest thing I ever did was...
- I wish I were on vacation in...
- Please help me when I...



Reflect on which of these icebreakers you will use next week in your team meeting to increase team performance.



## The Storming Stage

*The illustrative behavior of this stage is the breaking away of the false harmony into individual power displays, leading to rifts among team members.*

The second stage of team development is the **storming** stage. Although dissatisfaction might arise at any time during the team's life, the storming stage is characterized by the emergence of individual personalities and/or conflicts that disrupt the team. **This tension between unity and individualism is the essence of what a team is about; the precise balance between these two elements is the basis of a powerful team.** This can be construed as how much a person gives of themselves to become part of the team and how much a person retains of themselves as a functioning individual.

Different ideas compete for consideration as team members confront each other's ideas and perspectives. Individuals might question their roles, team procedures, and how they fit into the team structure.

A power struggle (big or small) might begin. The team might disagree on who will be performing what role or task and who will be leading the way. Members might begin to argue, resulting in **storming** turbulence or negative emotions to the degree that some members might become uncomfortable interacting with one

another. Subgroups might form, and "sidebar" conversations might occur between or among a few members, resulting in some type of unwanted disorder.

Time may be a factor in the storming stage because time is of the essence yet may often be constrained. Consequently, dissatisfaction or conflict can arise because the team does not have sufficient time to orient itself properly to role or requirements or enough time to understand the knowledge and skills that need to be used to get the job done.

Many teams stall in this stage because power struggles or politics are occurring, which might cause turmoil (e.g., procrastination, lack of communication, etc.) or might result in covert or overt rebellion. This stage might be short or repetitive, depending on the goal, clarity, commitment, and maturity of the members. As a result, morale and productivity can be challenged.

**Morale** is concerned with the team's commitment, motivation, and sense of well-being or support, which typically depends on enthusiasm, optimism, cooperation, and shared leadership toward the task.

**Productivity** is the team's ability to work together to achieve results. Productivity depends on knowledge, skills, goal setting, and effective team decision making.

### **Storming and conflict – a challenge?**

While the conflict that occurs during the storming stage might seem undesirable to many, most observers of the team process tend to agree that some forms of conflict are beneficial—as long as the conflict is refocused onto task and purpose rather than focused on personality. Too little conflict can lead members to suppress their differences without resolving them, only to find that the differences resurface later, throwing the team back into the storming stage. Conversely, too much conflict can destroy social relationships, resulting in team members unable to work together.

The storming stage, therefore, is necessary to the growth of the team, even though it might be unpleasant and even painful for members who dislike conflict. Tolerance of each other and of differences must be emphasized if the team is to succeed.

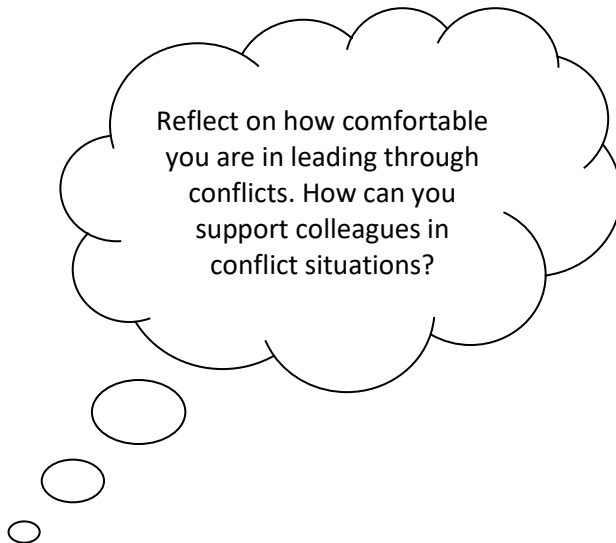
An effective, well-facilitated storming process fosters the discussion of key differences among members and results in more depth and breadth of understanding, better planning, and the building of needed compromise and consensus.

### **Leading the Storming Stage**

I am sure you have been in teams that never progressed from the storming stage onward; these tend to be in an eternal state of storming and conflict. The trust, morale, and productivity of these teams are low. The team leader hasn't stepped up to his/her role

and provided the needed direction and support to the team members, helping them balance between the team as a harmonic unity and the individual needs of each member.

When the team cannot facilitate itself adequately (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) and to prevent the storming stage from becoming **destructive** to the team, the leader might need to be directive, guiding decision making and norms of behavior.



## The Norming Stage

The illustrative behavior of this stage is the consensus between team members and the strict admonition of occasional rule breaking. The balance is once more shifting to the “us” focus; individual needs are suppressed and a fear of conflict based on individualities is in the background—a powerful fear from reverting to conflict laden interactions. The team is delivering the requested results, but not necessarily the desired ones, i.e., being efficient rather than effective.

During the *norming* stage of team development, conflicts have typically been resolved, relationships emerge, and a sense of belonging begins to develop among the team members as they unite, which often results in harmony. The main concern for individuals is "What do the others expect of me?" while the team concern is "Can we agree on roles and work as a team?"

Team norms, or *informal* rules the team follows, are also adopted during the norming stage. *Norms* provide social cues and regulate behavior for individuals and the team as a whole.

For instance, if someone is late in responding to email correspondence, one of the team members might send out a message to the entire team encouraging everyone to check their messages frequently and respond within 24 hours—an act that can

easily resolve the problem by modifying the offending member's behavior, but does so without blaming.

**Thinking Alert:** It's during this third stage of **norming** that a **WE** rather than a **ME** mentality emerges as team members become *cohesive*. *Cohesiveness* is defined as a strong sense of connectedness among team members that causes them to work together to attain an objective. Research suggests that a high degree of cohesiveness is desirable during teamwork because stronger bonds influence team members to work harder to achieve collective goals.

### **Groupthink**

A potentially adverse side effect of teamwork is the possibility of groupthink. Groupthink occurs when everyone on the team agrees in order to avoid or minimize conflict. Pressure to conform within the team interferes with that team's analysis of a problem. They may reach consensus, but it's without critically analyzing and evaluating ideas. Groupthink, thus, causes poor team decision making. Individual creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking are lost in the pursuit of team cohesiveness.

A variety of conflict-avoiding motives for this can exist: a desire to avoid being seen as foolish, a desire to avoid embarrassing or angering other members of the team, or a desire to be seen as a "team player." In any case, groupthink can cause teams to make hasty, irrational decisions, where individual doubts are set aside for



fear of upsetting the team's balance. As a result, members might be dissatisfied with the results of their teamwork. Good facilitation can help avoid this trap for a team.

### **Leading the Norming Stage**

As indicated, in the norming stage of development, team members adjust their behavior and begin to trust one another becoming a more cohesive unit. They establish implicit or explicit norms about how they will achieve goals, thereby solidifying ground rules, communication methods, behavior, timelines, working tools, and even taboos. As a result, the leader can be less directive and yet continue providing support to the team, emphasizing unity and helping the team solidify norms, goals, and values.

Cohesiveness is also fostered in this stage by keeping team sizes small, by ensuring that performance standards are clearly defined, and by encouraging interaction and cooperation among the team members. Channeling each team member's special talents toward the common goal, reinforcing each member's contributions, and emphasizing each person's task serve the common good of the team.

The norming stage typically doesn't last very long, and it might even overlap into the fourth stage as teams begin performing.

## **The Performing Stage**

***The illustrative behaviors of this stage are to listen and emphasize, allow, and self-lead. This is the holy grail of team development.***

The **performing** stage of team development is characterized by members focusing on problem solving and completing their assigned tasks. Team members are now interdependent and able to handle the decision-making process without direct leader supervision. Social relationships have developed, roles and tasks have been defined, and the team is working synergistically to accomplish objectives. Dissent is expected and allowed as long as it is offered in ways acceptable to the team.

Even so, performance might not be consistent, but instead, it might occur in peaks as everyone coordinates the efforts to meet critical target deadlines.

### **Leading the Performing Stage**

As individuals question, "How can I best perform my role?" the team questions "Can we do the job properly?" The performing stage of development is best facilitated through individual and team empowerment, encouraging them to work on the tasks they've previously identified as necessary to meet the overall objectives.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the leader should be hands-off during this stage. The leader can support the team by monitoring whether the desired objectives are being met and by making resources available to achieve the desired results.

### **The Adjourning Stage**

*This is the most skipped stage in terms of a leader's support and guidance. It is vitally important to allow a sense of completion for the team members. Otherwise, there remains a festering feeling of "unfinished" business.*

The final stage of team development, **adjourning**, or mourning, occurs as members disband once their jobs are done—hopefully after the task is completed successfully and its purpose fulfilled. Attention is directed toward wrapping up activities and moving on to new tasks, activities, and projects.

In this stage, team members remain upbeat because of their accomplishments and they feel good about what's been achieved. Others might be depressed due to feelings of loss or stress or because they have looked to the team for positive reinforcement, feelings of self-worth, and personal achievement.

### **Leading the Adjourning Stage**

The adjourning stage is often initiated by a brief period of review and reflection upon completion of the project, i.e., a debriefing

process. This can occur in the form of summative assessment or as reflective responses to questions about process and effectiveness.

**Thinking Alert:** A framework for reflection can include the following questions:

1. What went well?
2. What would you do differently next time?
3. What was your key learning from this experience?

In addition, the leader can help team members transition out of the team by formally celebrating the end or a new beginning. Awards, public acknowledgment for a job well done, and mock graduation ceremonies are often presented or conducted, while valuable lessons learned from working with the team and experiencing the group dynamics are recapitulated.

