



THE INFLUENCE EDGE

How to
Persuade Others
to Help You
Achieve Your Goals

ALAN VENGEL

An Excerpt From

***The Influence Edge:
How to Persuade Others to Help You Achieve Your Goals***

by Alan Vengel

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Foreword

Every day here at Nortel Networks, people are asked to lead different projects. At times, we have employees working on three separate projects at the same time, with three separate workteams. Some of those team members might be right there beside their coworkers, while others are thousands of miles away, tied in through phone, fax, or email.

In spite of all the challenges of leading global teams, project leaders have got to work effectively with all the necessary players in order to successfully complete their assigned projects. Their success with one project is crucial because it determines what they are assigned next.

That doesn't sound so pathbreaking, you are probably thinking. And it's not—except that with hierarchies flattening everywhere at Nortel Networks, many times project leaders have to reach out laterally, using their own personal influence to forge the working relationships they need to get the job done right.

Now, that requires the much more challenging art of persuasion, or *influence*. And as organizations everywhere become flatter, and more web-like, being able to influence without direct authority grows ever more crucial—not just at Nortel Networks, but at companies around the world.

The Influence Edge™ has been taught here at Nortel Networks to dozens of employees. Many of these employees came away with a lifetime's worth of insightful practical strategies for persuading coworkers and business associates. Putting into practice The Influence Edge strategies was an important factor in meeting their project-related goals.

They have even attributed The Influence Edge strategies to helping them improve relationships not only at Nortel Networks but also with friends, family members, and spouses. No surprise—The Influence Edge is, after all, about tapping into what motivates people, what makes them move into action, what allows them to build good working relationships. It's a highly sophisticated technique built on the foundations of plain old human nature.

Now, Alan Vengel has taken the insights and skills that have long been available in his The Influence Edge workshops and put them together into one fun, easy-to-use workbook of the same name that works as well for individual readers as it does in small groups or across whole organizations. It's packed with worksheets, quick tip boxes, and funny and enlightening personal profiles based on people and situations Alan's actually dealt with in his career as an "influence" educator and consultant.

Now more than ever, you have to know how to get what you need from people. The old "I'm the boss!" style of influencing employees to do the job just isn't an option anymore in today's work environment. Thankfully *The Influence Edge* is available to highlight some great techniques. It continues to enhance the "networked" way we get things done here at Nortel Networks.

Angel Rampy
Manager, Nortel Networks

Introduction

How do you move people to action if you don't have direct authority—or even if you do have direct authority but don't care to exert it?

How do you get results from others without destroying relationships?

These are the questions I have addressed for over 20 years in conducting workshops on effective influence skills. They are the burning communication questions of managers and professionals in every organization where I have consulted.

One thing is clear: the ability to influence people is not something you must be born with, but something anyone can learn. That is why I have written *The Influence Edge*. It's a precise system of behavioral skills that you can use over and over again, to move others to action at work, in personal relationships, and in everyday life. In fact, my Influence Edge workshop materials have been used successfully in hundreds of organizations all over the world.

Now I have taken highlights from The Influence Edge workshop materials and put them into this fun and easy-to-use workbook full of strategies you can learn quickly and put to use immediately. It will help you get started turning the often disorderly and difficult task of getting someone else to help you achieve your goals into an entirely viable process of analysis, preparation, and action. Just follow the system presented on the following pages, practice some of the short exercises, and you are on your way. You will not only be better prepared for those difficult situations, you will also build productive relationships and get more done in less time.

I start in Chapter One by showing you how and why the ability to influence others is essential to getting work done. Chapters Two, Three, and Four introduce you to a powerful system of influence behaviors and strategic thinking. Chapters Five and Six describe the nuts and bolts of planning for a real influence situation and how to map out your strategy. And finally, Chapter Seven goes deeper into the practice of influence to show you how to build a better long-term rapport with really difficult people.

When it comes to getting other people to get the job done, nothing succeeds like the art of influence. This workbook is your starter kit. If you are interested in the complete The Influence Edge program for yourself or your organization, contact me at:

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CHAPTER ONE

Why You Need Influence Skills

Let's start by looking at a few situations that I see and hear about all the time in my role as an influence skills-building consultant.

