

## Skills 360 – How to Influence People (Part 1)

### Discussion Questions

1. Think of someone in your work who has a lot of influence. What are the person's qualities or characteristics?
2. If you want to persuade others of your opinion, do you usually give the reasons *before* your opinion or *after* your opinion?
3. Are you persuaded more by logical arguments or emotional reasons?

### Vocabulary

**Case:** The situation; "If that's the case, I think you should email the customer."

**To win someone over:** to successfully get someone's agreement or support; "At first, I thought Jean's idea was crazy, but she won me over with that great presentation."

**Compelling:** persuasive, interesting, or exciting; "I can't really fire Giorgio if there is no compelling evidence that he has done something wrong."

**Dip:** a small decrease or drop; "Real estate investors who are thinking long-term payoff shouldn't worry about a dip in the value of their properties."

**To come in under budget:** to not cost as much money as you planned to spend; "Since office renovations came in under budget, we have a bit of extra money to spend on the exterior of the building."

**To matter:** to be important or relevant; "To create an effective Powerpoint presentation, font size matters; anything under 20-point is too small."

**Receptive:** open and willing to listen or accept something; "If you've got a good idea, talk to Carl about it. He's really receptive to his employee's ideas."

**Abstraction:** an idea that exists only as an idea, without referring to real things or actions; "Rather than just talking about 'efficiency' as an abstraction, give people a real example of how this can save us time."

**Ground level experience:** real, firsthand experience with something; "I've decided to take a year off from my studies to get some ground level experience in business."

**To translate:** to create or produce some result or effect; "Our efforts to cut costs across every department have translated into an 8% increase in profits."

**To urge someone to do something:** to tell or advise someone that they should do something; "My father is urging me to go into accounting, but I think I'd prefer to work in marketing."

**To bend someone's ear:** to talk to someone, especially for a long time; "Hey Fay, if you've got some time this afternoon I'd love to bend your ear about all these problems in the warehouse."

**To drive:** to make someone motivated or determined; "I believe what drives me most is a real desire to create technologies that improve human life."

**To tailor:** to change something to fit or suit a situation or person; "Your presentation is good, but very technical, so you'll have to tailor it for a more general audience."

**Metaphor:** a "metaphor" is a word or phrase that has one original or literal meaning, but refers to or represents another idea or meaning; "The word 'bullish' is a metaphor that describes rising prices in the stock market."

**To play from behind:** in a game or sport, if you "play from behind," you are trying to score more points because you are currently losing; "Blackberry is playing from behind in the mobile phone market and needs to come out with something big to catch up."

**A muddy pitch:** a soccer field that has a lot of mud; "The new Adidas Fortis cleats are great on all surfaces, from a muddy pitch to artificial turf."

**To play off something:** to respond or adapt to something to gain an advantage or benefit; "Advertisers know how to play off people's basic desires to sell products."

**To equate with:** to be the same as; "For many people, salary equates with success; the more money you make, the more successful you are."

**Magnet:** a thing or person that attracts or draws in other things or people; "With a great workplace culture and amazing benefits, Google has become a magnet for young grads."

**Sense of urgency:** the feeling that something must be done soon or quickly; "With the price of oil continuing to drop, there's a real sense of urgency among energy companies."

**To recap:** to summarize or say briefly what has already been done or discussed; "All right everyone, let's just recap what we've discussed and then I'll let you go for lunch."

**What makes someone tick:** what motivates someone or makes them behave in certain ways; "We've done extensive surveys to find out what really makes customers tick so we can respond to their needs."

**To wear something on your sleeve:** to show your real feelings to people; "Some people think a leader who wears his heart on his sleeve shows weakness, but I think it makes him seem human."

## Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. My name's Alex, and I'll be your host for today's lesson on how to influence people.

There are many different reasons *why* you might want to influence people. Maybe you're trying to get their support for your idea, or maybe you want to inspire them, or maybe you want to convince them to do something. Whatever the *case* may be, I think you'll find the techniques we're going to learn today very useful for *winning people over*.

First I want to look at what you should focus on when you speak to others. And that doesn't mean just talking about yourself or your idea, as people might stop listening. Instead, try starting with the *'why'* instead of the *'what'*. That is, give people a *reason* to listen to your idea, then give them your idea.

For example, say you believe that your company's marketing budget should be decreased. Instead of starting with that idea, set it up with *compelling* reasons first. That might sound like "we've had a pretty surprising *dip* in profits this past year." Or maybe it's "Gerry from marketing came to me and said they're going to *come in under budget* again." Or maybe you're trying to sell something. In this case, don't begin with a list of product features, like "the X300 comes with 16 gigabytes of RAM..." Instead, start with *why* that RAM might be important. For example, you might say "speed *matters*."

