

Skills 360 – How to Influence People (Part 2)

Discussion Questions

1. How does it make you feel when someone uses your name regularly during conversation?
2. Do you ever find yourself imitating or copying the way other people speak or use body language?
3. If you want someone to do something for you, do you usually give an order or a suggestion?

Vocabulary

Not always the case: not always true in every situation; "I agree that sometimes we don't respond quickly enough to complaints, but it's not always the case."

To open the door to something: to make something possible or give new opportunities; "Every additional language you know can open doors to more employment and business opportunities."

Rapport: a good relationship based on understanding and trust; "Over the five years I've worked with Darla, we've developed a great rapport and even friendship."

Literally: really true, rather than just an exaggeration or metaphor; "Sales have literally doubled in the past year, which has made our investors really happy."

To drop: to mention something casually or indirectly; "Ernie doesn't respond well to direct feedback, so just try to drop your suggestions into conversation naturally."

Habitually: usually or often; "Tanis isn't just late every once in a while; she's habitually late, and you need to speak to her about it."

To echo: to repeat what someone says or express the same idea as someone else; "It's not just Dylan who thinks wages are low; several other employees have echoed his concerns."

Workforce: the entire group of people who work at a company; "With the troubles in the energy sector, many oil and gas companies are cutting their workforces, leaving many people unemployed."

Validated: if someone feels “validated,” they feel supported and understood; “I finally felt validated for all my hard work when Stan mentioned what I’ve done in his speech to shareholders.”

To mirror: to reflect or show the same thing as someone else; “Because people naturally mirror each other, you should smile so that your listeners smile too.’

To lean in: to move your upper body closer to something or someone; “In the middle of our conversation in the staff room, Sam leaned in to whisper some rumor he’d heard about our manager.”

A word of caution: a warning; “Just a word of caution for you in your meeting with the CFO: don’t mention the budget cuts. He doesn’t want to talk about it.”

Seniority: position in an organization based on age or length of service; “Until I’ve got more seniority, it looks like I’ll be getting all the worst shifts at the warehouse.”

To imitate: to copy words or actions; “Dan has studied Steve Jobs’ presentations because he thinks that to be a great presenter, you have to imitate the best.”

To mock: to copy someone in a negative way that makes them look bad; “Did you see Jill in the cafeteria mocking Michael after his presentation? She thinks she’s funny but she’s just disrespectful.”

Collaborative: done with a group or team, cooperatively; “We believe in collaborative problem-solving, and so we’re partnering with three other companies on this ocean clean-up project.”

To propose: to suggest an idea or plan; “I like the ideas I’ve heard so far, but I’d like to propose something completely different for our new website.”

Hypothetically: if you speak “hypothetically” about something, you are imagining that it is true, rather than talking about a real situation; “All right, so hypothetically speaking, what would we do if the government *didn’t* approve our new development?”

A sense of control: a feeling that you have the power to do something or make decisions; “Involving staff in major decisions has given employees a greater sense of control and great job satisfaction.”

To strip someone of something: to take something away from someone; “The executive team has decided to strip Wayne of his title of manager because he just can’t handle the job.”

To foster: to promote or help something develop; “Putting on regular celebrations of employee success has really helped to foster a sense of pride throughout the company.”

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. My name's Alex and today we're going to look at some more techniques for influencing people.

The power to influence can allow you to do many wonderful things, such as lead people, change their minds, motivate them to action, and negotiate successfully. These are abilities that can help you in life and in business. Now, it might seem like some people naturally have more influence than others, but that's **not always the case**. Many powerful people have *learned* how to influence people using specific techniques.

In our last lesson, we had a look at *what* you should talk about and how you should talk about it. Today I want to take a closer look at some language techniques that can **open the door to** greater influence. And these techniques all help build **rapport** or trust with the person you're talking to.

Let's start with one key habit that really makes a positive impression on people: using their name. Dale Carnegie, who **literally** wrote the book on influencing people, said that "a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." And this doesn't just mean when you first greet them. **Drop** their name into the middle of a conversation, or in the middle of a sentence, like "So, I'm wondering Susan if we should try something a bit different here." You can probably think of someone you work with who does this **habitually**; next time you talk with that person, think about how it makes you feel to hear your name.