- Yolanda is the head of Human Resources at FactPoint, a mid-sized communications company. She's working on deadline to put together a new employee handbook, but she's stuck on one section because one of the company's vice presidents won't get her the documentation she needs to complete it. She has already put in several requests. Clearly, getting her the information is not the vice president's highest priority, but Yolanda needs it as soon as possible. How can she get the information she needs?
- Gary, a brand management director for a large food packager, has a great new marketing idea for a languishing line of cereals, but it's a bit experimental and he has

If It Were Only That Easy

Recently, at a workshop at a major Bay Area geo-tech company, a scientist approached me on the first break of the morning.

"Why," she said, "do we have to do this influence stuff? Can't people just do the work like they're supposed to?"

This was not the first time I had heard this question from someone recently promoted to a management position. People such as this scientist enthusiastically sign up for the work to do whatever their specialty is, but once promoted to team leader, all that changes.

"In a perfect world," I told her, "yes, everyone would do the work as you need it done. But this is not a perfect world and everyone sees it differently. That's why you've got to see the world from their point of view, and then get them to do the same—to make your priorities theirs.

"Hence, the need to influence . . . and to influence well!"

no way of proving to senior management that it will definitely raise sales. In other words, their approval would have to be at least in part an act of faith. How does he get them to green-light a budget and staff for his brainchild?

- Vera has designed and implemented a collaborative performance-feedback process for the department she heads at CompuStar, a mid-size Silicon Valley firm. The process has vastly improved communication, efficiency, and productivity, and she knows other department heads would benefit from it if they would give it a try. But she's no vice president, just one department head among many. How does she get the other department heads to open up to her idea?
- Roberto, sales director for a series of mail-order catalogs, has thought up a whole new sales campaign and needs the expertise of a certain consulting firm his company has worked with in the past to put it into action. But this time around, he doesn't have the money in his budget to afford the firm's expensive services. How can he get the firm's input when he can't afford to hire them?

For Yolanda, Gary, Vera, and Roberto, their solution lies in two simple words: influence skills. Let's face it—the workplace isn't what it used to be. Organizations are getting flatter, more collaborative, and team-oriented in their decision-making, and less overtly dependent on a clear chain of command from top to bottom. That means that old-fashioned, crack-the-whip authority doesn't carry the weight it once did.

Even if you still have the chance to bark out orders and edicts left and right, it's simply not the most effective way anymore of getting what you want from people. Workers, like all human beings, thrive on a sense of being needed and appreciated, of having a shared stake in something. They *don't* thrive on demands and threats from on-high.

Influence skills are even *more* important if you don't have clear authority. Since most of the time we don't have clear authority, influence skills as presented in this workbook are designed to help everyone, from bosses dealing with people reporting to them to people reporting to bosses—not to mention the colleagues, suppliers, vendors, customers, clients, team members, contractors, and even competitors we all have to deal with every day. *To be successful, we must have the ability to influence people over whom we have no direct control.* Learning effective influence skills to win the willing commitment of others gives us the edge we need to get what we want and build more productive business relationships—even when we have the so-called authority to enforce rather than cultivate compliance. *Especially* when we have the authority to enforce compliance.

Take a moment to fill out Worksheet 1, which gets you to think about where you want to have more influence in your life.



Determining Where You Want More Influence

Take a moment to think about your life. In what areas do you want more influence?

WORK AREAS

Upper Management: what would you want to influence them about?

Peers: what would you want to influence them about?

Support Groups: what would you want to influence them about?

PERSONAL AREAS

Family: what would you want to influence them about?

Friends: what would you want to influence them about?

Others: what would you want to influence them about?

The Importance of Influence in the 21st Century Workplace

While I was interviewing a manager in a high-tech manufacturing company to help her customize a program, the following exchange took place:

"We're matrixed," the manager stated, "so no one works for anyone and everyone reports to everyone. Decisions require support, and anyone with more information than you has power. We exert influence across all organizational boundaries, and informal support can make or break a project."