**Note:** Sometimes the mourning/adjourning stage is brief or non-existent. It might simply be an informal breaking up of the team, a debriefing following the completion of the small-group project, or a more formal method of "saying goodbye" to the process and one another.

**Remember:**

The Tuckman and Jensen five-stage team model is linear, but it can also be iterative as changes to the team—such as the leaving or joining of team members—might make the team **revisit prior stages and require guidance and support of the leader**. In other words, it is quite common when a key member leaves that the team will revisit the forming and storming stages.

According to Tuckman and Jensen, when establishing **teamwork**, two elements are necessary for an effective team to develop. First, there must be enough time in the project **designed** to allow teams to move completely through the forming, storming, norming, and performing stages. And, second, team-building activities among members **must be present in order for collaboration** to occur. This is highly relevant for virtual teams as well.

Michael Nir

# CHAPTER FOUR

## **Quickly Grow your Personal Influence – Informal Power**

## **Quickly Grow your Personal Influence, Informal Power**

In her children's book *Bear feels sick*, Karma Wilson describes how the hero bear is sick and playing on his friends to cater to his needs. His lovable smallish friends help out and perform many chores, including cooking, preparing tea, and keeping the sick bear company. The bear remains ill throughout the book until, suddenly, he is miraculously cured.

Most of the book describes how his charade convinces even the otherwise envious raven, the badgering badger, and the ever so efficient mole to continuously and wholeheartedly tend to his needs. While I don't know if Wilson considered her book an analogy to influencing stakeholders in the matrix organization, there is one important lesson that this book teaches us: the significance of stakeholder leadership. The shrewd bear skillfully identifies the stakeholders, analyzes their attitudes, and convinces them in a passive aggressive way to help while he is relaxing in his sick bed.

Much can be learned from this story, and this chapter presents a discussion about stakeholder leadership. It investigates the concept that stakeholders differ in their perceptions, and it introduces a strategy for influence.



**Stakeholders** are persons or organizations (e.g., customers, sponsors, performing organizations, or the public) that are actively involved in a project or whose interests may be affected positively or negatively by the execution or completion of a project. A stakeholder might also exert influence over the project and its deliverables (PMBOK®).

In this book, I will be using the term “stakeholder” in a boarder sense, i.e., any individual who can affect your work and activities, which can be non-project related.

### **Keeping the nice bears close to you**

The first step in building support within the greater stakeholder community is identifying the various stakeholder groups and individuals affecting the project/activities and analyzing their attitudes. Identifying stakeholders can be completed alone or with a small team. Because analyzing stakeholders is a sensitive undertaking, it makes sense to perform the activity with the kernel project team, ensuring that the output of the analysis remains within the team.

The objective of stakeholder analysis is to produce a list of stakeholders that might influence the outcome of the project. Once the list of stakeholders is produced, each stakeholder is assessed according to his/her power and interest. Power in this

regard is the stakeholder's ability to affect various aspects of the project, either positively or negatively, and interest is defined as the level of concern the stakeholder has with the project. Both the power and interest of the stakeholders are assessed in respect to the task, activity, project, and even toward a specific project objective.

The widely used two axes power and interest grid has four quadrants:

1. High power high interest stakeholders;
2. High power low interest stakeholders;
3. Low power high interest stakeholders;
4. Low power low interest stakeholders.

Experience shows that project managers and teams who do use this tool perform the analysis only once at the start of the project and don't revisit the analysis later on. This undermines the value that can be realized using the tool.

Actually, stakeholder analysis is an ongoing task that should be performed on a monthly basis in order to increase the opportunities to influence stakeholders. What's more, throughout the project, new stakeholders become relevant while stakeholders, who were part of earlier analysis, might become irrelevant. The analysis of power and interest is also an input for communication planning.

## Influence and Lead

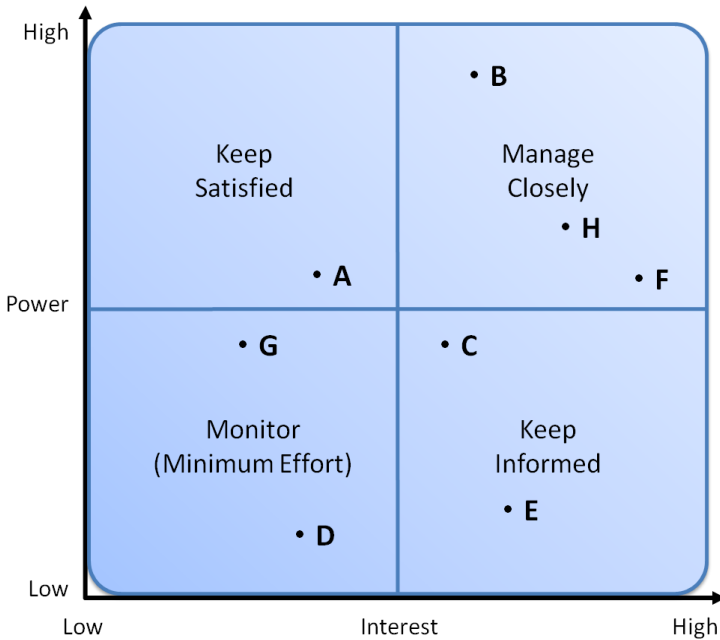
Each quadrant in the stakeholders' assessment grid has a directive explaining how to manage the stakeholders within the specific quadrant. The general guidelines for each quadrant are as follows:

1. High power high interest stakeholders: manage closely;
2. High power low interest stakeholders: keep satisfied;
3. Low power high interest stakeholders: keep informed; and
4. Low power low interest stakeholders: monitor with minimal effort.

The project team needs to detail further each general guideline into specific communication tasks and activities. The guidelines differ among different teams and different projects. Note that the direction to closely manage stakeholders in the first quadrant relates not only to the extent of communication activities performed, but also to the intensity of the process itself.

Stakeholders who are managed closely are also queried often on how much communication they would prefer. Thus, it might happen that some stakeholders in this group receive fewer reports and updates compared with members in the keep-informed quadrant because they opted to receive less information.

**Thinking Alert:** manage closely, similar to the other communication guidelines in the grid, doesn't imply that stakeholders receive more bits of information; rather, it indicates that the stakeholders are allowed a customized communication approach compared with stakeholders in other quadrants.



*PMBOK® Guide – Fourth Edition, p. 249*

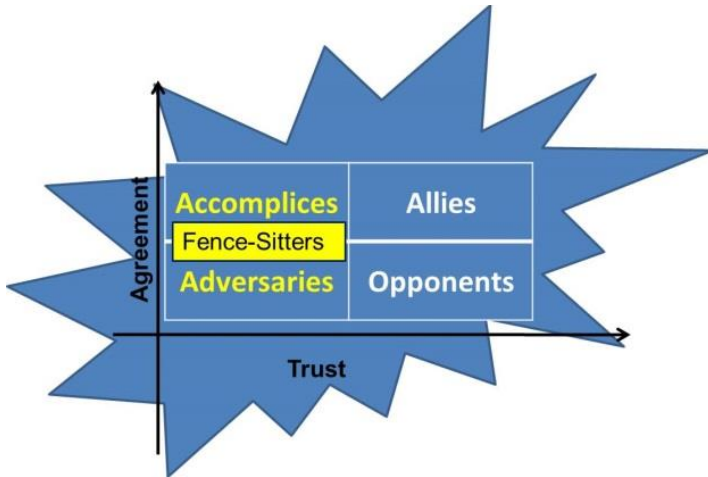
## Happy bears

The stakeholder analysis grid detailed above, while useful in the context of creating a general understanding of stakeholders support, lacks a more in-depth view of the actual relationships and forecasted behaviors of the stakeholders toward the specific effort.

To understand these better, an alternative view on the analysis of stakeholders is suggested. In this view, stakeholders are analyzed based on their perceived support, implicit or explicit. A four-quadrant grid is likewise employed with two axes as seen below.

## Influence and Lead

The axes are trust and agreement. Stakeholders are divided into four groups: allies, opponents, accomplices, and adversaries.



Stakeholders in the **Allies** quadrant are the advocates of the project effort, having both trust in the project team and agreement with the objectives and the approach used to manage the project. They are supporting unequivocally and will provide assistance when required, help when needed, and advice when requested (sometimes even when it's not requested).

Stakeholders in the **Opponents** quadrant are openly and objectively criticizing elements of the project or the effort. They are, to a degree, not in agreement with some objectives of the project and might be questioning the methods employed by the team to achieve the objectives. Nonetheless, there is mutual trust between the project team and these stakeholders that translates into "fair play" in solving disagreements. The project leader and

the team are certain that disagreements can be solved in a reasonable, unbiased, and honest approach. While these stakeholders aren't unequivocally supporting the process and the objectives, they prove to be a much required judicious group of stakeholders who can objectively challenge project decisions.


Stakeholders in the **Accomplices** quadrant are outwardly accepting and collaborating with the project team in the process and supporting the objective. These stakeholders are also said to be giving lip service. It might seem that they agree, but because there is little trust between the project team and these stakeholders, the continued support isn't granted. The project leader and the team can't depend on the seeming support that is displayed by this stakeholder group because it can easily be substituted by sharp defiance as soon as the environment changes or as soon as the project team is out of hearing range. This makes the accomplices group of stakeholders quite dangerous. Project teams and managers are advised to build trust with these stakeholders. The influence techniques in this guide can be employed to establish trust, specifically the strategy of *Liking* mentioned later in this chapter.