Not only do people like to hear their name, they like to hear their own ideas too. For that reason, it's a good idea to **echo** what other people say. On a basic level, you can just repeat a single word. So if Bob says that something is "essential," you can use that word "essential" in what you say too. That will help Bob connect with your ideas. But you might use more than just one word. You might repeat an entire idea, like "So Bob, you think that it's absolutely essential to increase our **workforce**? That's definitely something to consider." Bob will feel heard and **validated** simply because you repeated his idea.

And besides repeating *what* people say, you can **mirror how** they speak. If someone is speaking informally, you can speak informally too. If someone **leans in** when they speak, you can lean in too. Sometimes we do this without even knowing it. Whether you're aware of it or not, mirroring can help build rapport. But **a word of caution** here: mirroring is effective with peers, or colleagues, or people in the same position as you. But mirroring across lines of **seniority** can have a negative effect. And don't try **imitating** someone who is very different from you. You don't want to come across as **mocking**.

Now here's another little language trick for increasing trust and rapport: instead of saying "I" and "you," try saying "we." How can you do that? Well, if you're giving an opinion, rather than saying "I think that maybe..." try saying "Maybe we should..." And instead of saying "*you* need to come up with a solution," you might try "we need to come up with a solution." You might *mean* "you," but using "we" makes it feel more **collaborative**. The word "we" brings you together with the other person, while the words "you" and "I" separate you from others.

There are also a couple of other techniques that you can combine with the use of the word "we." One of these is **proposing** your ideas **hypothetically**, rather than directly. So, rather than "I think we should do X," you can say "what if we tried X?" or "If we tried X, maybe we could achieve Y." What you'll notice here is that you are reducing the *forcefulness* of your idea. And that's important, because *influence* is not the same as *force*. You see, one of the things that everyone wants in life is **a sense of control**. And when you can increase people's sense of control, or avoid **stripping** them of control, you'll have greater influence.

Good leaders know this. They avoid giving orders, like "do this" and "do that." Instead, they give suggestions and ask questions. For example, "why don't you try X" or "do you think X would work?" Using suggestions and questions helps people maintain their sense of control. Again, influence isn't the same as force. Influence is built on positive feelings, trust, and rapport.

And that's what all these techniques we've looked at today help **foster** and encourage. So remember to use people's names, mirror what they say and how they say it, focus on "we," and use questions and suggestions to avoid being too direct and forceful.

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** 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. In general, what do people like to hear in conversation? [choose all that apply]
 - A Their own ideas.
 - B Their position or title.
 - C Their names.
 - D Reasons to trust you.
 - E The same words they use.

2. In which situation is it NOT a good idea to mirror how someone speaks?
 - A When speaking to your colleagues.
 - B When speaking informally.
 - C When speaking to your superiors.
 - D When speaking with peers.

3. Which of the following statements uses language that brings you together with others, rather than separating you? [choose 2]
 - A I really think you need to shorten the presentation.
 - B Maybe what we need to do is find a different solution here.
 - C If we improved the visuals, maybe the overall impact will be greater.
 - D You might want to edit the document one more time, in my opinion.

4. Which of the following statements or questions demonstrate “hypothetical” speaking? [choose all that apply]
 - A Maybe if we worked late, we could get this done today.
 - B I really think we have to reduce costs on this.
 - C This is not going to work given the current budget.
 - D What if we changed the timeline in the proposal?
 - E We could have a huge impact if we agreed some strategic actions.

5. What do good 21st-century leaders avoid?
 - A Asking questions.
 - B Giving orders.
 - C Making suggestions.
 - D Speaking hypothetically.

6. What is influence built on, and what do all these language techniques help to build?
 - A A sense of control.
 - B Direction and force.
 - C Friendliness and informality.
 - D Rapport and trust.

Review Answers

1. In general, what do people like to hear in conversation? [choose all that apply]
A Their own ideas.
C Their names.
F The same words they use.
2. In which situation is it NOT a good idea to mirror how someone speaks?
C When speaking to your superiors.
3. Which of the following statements uses language that brings you together with others, rather than separating you? [choose 2]
B Maybe what we need to do is find a different solution here.
C If we improved the visuals, maybe the overall impact will be greater.
4. Which of the following statements or questions demonstrate “hypothetical” speaking? [choose all that apply]
A Maybe if we worked late, we could get this done today.
D What if we changed the timeline in the proposal?
E We could have a huge impact if we agreed some strategic actions.
5. What do good 21st-century leaders avoid?
B Giving orders.
6. What is influence built on, and what do all these language techniques help to build?
D Rapport and trust.