"What kinds of skills do your people need?" I asked.

"They need to plan for every meeting with the same attention to detail they would apply to their technical projects. You can't ignore the people side of a project. People are the reason why a project will succeed or fail. Give me people who can compete for resources without burning the relationship and I'll hire them."

At this point you're probably thinking, *so it's better to use influence with people rather than Authority*. But what's the difference between influence and manipulation?

Effective influence focuses not just on getting us what we need or want, but on improving the relationship. Thus, we are honest and sincere about our objectives, flexible in our approach, and aware that the people we are dealing with have their own goals or priorities. Manipulation, on the other hand, uses the relationship only to accomplish what we want with little or no consideration of the impact on the other person. Call it the "hit and run" approach if you will.

FIVE GOOD REASONS FOR ATTAINING INFLUENCE SKILLS ... NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO!

1. Old-fashioned formal authority just doesn't cut it anymore. Organizations are flatter, work is done more as a team effort, and everyone has a say. Direct control over others is limited.
2. Your ability to influence is directly related to your individual success at work.
3. It's more important than ever to approach situations with both a thought-out plan and the flexibility to adapt it to meet others' needs as well as your own.
4. In our flatter work world, it's more expected than ever that you should know how to work with other people so that everyone's goals are met.
5. Well-honed influence skills help you:
 - Get work done faster.
 - Reduce conflict.
 - Relieve stress.
 - Demonstrate that you are a team player.
 - Be a better negotiator.



Determining What You Know About Influence

You have influenced and been influenced your entire life. It’s important to identify how you have been influenced, what works on you, and what does not work on you.

<p>BEST</p> <p>Who are some of the best influencers you have run across? What have they done?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What impact on you will future dealings with this person have?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>WORST</p> <p>Who are some of the worst influencers you have run across? What have they done?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>What impact on you will future dealings with this person have?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Building Your Strategy

These typical influence-based situations may sound as familiar to you as they would to Yolanda, Gary, Vera, and Roberto, our model influencers:

- You need someone to provide you with necessary information so that you can accomplish your goal. Giving you the information is not the other person's highest priority.
- You need to get support from senior management for a new project. The support could be in the form of money or a headcount.
- You have made some time saving and money saving improvements in your department and you would like to influence managers in other parts of your organization to make the same improvements.
- You need the help of an expert who has more experience than you in a certain task, but that person is very, very busy.
- You have explained to someone what you need or want in a logical, rational way. You have even used data to back up your position. But the other person resists seeing your point or helping you out.

Take a moment to think of other situations you have heard about or experienced where the ability to influence someone was key to your getting what you needed. Then take a look at Worksheet 3, which gets you to assess what it is you most need in situations where you need to influence someone. Is it to sell your ideas, to get support for a project, to build a better working relationship? Use Worksheet 3 to think about how influence skills would most benefit your life. You will be

referring back to Worksheet 3 in later exercises and worksheets as you apply the influence skills you will learn here to challenges in your own life.



Focusing Your Influence Needs

Determine which three of the nine areas below are most important to you. Place a 1, 2, or 3 in the box to the right reflecting your first, second, and third priorities. You will want to keep all three of your selections in mind as you work through this book—and pay specific attention to your first priority.

Generally, how would you want to improve? What would you like more effective influence to help you do?

1. To sell my ideas better ☐
2. To get support for my projects ☐
3. To build rapport and better relationships ☐
4. To be more savvy in political situations ☐
5. To run more effective meetings ☐
6. To be more flexible in tough situations ☐
7. To get people more involved and committed ☐
8. To handle conflict more effectively in both business and personal life ☐
9. To be able to read people and situations more effectively ☐



Identifying a Specific Influence Situation

Now, identify a current situation in your life where applying what you learn in this workbook will help you increase your influence ability. Take your time in choosing because you will be referring back to this situation throughout the workbook, and you will have a surefire influence plan for it by the end.

SITUATION:

Who do you want to influence? _____

What do you want to influence them about?

What are the challenges you face in this situation?

What is your time frame? Do you have just one meeting to influence? Or an option for several meetings?

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