Stakeholders in the **Adversaries** quadrant are un-accepting and not collaborating with the project team in the process and are in disagreement with the objective. There is an evolving conflict building between the project team and this group of stakeholders.

## Influence and Lead

The project leader and the team can't depend on receiving support from this group, which tends to employ manipulative means in propagating disagreement. Naturally, the group of adversary stakeholders is the most difficult to influence and lead.

Theoretically, project team and manager can invest time and effort to build trust and agreement with these stakeholders. Practically, these might be wasted efforts, leading to the opposite result (see more below). After all, people, project teams and managers included, invest too much effort in persuading and convincing the adversary stakeholder group with little valuable results. The focus on this group develops into an openly hostile conflict that resonates with the other stakeholder groups and can create a landslide in the overall level of support.



Reflect on who your allies are, who your opponents are, who your accomplices are, and who your adversaries are



## **Be a practical bear**

Our behavior of increased focus on the adversary group is quite human and evident in many similar interactions. Imagine a teacher in a classroom where among thirty pupils, three are in distrust and conflict with the teacher. In most cases, more than half of the teacher's attention will be given to these pupils at the expense of the others. Obviously, the teacher needs to create an environment supporting learning in the class, but the focus on those disturbing the class is counter-productive because it provides opposite results.

So why do we focus on the adversary group? Psychologically speaking, we have a need to be accepted and loved (or at least liked), and we find it extremely difficult to be in a position where people are un-accepting of us. We go to great lengths to receive appreciation and support from groups of people who disagree with us and/or our goals.

Take a minute to reflect on your efforts in gaining *liking* and appreciation from everyone and investing great efforts to please those who are in hostile conflict and distrusting disagreement, at the expense of investing your time building positive relationships with other more supporting individuals.

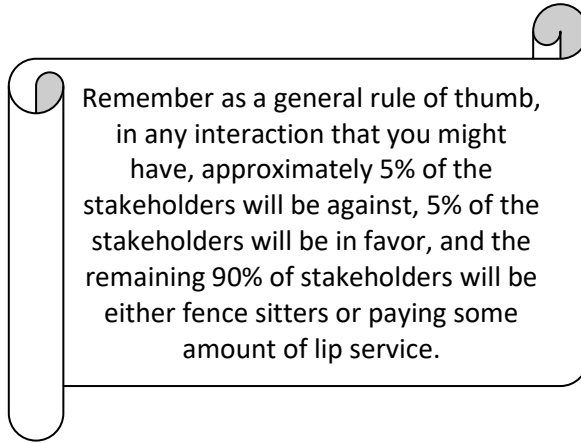


## Influence and Lead

Letting go of our explicit need for unanimous all-encompassing acceptance isn't an easy task and requires a mental and cognitive shift in how we perceive ourselves and our interaction with the environment in which we operate. Achieving this improved psychological condition enables us to move away from focusing on those who aren't accepting us and instead investing time and effort in those who are supporting or those who haven't made up their mind yet (more on that later).

In the teacher example above, the class, the teacher, and the learning environment would benefit greatly from focus on the main group of pupils who are sitting on the fence, so to speak, waiting to see how the conflict between the teacher and the adversary pupils plays out before deciding which side to choose.

Notwithstanding the two models for stakeholder analysis presented so far, at the outset of each stakeholder interaction such as a kickoff meeting, a conference call, a town-hall meeting, or similar gatherings, there are three main attitudes apparent. These attitudes are easily observed by reading body language, words used, and tone of voice. Roughly speaking, there are stakeholders who immediately support, those who are against, and a big group who are "sitting on the fence." Stakeholders who are fence sitters are waiting to see how things play out. They haven't decided yet whom to support and are making up their minds.



As detailed above, placing emphasis and overt focus on those against is a fatal mistake in building your support coalition and your informal power base. It is also the **most common mistake**.

**Thinking Alert: Often, when building a support coalition you will place too much emphasis on the stakeholders who are against, which will lead to a failed effort.**

In an analogy to the teacher example, imagine you are giving a presentation to 100 participants. The presentation is about some change project in marketing that will greatly affect the manufacturing, maintenance, operations, IT, engineering, and sales departments. This is a high profile project with many interests. You are holding a formal kickoff presentation and it is vital that you gain support for this endeavor.

As explained above, about five to ten participants will be totally in favor of your approach, and about five to ten participants will be


## Influence and Lead

totally against whatever you propose. The remaining participants have not made up their minds yet. This presentation is your opportunity to build a coalition and to influence the stakeholder community to support the project as you move forward.

Most presenters will aim their influence efforts at those opposing, sometimes engaging in verbal confrontations with them during and after the presentation. This is folly, because they are unlikely to gain much by arguing with this stakeholder group. The byproduct of discussing the merits with them is that some “fence sitters” will actually join the group of naysayers. This common outcome mirrors the human tendency to side with the underdog—in this case, if you are leading the presentation and have the stage, the underdog will be the blockers.

What you want to do is to speak partly to the supporters and partly to the fence sitters. You wish to create an explicit path of trust for those sitting on the fence to become supporters.

Tip: You can easily recognize those supporting, those against, and the fence sitters. As a rule of thumb, those who are supporting will be sitting in the front rows, and those opposing and blocking in the back rows.



Reflect on your  
strategy to  
influence and lead  
stakeholders.

## **When is a bear not a bear?**

We tend to think that others think in the same way that we do. This makes sense, as our personal thinking process is the only one with which we are familiar. Philosophically, we actually can't be certain that others are experiencing events anywhere nearly the same way we do.

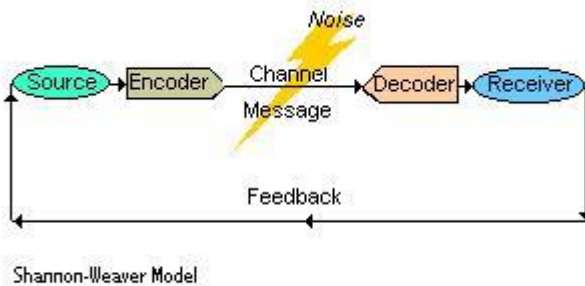
The axiomatic assertion concerning colors is a good example as my experience of yellow is probably different compared to others' experience of the color yellow, and I can't relay this experience in any concrete way. I assume that when I say a certain color is yellow, others perceive the same emotional range, cognitive experience, and mental state that I do. It is human to assume that others are experiencing the environment the same way that we do, but it leads to obvious communication challenges.

When interacting with stakeholders, the fallacy that others are viewing situations, scenarios, and the environment as we do is detrimental. Working with stakeholders, assuming that their perception of a certain situation is identical to ours, is at the basis of many failures to influence. Being able to move away from our perception of the situation, which is based on our emotional, mental, and cognitive states, is crucial in gaining the support of others.

Concepts such as active listening, empathizing, and WIIFM (what is in it for me?) spring to mind; these are actually the techniques that assist us in moving away from our perceptions and more capable of identifying the perceptions of others.

### More about Perception and Communications

Widely held communication models—ones presented in books and articles—depict two equal participants in a communication dialogue: the sender and receiver. The Shannon-Weaver model is a relevant example.



In 1947, Shannon and Weaver suggested a model to describe communication between computer systems. The model can be used to depict TCP/IP (transmission control protocol/internet protocol internet communication). In the model is a communication source, an encoder for encoding the message, a channel through which the message flows, a decoder of the message, and the receiver.

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The receiver sends feedback of message reception. In the communication channel, there can be interference and noise, e.g., the dropping of IP packets in an ADSL line.

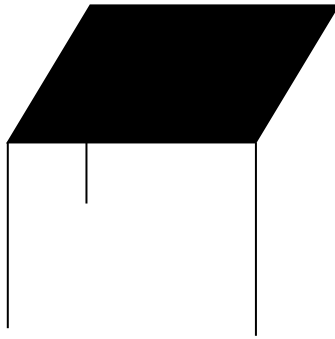
The model was adopted to illustrate interpersonal communication. In workshops, I often joke that psychologists are science envy and borrowing on scientific models and concepts explains elements of human behavior. This is the case with the adoption of the Shannon Weaver model into interpersonal communications; it doesn't explain well the causes for miscommunication. Social sciences practitioners added elements to the original model to illustrate perceptions that interfere with the message; however, the fundamental application of the IT model to interpersonal communication is flawed.

Communication between humans, in contrast to machines, is not linear and balanced; rather, it is haphazard, contingent, context-based, and associative. In order to understand how humans communicate, we need to understand how children develop the spoken language.

One of the pioneers in the research of language and cognitive development is Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and philosopher known for his epistemological studies with children. Piaget demonstrated that children learn words through a bottom-up approach, in contrast to the belief of a top-down mechanism.

Children impart a meaning to an object by processing many encounters of different versions of that object.

For example, most individuals globally have this as a model of a table. When asked to draw a table, most would use the conceptual model and draw something similar to the drawing below



However, this is just a two-dimensional drawing of lines connected to a parallelogram. How is it that we consider the drawing to be a table?