Now here's another thing: focus on the connection between other people and you, and the connection between ideas and life. What do I mean by that? Well, if you want to influence someone, show how you have similar values or experiences, like this: "So, I know we have all had some problems with this new software..." Or maybe this: "It's pretty clear that everyone here is concerned about costs..." Showing a common interest will help make people more *receptive* to you, and your ideas.

As for the connection between ideas and life, remember that most people don't deal in *abstractions*. They think about *ground level experience*. If we think again about that example of trying to persuade someone to buy a new computer. Don't just talk about what the computer can do, talk about *how* that *translates* into a better experience for the user. In the end, isn't that what really matters?

And when I say you need to connect ideas with life, I'm talking about *other people's lives*, not yours. You need to appeal to people's desires, interests, dreams, and hopes. That starts with getting people to talk about themselves. It's amazing how much people will like or trust you if you just let them *bend your ear* about what they want or hope for. Ask them questions. Show interest. It will not only make them feel good, it will give you useful information.

Useful how? Well, you'll know what interests them or **drives** their desires. Then you can **tailor** what you say to match that. So if someone mentions their passion for football, you can drop in a nice **metaphor** like "we seem to be **playing from behind** on a **muddy pitch** here." Or if it seems clear that someone wants to appear smart, then you can compliment them on their intelligence.

You see, different people might require different approaches. Some are logical, in which case you should use logic. Some are emotional, in which case you can use emotion. Basically, you need to **play off** their personality, their desires, and their hopes. And what will happen is they will feel a greater connection, greater trust, and greater interest. And that **equates with** greater influence.

But still, influencing someone doesn't just mean making someone feel good. Like I said earlier, maybe you want to persuade them, or inspire them, or sell them something. And to do these things, it also matters *how* you talk about your ideas. For one thing, you should demonstrate passion. Create energy around yourself and your ideas. Don't say "good," say "fantastic!" Passion is like a **magnet**. It draws people in and makes them want to be involved. And here's another thing, you should create a **sense of urgency**. Whatever you're talking about, you should do it in a way that makes people think action is required *now* not later.

All right, let's **recap** these ideas: If you want to influence people, you need to start with *why*, not *what*. You also need to make connections between yourself and others, and between your ideas and other people's lives. Appeal directly to **what makes people tick**. And always remember to **wear** your passion **on your sleeve**.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the [BusinessEnglishPod.com](http://BusinessEnglishPod.com) website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon!

## Review

1. When you talk to other people, what should you focus on at the start?
  - A The key features of your idea.
  - B Information about yourself.
  - C Details about your idea.
  - D Why your idea is important.
  
2. Which "connections" should you try to make to influence people? [choose 2]
  - A The connection between you and famous people.
  - B The connection between your idea and life.
  - C The connection between other people and you.
  - D The connection between your idea and popular business books.
  
3. If you're trying to sell someone a computer, what should you talk about?
  - A Product features
  - B The user's experience
  - C Potential problems
  - D The customer's personality
  
4. To influence people better, it is a good idea to... [choose all that apply]
  - A ... ask them questions.
  - B ... avoid metaphors.
  - C ... focus on money.
  - D ... talk about abstract concepts.
  - E ... show interest in what they say.
  - F ... appeal to people's desires and dreams.
  - G ... avoid talking about your experience.
  - H ... talk about their experience.
  
5. How is understanding a person useful when you want to influence them?
  - A You can tailor what you say to what motivates them.
  - B You can show how intelligent you are.
  - C You can create interesting comparisons between you and them.
  - D You can decide whether they are worth persuading.
  
6. When it comes to *how* you talk about your ideas, you should... [choose 2]
  - A ... avoid adjectives.
  - B ... create a sense of urgency.
  - C ... show passion.
  - D ... remain calm.

## Review Answers

1. When you talk to other people, what should you focus on at the start?

**D Why your idea is important.**

2. Which “connections” should you try to make to influence people? [choose 2]

**B The connection between your idea and life.**

**C The connection between other people and you.**

3. If you’re trying to sell someone a computer, what should you talk about?

**B The user’s experience**

4. To influence people better, it is a good idea to... [choose all that apply]

**A ... ask them questions.**

**E ... show interest in what they say.**

**F ... appeal to people’s desires and dreams.**

5. How is understanding a person useful when you want to influence them?

**A You can tailor what you say to what motivates them.**

6. When it comes to *how* you talk about your ideas, you should... [choose 2]

**B ... create a sense of urgency.**

**C ... show passion.**

## Online Practice

Click the “Launch” button to open the **online practice**:

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