

Six Essential Influencing Elements

Most efforts to lead or manage change involve the process of how we can influence others, usually without much formal authority. This influence will need to be aimed in three different directions from where we sit as leaders: down, out and up. Each of these involves a different framework and understanding, but effective influence without authority begins with understanding the following six elements.

- **Self-Awareness:** Having insight into your skills and weaknesses as an influencer and the ability to move beyond the heroic leader role to being a collaborator. Self-insight also includes what you want from a situation and what you are willing to give to secure it.

For **Change Work** you will need to add in awareness of what you think about the change. Are you supportive of the change? Do you understand the reasons for the change? How will this change impact you and how you work? How will it impact your career? How do you feel about change in general? Is now a time in your life, professional or personal, that you can tolerate more change?

- **Needs of Others:** Understanding the full range of needs, from strategic to interpersonal, of those that you want to influence. Knowing what they need, desire and want is essential to your being an effective influence. Often people talk of “stakeholder analysis” in change work and this is the same thing as the needs of others.

For **Change Work** you will need to ask many of the same questions of others that you have asked of yourself. One of the big disconnects in leading change is assuming that once we come to a place where we can support change, we believe that others share that commitment. One of the best ways to enhance your ability to lead change is to truly understand how others see and will experience the change. It will also help immensely if you have a deep understand of what they value and believe they need.

- **Common Ground:** Having the ability to develop, share and gain buy-in to a broad vision about your collective work that is shared in all directions. This also includes knowledge about the mutual gain that we will share in, even if the motivation for that mutual gain varies from person to person.

For **Change Work** that is of a more tactical nature you hopefully will be working with an existing framework for carrying out the change from a strategic perspective. Your job will be to translate the change into something that can be understood and valued at the level of the people that you must influence. This does not mean “dumbing it down”. It does mean understanding the strategic change with enough precision that you as a leader can translate the impact of the change to your team, unit, department, office or organization. Not all news about change is welcome news. In fact, even developments that some might see as positive will be perceived by others in a negative light.

- **Relationship Capital:** Your stock of good will that has built up over time with the various constituencies and stakeholders, in all three directions. The process of influencing either builds or draws down on our relationship capital.

Change Work will draw on your stock of relationship capital, but it is possible to lead in a way that might minimize these withdrawals and perhaps even allow you to make a deposit or two. In general the way to do this are to be clear, focused on the people changing and be willing to share what you can as openly as possible- both the good and the not so good news. Many of the leadership qualities that can add to your stock of relationship capital when things are changing are reviewed below in the “Rules for Uncertain Times”.

- **Reciprocity and Exchange:** This involves your understanding of the reciprocal nature of relationships that are involved in all influencing situations. It also points to the very real exchange that goes on between parties in order to maintain that relationship and be influential.

In **Change Work** you want to align as many people as possible with the work and the gains to be made. Others you will have to ask to delay gratification and others will have to be compensated for their loss.

- **Follow Through:** Your ability to develop and use legitimate power to continuously influence others.

In **Change Work** legitimate power is both the structural power of your leadership position and more importantly the informal power that you derive from using the first five of these qualities. How you use this power to continue to push for change will be a key to success?