Piaget would say that, as children, we saw many examples of tables, probably none that resembled the one in the drawing above. Each time we saw a table, the people around us would say a mostly unintelligible (as we were only babies) sentence that included the word “table.” After several hundreds of such occurrences, the word stuck, and we were able to build a lasting image of the **essence of the functionality** of a table. Almost like magic, the conceptual model of a table, as presented above in the drawing, materializes for the word table.

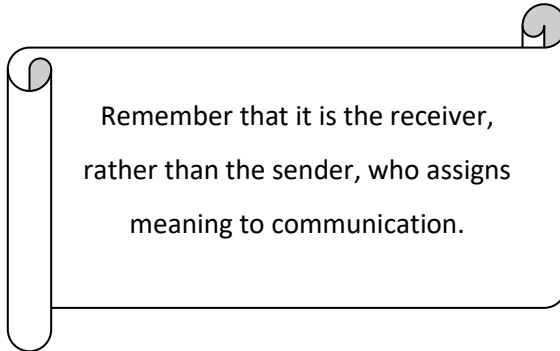


**Thinking Alert:** Every one of us builds the conceptual dictionary based on individual experiences. While the model might appear similar, especially for concrete objects, the meanings that we allocate to the model can be vastly different. As a result, while the Shannon-Weaver model assumes that people’s mental models for words and concepts are identical, they actually aren’t.

**Communication based on the assumption that two stakeholders mean the same thing when they say a certain word is doomed to fail.** Although we have the same mental model for a table (the cover and the four lines), the **context and associations** that we have for the concept are vastly **different**.

When I say “bear,” the immediate picture that springs to my mind is my Alaskan encounter with a grizzly. What is your mental image when you hear the word “bear”? What is your mental image when you hear the word “project”? How about rapport, *liking*, PMO, leadership, influence?

The more abstract the concept, the larger the variance in connotations associated with the concept. Communication is hardly an orderly Shannon-Weaver model; it is more a tornado of context spiraling down, and the base of the tornado is where mutual understanding is achieved. Our ability to understand each other is based on investigating the associations and context more than the message itself.



Project managers assume that stakeholders understand what they communicate in words, but actually, the stakeholders decide what to glean from a message, the context, and the associations. In order to validate the intention, the prudent project manager should spend time in understanding the meanings that the stakeholders assign to the words, sentences, reports, presentations, etc.



Communication inferences tornado

### **Case study example**

The following case study exemplifies how comprehending perception divergences is crucial. Without understanding the different perceptions, leading the bears of the matrix organization is doomed to fail.

The case study presents a global telecommunication company that sells to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), developing both hardware and software. Software development is performed using agile project management approach, and specifically Scrum processes.

The corporate offices in North America have mandated the inception of a PMO that will globally manage the company's portfolio. Tom Jenkins, a senior project manager, has been appointed head PMO and has recruited three junior employees from various departments with up to three years of work experience.

The company has eighty project managers distributed among fifteen sites: seven in North America, four in Europe, and four in Asia and Australia. Some of these project managers are handling marketing projects, others work in new project integration into operations, and the majority of project managers operate in development. The project managers report to their relevant business units.

Tom is traveling on a business trip to South America; he is meeting with clients to discuss specific aspects of procurement of electronic hardware components. Accompanying him are the VP of marketing, the VP of supply chain, and the VP of customer support. They decide to present the client with several options for consignment of products. They prepare a presentation to solve some challenges regarding supply chain and costs of products. The presentation is impeccable and includes several options to resolve the challenges they have been facing with this particular client. They perceive that by addressing these issues upfront, they will be able to move forward and increase sales with the client.

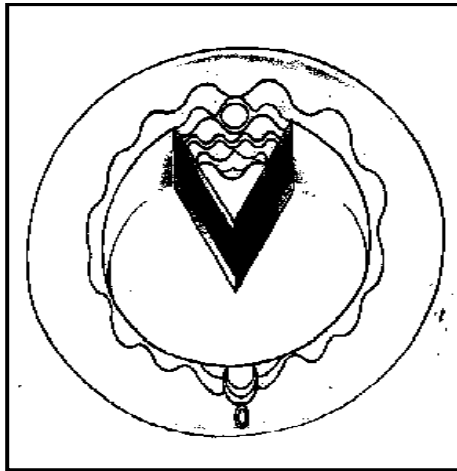
Halfway through the presentation, however, the client cuts them short and says that he is considering the problem as a trust issue and therefore changing the consignment and product costs will not resolve it. The client is troubled and agitated that Tom and his team are not viewing this as a trust issue, and he decides to cancel the remaining meetings to consult with his managers. Tom and his colleagues are surprised with the behavior of the client, but because the client is adamant in his refusal, they head back to the home office.

Perception of issues is crucial in creating, developing, and building personal influencing power. The ability to influence without authority is based on one's capacity to view an issue from more than one perspective and preferably from the perspective of the

## Influence and Lead

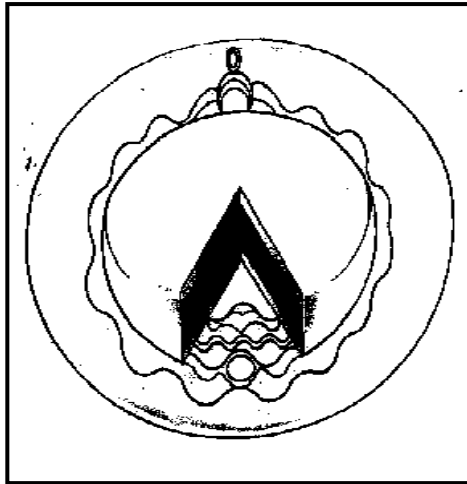
other side as well. This is known as empathy (not to be confused with sympathy). Understanding that an issue has many dimensions and is perceived differently by various stakeholders not only prevents misunderstandings, but also increases and provides opportunities for creative results.

In the graphic below, what do you see?



Is this a small piece of cake?

And what do you see below.



Do you now see a big piece of cake?

You can't overestimate differences in perception; sometimes what one side sees as a bear appears as a bull to the other side. In option and future trading, one can short a position and profit from the markets going down. Understanding differences in perceptions is vital for building coalitions and influencing stakeholders.

### **Making the bear like you**

As already mentioned, in his book *The Psychology of Persuasion*, Cialdini describes six persuasion techniques that are often employed manipulatively by marketers and sellers to lure us into purchasing items we have not intended to buy.

Methods, such as the foot in the door, which is based on the social stipulation of reciprocation, are extremely powerful in guiding us to action. Of the six techniques, *liking*, as an influence approach, is

## Influence and Lead

probably one of the least used and least manipulative in a business setting.

Liking, therefore, has many advantages as an influencing tool and is described below. It is up to you, the reader, to decide when, how, how much, and if to use it. In any case, liking is a powerful way to creating informal power in project teams without much effort. (It resembles, to an extent, sympathy.)

Liking is the creation and development of feelings of identification, bonding, and rapport through which one can obtain informal power and can influence an individual or a party to commit to a certain course of action.

Liking has many facets and can be achieved through the following categorical approaches:

1. Appearances, i.e., similar outwardly can help instill *liking*;
2. Mutual beliefs, lifestyles, and/or religion create a strong *liking* between individuals;
3. Similar backgrounds promote *liking*. It is always exciting to observe how participants sitting at the same table in workshops immediately find a common background. This background can be the school they attended, hobbies they share, a good book they've read, etc.; sometimes it is even their favorite flavor of ice cream;
4. Positive acknowledgment, feedback, and outright compliments and flattery can go a long way in creating

*liking*; maybe they aren't considered honorable, but they are powerful; and

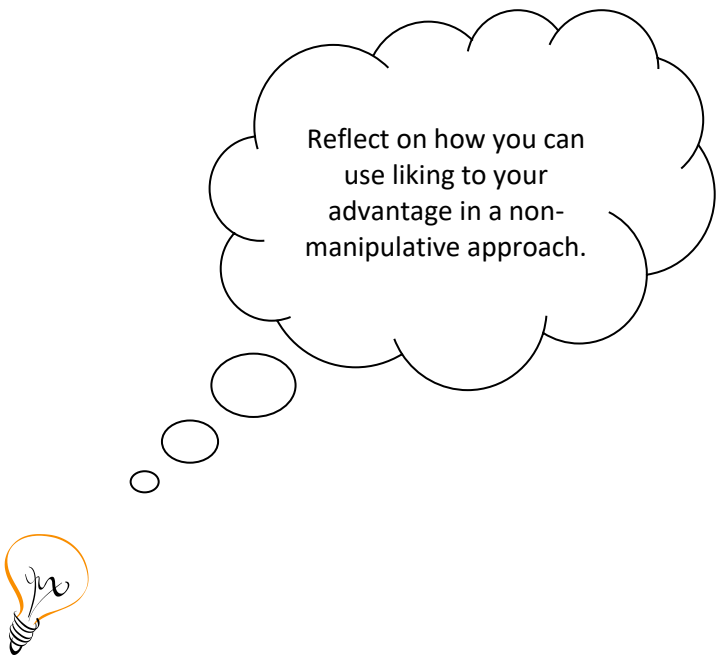
5. Interaction, cooperation, and collaboration, i.e., mutual work, tends to create *liking* when it is positive and successful.

Liking based on any of the five mentioned categories is effective and enables the initiator to create a strong bond with individuals and groups. However, liking is usually shunned as an influence strategy. It is easy to remember how those pupils who interacted with the teachers were usually mocked and called teacher's pets, bootlickers, brown-nosers, etc.

Because people tend to avoid using these tools, the opposite result occurs; in most organizations, hardly any acknowledgement is given and hardly any liking is developed. Simple thank you cards and emails are neglected and appreciation on the personal level is often avoided. Within this atmosphere, a minimal use of liking as an influence strategy can go a long way. It provides informal power and the ability to influence and create coalitions of supporters. That is not to say that *liking* should be used haphazardly and without consideration; rather, the idea is that genuine *liking*, using any of the approaches mentioned above, should be pursued.



## Influence and Lead



Reflect on how you can use liking to your advantage in a non-manipulative approach.

Virtual teams who operate in the global environment are often devoid of any liking whatsoever. Small efforts go a long way in the virtual sphere. While I recommend investing time to create bonding between the stakeholders in my soft skills workshop, the opposite usually occurs.

We treat others as resources, which if you think about, is quite demeaning. How is it that we stopped calling others people and instead refer to them as resources who must deliver work results? The typical status reporting conference call has no schmoozing time allocated. Rather, it is a round-robin exchange where the

meeting manager requests participants to report their achievements.

We don't even consider investing time in building rapport and liking in virtual settings. These can be incorporated easily into the virtual meeting by allocating a few minutes for small talk. Other methods to increase rapport and building liking can include:

- Asking meeting participants to share a personal anecdote about themselves;
- Asking meeting participants to share a picture of themselves engaging in a hobby;
- Asking meeting participants to share information about their country's/city's specifics, such as a holiday, customs, cultural aspects, etc.;
- Creating a shared social site where the team members can interact in an informal style (this can also be achieved by creating a closed group on LinkedIn or Facebook); and
- Playing a virtual game with fun prizes to increase informal interaction.

Each of the above methods increases liking because it builds interaction, cooperation, and collaboration. As mentioned above, the virtual environment in most organizations is often devoid of any interpersonal interaction, so a small investment in building liking can go a long way.

**Remember to Influence and lead, one must:**

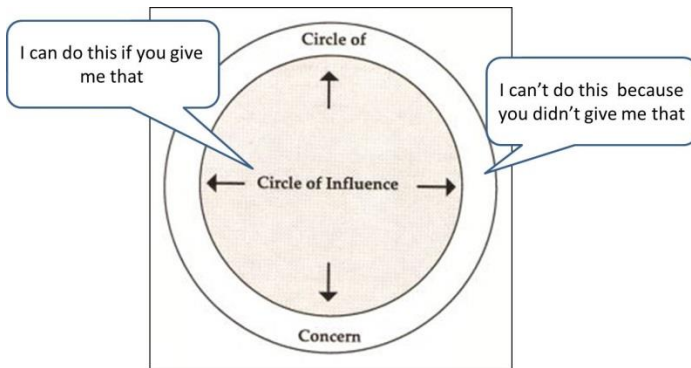
1. Manage stakeholders by identifying them and analyzing their interest and power;
2. Use the identification as the basis for communication planning, or assess stakeholders according to their trust and agreement (i.e., allies, opponents, accomplices, and adversaries);
3. Construct a method to lead the stakeholders who are sitting on the fence;
4. Avoid giving too much emphasis to the adversaries;
5. Accept that stakeholders will have different perceptions of the same issues; strive to learn these perceptions through active listening and questioning; and
6. Consider using *liking* to increase your influence without authority power.

Michael Nir

## Influence and Lead

**More thinking: Did you know?** Effective leaders focus on the circle of influence rather than on the circle of concern, as described in Covey's best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. This is in stark contrast to others who focus on the circle of concern. In relation to project management, and specifically change control process, a project manager and team that focuses on the circle of concern often communicates what they can't achieve because they haven't been given something.

Effective project managers and teams would rather describe what they can achieve with what they have or with what can be given to them. There is a big difference between the two options, and next time focus on the circle of influence.



Michael Nir

# CHAPTER FIVE

**Revealing ideas of NLP – to  
motivate and lead**

## **Revealing ideas of NLP, to motivate and lead**

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is an incredibly powerful discipline that enables people to unblock the structures of human communication and human excellence. By doing so, people can think, communicate, and manage themselves and others more effectively. NLP explores the relationships between how we think (neuro), how we communicate (linguistic), and our patterns of behavior and emotion (programs).

By studying and learning from these relationships, people can effectively transform the way they traditionally think and act, adopting new and far more successful models of human excellence. (This activity is called modeling and is a key feature that distinguishes NLP from psychology.) In effect, NLP is a powerful change management tool that transforms the way people think and act to have the greatest impact both professionally and personally.

That's why NLP is one of the most powerful skills used in business management, psychology, sales, sports coaching, and all forms of personal development.

We will explore only a fraction of what NLP is about—specifically five words that are used redundantly in almost every team interaction. These words are mostly negative, yet they are



common in team interactions. They create noise in the communication, confuse the message, and carry baggage of ill-considered meanings.

### **Word #1: Try**

The first word often used without understanding the implication is “try.”

For example: “We will try running this test next week” or “Please try to have the results by Wednesday” or even “I tried really hard.”

“Try” masks the intent and carries an element of implicit failure in the message. As Yoda said, “You either do it or you don’t; there is no try.” Either you’re going to run the tests next week or you’re not going to run them next week. When you’re saying that you are going to “try” to run them next week, most likely, you’re not going to do it. When I’m telling you to please “try” to have the results by Wednesday, I’m actually saying that it is fine that they come in Thursday or Friday or even next month.

Notice how many times the word “try” appears in Mark’s email:

*We have indeed defined a way of work, but we also defined a process for completion of tasks, that we should **try** to stick to.*

What is Mark saying? Did we define a process just so we should *try* to stick to it? Or did we define a process that we must stick to? By

using “try,” Mark undermines his authority as a team leader; he defined a process for the team members to follow.

The abundant use of the word “try” in many teams, both collocated and virtual, is a sign of fear that both leaders and team members have of stepping up and asking for commitment and responsibility.

**Thinking Alert: Drop the “try.” It does not add anything to the communication.**

## Word #2: Should

The second word often used without understanding the implication is “should.”

‘Should’ has a flavor of admonition, guilt, and manipulation, especially when other people are using it by blurting out-loud a general statement with the word “should.”

For example: “You should always finish what you’re eating and never leave anything on the plate.” Also: “This should have been completed by now.” And yet another: “You should not get up before the manager has left.”

For example, Tina writes:

*Tina answers, “We **should** focus on production levels because this is what is driving the transfer to production; trust me, I’ve been here and have seen these projects many times.”*

In this case, Tina is using “should” to reprimand the team and also to have it her way by defining an imaginary rule and enforcing it upon the team. Actually, what Tina is saying is, “I want to focus on production levels.” Many times, people use “should” instead of “I want”; this is the case with parents and children. The admonition of, “You should be nice” is actually saying, “I want you to be nice.”

Observe the power and direct impact of the second sentence as opposed to using “should.”

*Tina answers, “I **want to focus** on production levels because this is what is driving the transfer to production; trust me, I’ve been here and have seen these projects many times.”*

People use the word “should” to mask their wish or need. Instead of directly stating what they want, they construct a stipulation without naming a person responsible for carrying it out. In families, we often hear such a “should” sentence: “The lawn should be cut.” This indirect communication can create resentment. The person would be better off asking directly what he wants to happen “Please, can you cut the lawn now?” Notice that this question can lead into conflict as the other person might rebel and disagree. By using “should,” we are avoiding the conflict between our wishes and the other person’s wishes. The truth is that the conflict **is not avoided**; rather, because the communication is indirect, it is unclear what the person wants the other person to perform. **Thus, the conflict is exacerbated and not mitigated.** The extensive use of “should” stipulations occurs in families, in couples, and naturally also in business teams.

**Thinking Alert: Monitor the “shoulds” in your teams. They are barriers to effective communication and reduce the potential power of the team.**

### **Word #3: Why**

The third word often used without understanding the implication is “why.”

“Why” carries a sense of blame to it. For example, “Why did you break the glass?” One can see that the usage of “why” is not about receiving an answer but about rebuking for the actual breaking of the glass because there is no good answer for this question. A wisecrack answer might be, “Because I like to see you get mad...” Actually, it is just the right answer to such a question.

Ashley, who leads a meeting, wants to regain control.

*Ashley tries to gain control back and asks Tina, “Why do you think this is now relevant for our meeting? Let’s try to get back on our planned agenda.”*

In this case, Ashley is blaming Tina by asking her the question. Ashley would have been better off saying: “Tina, I would like get back to our agenda. I think these are issues relevant for another meeting.”

The word “why” carries guilt and finger pointing in team communications. It is better that we leave it out of our messages because it doesn’t have any positive impact on what we are saying. Rather, it is clearer to state what we want to achieve or alternatively ask information-gathering questions using the word “how.”

For example, Ashley might ask, “Tina, can you please explain how these figures affect the transfer to operations?”

Notice that while “why” structures a closed ended question, “how” questions are open-ended and investigate the process that led to a certain consequence.

**Thinking Alert: The “whys” don’t contribute to clear communication; instead, they add guilt and finger pointing, so it is better to drop them.**

## Word #4: But

The fourth word often used without understanding the implication is “but.”

If I had a dollar for every time a member on my team used the word “but,” I would be a millionaire. Of the five words, “but” is probably used the most. “But” is a funny word; it’s not necessarily negative, yet the way that we use it in constructing sentences creates a negative message.

For example, “I really like you, but I’m leaving,” or “You did a great job buying groceries, but you left them out on the kitchen floor,” and a bit more subtle, “I like your suggestion Chris, but I think Jennifer’s is better.”

The word “but” negates the first sentence and accentuates the second sentence.

For example, read Ed’s email:

*“Don’t get me wrong, I appreciate the way that you reported detailed information in the status report, **but** we should make sure that we are consistent with how we communicate our actuals.”*

What is it actually saying? On the one hand, Ed is appreciating the way that Beverly was reporting information, but then he totally negates it by saying that it is more important to make sure that the team is consistent with communicating the actuals.

In workshops and seminars, teams push back, saying that “but” is actually very important and they have to use it. That’s fine with me. However, instead of “but,” maybe it is possible to use “and.” Let’s examine it together in Ed’s email.

*“I appreciate the way that you reported detailed information in the status report **and** we should make sure that we are consistent with how we communicate our actuals.”*

How does the message sound now? Ed appreciates Beverly’s contribution, and at the same time, he would like her to be more consistent with communicating the actuals. It is a subtle yet powerful change, especially if you’re the recipient of the email.

This is not to say that you should weed out all the “buts” in your communication; sometimes it is important. If you monitor your meetings, you will find that “but” is used haphazardly and too often. The impact of “but” is that many of our compliments are deluded by our criticism, such as, “You’re a great colleague, but sometimes you really freak me out”—where is the emphasis in this sentence?

**Thinking Alert: Weed out half of your butts. You won’t regret it.**



## **Word #5: Don't**

The fifth word often used without understanding the implication is “don't.”

The main issue is that the mind cannot create “don't.” In other words, in order to negate something in our thoughts, we first have to create it; only then can we negate it. That is why saying “don't” sometimes leads to the opposite result.

This is most apparent in children. Young children have not yet separated cognition and behavior. This interesting phenomenon was first established by the same Jean Piaget, who was a Swiss developmental psychologist and philosopher known for his epistemological studies with children. It leads to interesting responses when we ask children not to do something. For example, when you tell your little girl, “Don't hit your brother,” what is the next thing that happens? Naturally, she hits her brother. Most parents view this as subversive behavior, but this is not the case. Because the mind does not think in terms of “don't,” the little girl's first thought is of hitting, and because young children do not separate thought and behavior, she carried out the mentioned action. It was only after a second or two that she understood she was not supposed to do it.

Grownups first have to create an existence before negating it. If you ask someone not to think of a green elephant, he/she will first

imagine the green elephant and then try not to think about. Quite the conundrum.

For example, in Ed's email:

*"You **don't** want to make mistakes while reporting—that is understood. We should work together as a team."*

What is Ed actually saying? Is he asking the team to make mistakes? When you tell someone, "don't make mistakes," you might actually be causing that person to fail because he/she will focus on the mistakes while reporting. How can Ed phrase the sentence differently?

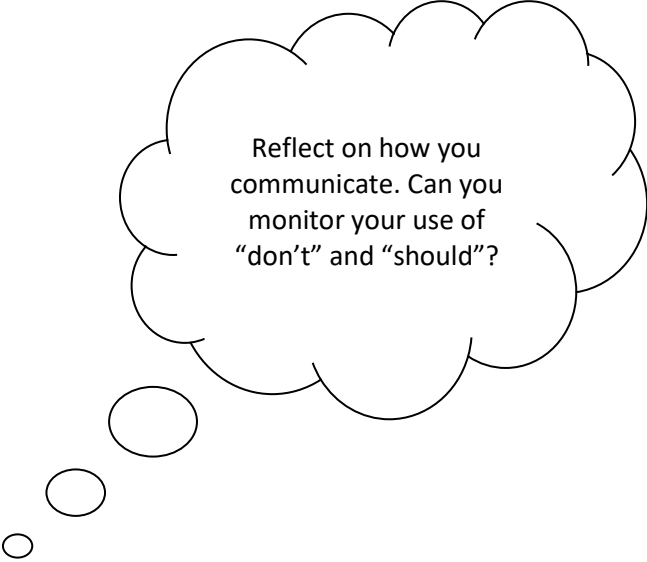
*"Please report correctly. We should work together as a team."*

This way it is clear the behavior Ed would like to see.

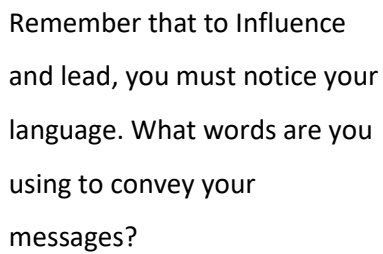
**Thinking Alert: Describe the behavior you would like to see, rather than the behavior you don't want to see.**

P.S. With children, it is much the same. If you want to stop a behavior, you can also use this knowledge by describing to the child what you want to see, i.e., instead of saying, "Stop doing that" or "Don't do that," say, "Do this," or "Do that."

## Influence and Lead



Reflect on how you communicate. Can you monitor your use of “don’t” and “should”?



Remember that to influence and lead, you must notice your language. What words are you using to convey your messages?

Michael Nir

# CHAPTER SIX

## **Quickly Grow your Personal Influence – Awareness Exercises**

## **Quickly grow your personal influence, Awareness exercises**

The following exercises are geared to increase your personal awareness, which will in turn strengthen and augment your capacity to motivate and lead.

### **Exercise #1: The Mirror, Awareness exercise**

The first step in growing your capacity to motivate and lead has to do with personal awareness. As we seldom physically see ourselves as we truly are, this exercise increases personal awareness to our physical dimension.

Stand in front of a mirror so that you are able to view yourself completely. Be sure to breathe while performing this exercise.

Reflect on the following:

- Is there a more attractive side (left/right) of your face?
- Is your stance symmetrical? Are you taller on one side?
- What do you notice regarding your posture?
- Where do you place your hands?
- Where is your abdomen situated in respect to your hips and pelvis?
- How are your knees situated in relation to each other? To your feet? To the ground?

## Influence and Lead

- Slowly count to twenty, making sure to breathe normally, do you notice movement in your stance?
- Cross your hands. How does this look?
- Hold a book in your hands. How do you feel?
- Make some facial gestures and take them to extreme. How does this look and feel?
- Scream at yourself. What do you notice?
- Laugh at yourself. What do you feel?
- Think of something you would like say to persuade someone at work or elsewhere. Say it aloud to your mirror reflection. How did you feel? How convincing was it?
- For example, if you would like a colleague to help you with a task, say to your mirror image, "I would really like you to help me out with preparing for the banquet arrangements..."

Write down five things you were pleased with in the mirror. Next, write down four things that you would like to change.

Repeat this exercise every two weeks; notice changes and make a note.



**Stand in front of a mirror so that you are able to view  
yourself completely.**

**Is there a prettier side of your face?**



## **Exercise #2: Awareness in context**

Stand in front of a mirror so that you are able to view yourself completely. Be sure to breathe while performing this exercise.

Change your stance. Stretch your hands forward with palms facing upward, and speak assertively: "I am really angry with you. What you did is despicable and I will not have it again."

How does it feel? Can you feel changes in your body, stance, and your breathing as you are speaking? Make sure to note these changes and write them down.

Can you adjust your stance, tone of voice, posture, and gestures to make the verbal message more or less powerful and convincing?

Count slowly from one to ten with a high-pitched tone, then change to a low-pitched tone from ten to one. Are you aware of your voice support? Can you allow yourself more voice resonance and more support? Experiment with breathing as you are counting. Does it change your feeling?

Repeat the exercise. Experiment with your facial gestures, lower and raise your eyebrows, squint with your eyes, open your mouth and close it, narrow and widen your nostrils, and raise and lower your chin.

How does this process feel? Can you sense changes to your counting? Can you find better facial gestures that feel more comfortable?

**Thinking Alert:** It is vital to be aware of your nonverbal and verbal cues, including stance, gesture, and tone of voice in order to improve your silent influencing aptitude.

### **Exercise #3: Hand and palm presentations**

Carry out the following exercises with your spouse, parents, children, colleagues, or anyone you run across. Maybe you can do this with a complete stranger who keeps receiving annoying texts on his/her Smartphone at a restaurant. Be sure to choose your subject wisely (I will not take responsibility for bumps in the head because of an unexpected encounter with a Smartphone!).

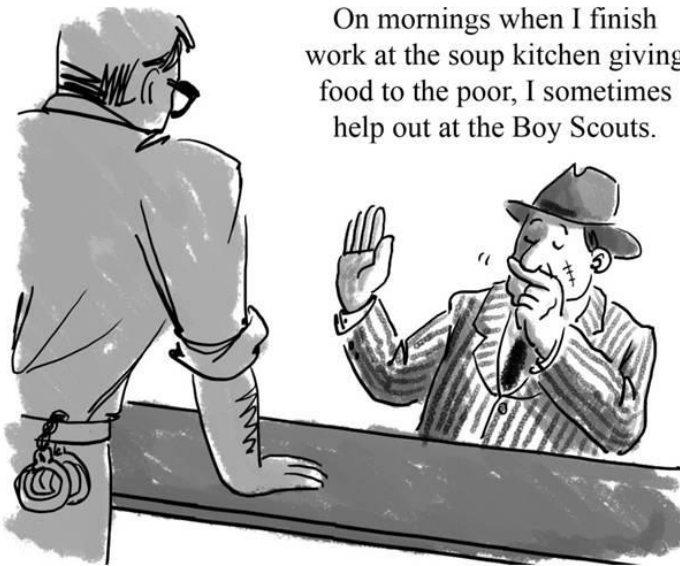
First part of the exercise: Carry out a conversation and maintain hand forward with palms upward. Notice your tonality, your choice of words, your speed, and your eye contact. Do you notice anything else? How comfortable are you with this posture? How is your breathing? Can you ask for something assertively in this stance?

Second part of the exercise: Carry out a conversation and maintain hand forward with palms downward. Notice your tonality, your choice of words, your speed, and your eye contact. Do you notice anything else? How comfortable are you with this posture? How is your breathing? Can you ask for something assertively in this stance?

Third part of the exercise: Observe conversations, movies, television shows, and presentations. Notice the hand gestures used, specifically, the way the palm is presented. Can you see a harmony between the spoken language and the hand gestures?

This three-step exercise is extremely important. Repeat it numerous times. With time, you will develop awareness of your hand gestures. You will be able to deploy them to silently influence a setting to your advantage while understanding and withstanding situations where others are using them. You will notice the confluence between the spoken language and the gestures you and others use.

This will serve you at times to increase the impact of requests from peers, lessen the antagonism you might have otherwise created, and diffuse potential dangerous and harmful interactions that could deteriorate into violence.



## **Exercise #4, Recognizing personal stress and inconsistencies**

Perform this exercise standing up, breathing normally, and letting your body flow naturally. Watch for changes in your breathing and in your voice pitch and tonalities.

Read and then repeat once or twice the following sentences. The first time, say them as though you really mean them and the next time as though you are not comfortable and unsure saying them.

1. **Trust me, that is the only way** to carry out this solution.
2. **Believe me**, we have to do it this way.
3. **I promise to give you** the results by next week.

Record your observations. If you aren't seeing or experiencing inconsistencies in your behavior, then repeat the sentences, but play out an extreme your feeling of unease.

Notice the following:

- What happens in your body as you are saying these sentences?
- Do your hands move to certain gestures (don't prevent it)?
- Do your fingers form specific patterns?
- Does your palm point to a specific direction?
- Do your hands do anything else?

Hold your right hand as if taking an oath, at heart level, vertical to the ground, palm facing out, fingers pointing up. Repeat the sentences. How does it feel? Is it “natural”?

Practice these sentences and others that you usually use at work, in meetings, and elsewhere to promise things. Observe your body, hands, breathing, and voice. Practice speaking while maintaining “consistent flowing” gestures that you feel comfortable with; doing so will increase your personal impact and your silent influence.

Pay attention to how others behave and what gestures they use when they are making commitments, promising things, and giving various statements.



## Influence and Lead



**Remember, to influence and lead.**

**Practice makes perfect!**

Michael Nir



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## **Marketing the Impossible - The 1st Step: Believe**

## **Marketing the Impossible. The First Step: Believe**

Believing in yourself is the first step. Without belief, we cannot make a change. We must believe in who we are and in our strengths, our abilities, our convictions, and our energies. Without belief, we cannot undertake the complex mission of marketing the impossible.

The first guiding question is **who am I?** Indeed, who are you, right here and now as you're reading this book? How much belief do you have in yourself? How much failure can you withstand? How many times can you hear "no" without flinching and without losing your belief in yourself?

The aphorism "know thyself" is has been common since ancient Greece. In order to plan and act toward a better future, we need to understand where we are today. Similarly, when navigating with a map to a desired location, the first thing we need to realize is where we are.

**Ask more girls to dance... "No" is just a word. Fail and fail again.**

The first step in becoming **bolder** is belief, which is strongly connected with stubbornness. Stubbornness is often not

## Influence and Lead

considered a virtue. Being stubborn is perceived as an undesirable trait, e.g., the idiom “stubborn as an ass.” Children who are stubborn are viewed negatively, and grown-ups even more so.

Nonetheless, a certain degree of stubbornness is an important ingredient in marketing the impossible; it is difficult to succeed without failing several times. Only by being committed and moving through the failures can you reap the desired results. We tend to think of “instant” fixes, solutions, and remedies, but these are illusions. Self-discipline, coupled with stubbornness, is a necessary factor in overcoming failures on our way to success.

Stubbornness pays! We tend to think that it doesn't, and we might be hesitant to be stubborn, but only the stubborn succeed.

### **Stubbornness on the Dance Floor**

The discussion of stubbornness reminds me of how I learned to dance. I truly was ungifted in coordination. I wanted to learn couples dancing. I asked my big brother what to do.

He told me, "Michael, just ask someone to dance."

I told him that I was an awful dancer and I step on my partner's feet.

He said, "You know what works for me? I don't give up. All you need to do is ask a girl to dance. If she refuses, ask the next one, and then the next until a girl says yes. With her, you can dance."

That is exactly what I did. My success rate is about one in six girls agreeing to dance with me (word had spread that I was completely inept), but I learned to dance, and in the process, I also learned something very important: being stubborn pays off. I also got to know some really nice girls, a few of whom still limp to this day.

Despite being stubborn and determined, you are going to fail sooner or later. Failing is as important as succeeding. It helps you to improve quality, it builds decisiveness, and it enables retrospect.

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Because hard times always happen, those who know how to handle failure are better off when they do. Actually, very smart people who never failed as children and haven't developed resilience tend to reduce the risk that they allow themselves to take because they have a perpetual fear of failing.

This is also true for first time winners (who succeed on their first attempt). They will fail eventually, but if they lack the endurance to trudge through the failures, they will never take the required risk to succeed.

**Remember: We learn a lot from our failures.**

Thomas Alva Edison, the great American inventor, once said, "I have *not* failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Edison knew the power of failure in giving us a feedback on what we are doing wrong and how we can improve.

Many people we know are afraid of taking the first step, taking a risk, and moving away from their comfort zone. They are afraid of the difficulty that the first step poses. Of course, doing the things in which we excel is a no brainer. The challenge is to get out of the comfort zone and do something that is difficult, to fail and keep doing it until we succeed—that is stubbornness. For many of us, marketing ourselves is next to impossible, but stubbornness is a virtue in this respect.

While the guiding question of the first step is, who I am, the reinforcing power that supports you as you overcome the obstacles in the first step is saying and feeling yes I can do this.

During the first step, you might experience a dwindling of energies and power. Taking the first step from the familiar and comfortable present state and moving outside the comfort zone to areas that are difficult and unfamiliar can be exhausting and frustrating. Invigorating you at these times is the alternate power that is “I have no choice.” Truly, you have no other choice, and you must plunge ahead.

There are two useful improvement tools to guide you through the first step.

The first is NLP, and the second is SWOT analysis. Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) helps you to move away from hindering and impeding beliefs you have on yourself. SWOT analysis helps you to understand your power points and your soft areas.

### **Tool: NLP, the stories of who I am**

We tell ourselves stories about ourselves. The stories create our concept of who we are, how we interact with the environment, and the results of our actions. Our memories shape our stories, which in turn define the memories we emphasize as we are creating the stories. They also implicitly reflect which events we

“forget” or deemphasize. In a reciprocal interaction, our memories and stories build on one another.

What we are going to say now is probably one of the most important points. Pay attention. We structure our perception of who we are solely on our decisions and our inner dialogue as we are observing our experiences and as we are thinking about the future.

**The biggest obstacle you are going to find in marketing the impossible is reading this right now—YOU.**

About ten years ago, I started by happenstance to ride a mountain bike. I was residing at the time in a small village in the desert that was run as a commune. Because most areas were only accessible by bicycle, and no cars were allowed, I decided to buy one. It was quite a big decision for me because my previous experiences with bikes were rather disastrous. One powerful memory I had was riding a bike in Fairbanks, Alaska, when I was 22 years old and hitting the curb on a main road, falling down, and receiving a nasty blow from the sidewalk. Another memory occurred when I was 16, and I went on a combined walking and biking trip with the trekking club I was a member of; I managed to collide into a thorny hedge, missing an easy right-turn at 10 MPH.

Over the years, my perception of my coordination and dexterity wasn't positive. Whether for bike riding or sports in general, I thought of myself as clumsy at best. This was exacerbated by

comments from friends and relatives that I can trace all the way back to when I was six years old. At that age, I was creative enough to swallow a tiny mercury battery from a camera, which resulted in an operation to extract it—quite a nasty experience. While the self-belief of my bike riding ineptness wasn't serving me well in sports, it did have its advantages in other areas, specifically in cognitive ones.

I tended to believe that people, who are bad in one field, compensate for it by being good in another field, so I did very well in cognitive assignments. When I finally decided to start riding a bike more seriously at that desert commune, I encountered the self-belief impediment of how well I could ride. At that point it wasn't self-serving; it was an obstacle to my progress. What's more, as my friends also had a negative view of my abilities in biking, they weren't expecting me to do well. Needless to say, I also didn't have many bike riding friends that could motivate and inspire me...

Do you see now? This is the danger of the stories and narratives we tell ourselves. This is also how they stand in our way of growth.

Not only did I select the stories that create and support a specific narrative, my friends and family reminded me of the experiences that impeded my growth. On top of that, my choice of friends was limited based on the narratives and stories I told. Quite the conundrum, isn't it?



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I urge you to reflect back and examine how powerful and often limiting this mechanism is. Moreover, stories and self-narratives are the way we pass on opportunities and provide legitimacy for ourselves to remain in our comfort zones. In order for you to **market the impossible**, you must listen to your dialogues and **monitor** the stories you tell yourself and others about **who you are**. I will avoid the philosophical assertion that indeed the “self” is an invention that we convince ourselves of because these are heavy Gestalt concepts that are too complex to introduce now.

By the way, if you wish to see how I have been doing recently, [watch here - http://youtu.be/qQ8ikQWTrVg](http://youtu.be/qQ8ikQWTrVg). Not too bad considering I had to rid myself of some historical narrative baggage before making the jump...

***The stories we select and choose to tell ourselves serve nothing. Every time you say to yourself and to others that this is how you are, you miss an opportunity. They also serve as impediments about what we can achieve.***

How can you liberate and allow yourself more freedom with the stories you tell? Start by writing a list of who you are. Read and reread it several times. Can you remember events and experiences that support these self-beliefs? Take a deep breath...

Can you remember events and experiences that essentially undermine your self-narratives? You will be surprised once you perform this exercise that actually you are able to find quite a few

events and experiences that support the opposite belief. This might raise the question of why you chose to focus on a certain set of stories, but this is unimportant now. ***Your focus should be on liberating yourself from stories that hold you back and allow you to see yourself in a way that empowers you.***

If you like to enhance self-awareness, we will gladly send you a **free** set of tools from Michael's book on [silent influencing](#). All you need to do is send us an email.

### **Tool: My SWOT**

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is a great tool for the first step of identifying what you can do and what you need to develop.

Commonly, companies use SWOT analysis to match resources and capabilities to the competitive environment in which the company operates. However, SWOT analysis is also a valuable self-assessment tool for personal growth. The elements of SWOT appear deceptively simple, but in fact, assessing and deciding what your individual strengths and weaknesses are, as well as analyzing what the opportunities and threats in the external environment are, is more complex than it might appear.

We have been using SWOT analysis for personal and business growth, and we strongly recommend you do the following. Not only does it provide a framework for answering the important

## Influence and Lead

guiding question of the first stage, it also brings forth the narratives and the stories by which we operate. By performing SWOT analysis, the alternate power of the first stage, “I have no choice,” emerges vividly.

The initial step of a SWOT analysis is identifying your individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors. They are the skills and assets (or lack thereof) intrinsic to you and that add to, or detract from, your value proposition. One's strengths might include formal education, fields of knowledge, work experience, professional network, and social skills.

On the other hand, one's weaknesses might include the lack of a critical skill, limited experience, psychological boundaries, and shortage of capital for opening a new business. When we list our weaknesses, we should notice that some weaknesses are flexible and can be altered. For example, if you lack knowledge on business management, you can easily fill in the gap with some intensive reading and a few business workshops.

While strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, opportunities and threats are external factors: environmental aspects that affect you. The opportunities for a business entrepreneur often change in the immediate external environment that can lead to possible growth.

Although you cannot directly affect these external factors, you can take advantage of them and use them to stimulate your success. In opposition to opportunities are threats: external factors that carry a harmful potential to you and your work. In the case of threats, we should identify them before they loom and prepare a defensive strategy.

### **Wearing Dark Glasses**

A few years ago, I had a client who quit his job as a middle-rank employee in a governmental company and wanted to start a company for importing fishing gear. When we started conducting a personal SWOT analysis, it appeared that from all four dimensions, the entrepreneur listed the largest number of factors under the category of weaknesses.

When we discussed the topic, I realized that working for fifteen years in a job that was unsatisfying and with very few challenges had a long-lasting impact on the entrepreneur's self-esteem and view of his strengths and weaknesses. Seeing the value in the first step, I referred my skeptic client to personal coaching where he could rebuild trust in his abilities and see the many strengths he possessed.

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In order to conduct a personal SWOT analysis, you should follow these four guiding questions

1. **Strengths:** What do you do well? What can you offer?
2. **Weaknesses:** What don't you do well? What do you lack?
3. **Opportunities:** What environmental situations and events could provide a positive impact?
4. **Threats:** What environmental situations and events could provide a negative impact?

The subsequent step is to pair the different SWOT dimensions. The first and easiest is to pair strength and opportunities, i.e., use strengths to take advantage of opportunities.

For example, if you are good with new people and you identify an opportunity with a local chapter of a leading NGO, you can pair strength and opportunities by attending a gala dinner and building a new network.

The next pair deals with weaknesses and threats; minimize your weaknesses in order to avoid threats. In case I identify my limited technological abilities as a weakness, and the possible threat of implementing new ERP software in the organization I'm working for, a smart move would be to improve my technological skills and knowledge. By doing so, I will minimize this weakness and reduce the possible negative effect of this anticipated threat.

The next challenging step is to pair weaknesses with opportunities and strengths with threats. In the first case, one can take advantage of opportunities by overcoming weaknesses or making them irrelevant. Following the example of limited technological abilities, if I improve my technological skills well enough, then I can become a leader in implementing the new ERP software and use this as an opportunity to improve my position in the organizational hierarchy.

The last pair matches strengths with threats, using our key abilities to avoid possible negative outcomes. In the case of being good with new people, one can use social skills to be transferred to a business unit that would remain with the old and familiar software.

As seen by these four pairs, the SWOT analysis dimensions constantly interact with each other, and one dimension can be used to compensate for others.

The guiding question for the first step is "Who am I?" and putting the answer in a SWOT grid can frequently assist us in maximizing our strengths, minimizing our weaknesses, taking advantage of coming opportunities, and avoiding possible threats.

### **First Step Summary**

Belief is also a feel oriented step: the guiding question of understanding and assessing who you are. The reinforcing power of "Yes I can" is to move from the current state in your comfort

zone into uncharted territories outside your comfort zone. The alternate power revitalizes to action during times of faltering energies. Use the relevant and practical tool of narratives to identify and change your narratives, by searching for experiences that support, other narratives, or better yet operating without a narrative at all. Use the self-assessment tool of SWOT analysis to map your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

**The first step keys are:**

- ***Believe: Feel oriented***
- ***Guiding question: Who am I?***
- ***Reinforcing power: Yes I can.***
- ***Alternate power: I have no choice.***
- ***Relevant practical tools: Change the narrative. SWOT analysis***

This is your first step in becoming **BOLDER**.

Grow your personal marketing aptitude:

[Marketing the impossible Five Steps for Personal and Professional Success , 'A step-by-step guide to accomplish business success'](#)

exclusively on Amazon Kindle, print and Audible.

Michael Nir



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Summary

## Summary

I hope you found this book useful. This book is different from my other books in that it is process oriented. We started with an outside view of the three main elements of high performance teams: relationship, accountability, and networking. We moved deeper to discuss the leader and the required leadership aptitudes for building a high performance team.

The Tuchman Jensen model discusses maturity of teams through a five-stage framework. It is an extremely useful view on team development that has stood the test of time. It gives the team and the leader a perspective into the process behind the process, a kind of a dressing room understanding of what is going on with the team. With this understanding, you can apply the required support and direction to any team, big or small.

The next chapter has been a step into your personal influence and leadership capabilities. It highlights the hunt for the illusive leadership and influence without authority and informal power. In all the soft skills workshops I lead, it is the most sought after topic. Truthfully, it is easier said than done, but analyzing stakeholder positions and defining support coalitions is the first step to building your influence powers.

## Influence and Lead

We then plunged fully into personal models of how to grow your individual power through NLP, awareness exercises, and last but not least, changing the narratives on which you base your convictions

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## **Before you go....**

Did you enjoy this book? You might find **these great titles** of interest:

### **Satisfaction Guaranteed!**

**Maybe you are looking for Breakthrough and Daring personal Growth – this guide works like Magic:**

[Silent Influencing - Employing Powerful Techniques for Influence and Leadership](#)

### **Bestseller!**

Are you tired of not getting your message across? Of not being heard? Of having your boss always ignoring you and your spouse not caring what you think?

Silent influencing is THE guide for you. It will enable you to change how you interact with others, how to influence them and how to lead to results. With Silent Influencing you will succeed.

It includes world proven techniques and an easy to implement approach; Silent Influencing has in ONE DAY REACHED AMAZON AMONG 200 ALL TIME BESTSELLER KINDLE FREE LIST.

**Influence without authority? Wait no longer!**

I know, you are searching for the ultimate method to build rapport with your stakeholders and emerge as a great influencer, aren't you? Once you finish

You will secure personalized practical advice relevant to YOU; why not sample a look-inside NOW.

**Bestseller!**

**[Simple - 3 Proven Fundamentals - Unlocking the Secrets of Leadership and Influence!](#)**

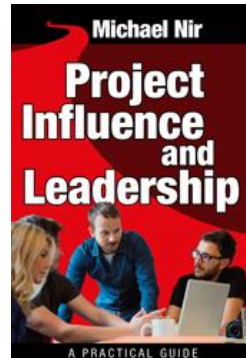
\* Imagine that you master the magic of influence and get people to do what you want?

\* Imagine that you have a clear path of how to accomplish it.

\* We have some good news and some bad news: The good news is that with the revealed secrets in this practical book you can quickly learn how to influence and lead.

\* These are proven methods that have been tested by the author in his global professional experience.

\* The bad news is that you have missed many opportunities by not reading this book so far.



Michael Nir

\* After you read this book you will not understand how you ever lived without the amazing knowledge within.