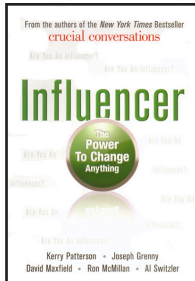


# Book Reviews for Managers

## Influencer

### *The Power To Change Anything*

by Kerry Patterson • Joseph Genny • David Maxfield • Ron McMillan • Al Switzler



McGraw Hill, 2008  
ISBN #978-0-07-148499-2

#### REVIEWED BY IAN COOK

If you are like me, and like most of the managers we all know, you have a default strategy for influencing people around you. You TELL them what they should do! You SHARE your wisdom and advice, often drawn from experience in similar situations. Your SUGGESTIONS are frequently spot on and brilliant.

There is only one problem, say the authors of this excellent book. This approach rarely works. Why? Because it so often comes across as parental, manipulating, nagging, not their solution, serving someone else's interest, and so forth. All these are sound reasons why people push back and hold on tenaciously to their current behavior.

#### Master Influencers

The authors claim, however, that there exists a proven array of approaches to influencing new behavior, whether that be of one person or a country's entire population. The writers followed the accomplishments of a number of individuals who have successfully applied influence strategies to problems that others have been trying to solve, in some cases for centuries.

Here are just three of these "master influencers":

- *Dr. Mimi Silbert* whose San Francisco organization, *Delancey Street Foundation*, runs a number of enterprises (restaurant, repair shop, moving company) that hires convicted felons, homeless persons, lifetime drug addicts, hardened gang members and the like. Of those who join Delancey, less than 10% return to their former life.

- *Dr. Donald Hopkins* of *The Carter Center*. In 1986 the Center declared war on the Guinea Worm that was infesting the village populations of 20 countries in Africa and southern Asia. Within twenty years their programs reduced the number of cases from 3.5 million to under 10,000.
- *Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn* in Thailand's Ministry of Public Health between 1989 and 1993 cut the number of new HIV cases by 80%, saving five million Thais from contracting this terrible disease.

#### Their Approaches

From studying how these and other change geniuses were so successful, it became apparent that the approaches they employed have some things in common.

1. They first identify the vital behaviors that are at the root of the problem and need to change. This often requires investigating examples of "positive deviance," situations or locations where the problem should exist but doesn't.
2. They then focus their efforts strategically on changing only these few behaviors. Alter these and the problem topples.

Obviously, the second step is the more difficult one. That said, how did they go about it? Again in common, they tended to work through an array of six sources of influence that, together, respond to two concerns of any individual or group being asked to change their behavior:

1. Is it worth it to me to change?
2. Can I do it?

“...design a strategy that combines more than one of the six sources of influence”

The Six Sources Of Influence		
	MOTIVATION	ABILITY
<b>PERSONAL</b>	Sometimes the required (“vital”) behavior is not seen as pleasant. You need to reframe it in their mind as leading to positive, desirable outcomes.	Beyond the will to make significant change, most people need to learn new skills, develop clear goals, receive regular feedback and manage emotional impulses to fall back into the old ways.
<b>SOCIAL</b>	Harnessing the words and deeds of peers is a proven way to influence someone to change his or her behavior. To change an organization or community, it is the respected and connected opinion leaders that count the most.	You can simply achieve more when you engage a web of other people to become involved, support and enable your change to occur. As the now famous expression goes, “it takes a village.”
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>	Definitely not to replace but rather to supplement personal and social strategies, well designed and well timed incentives reward incremental improvement in vital behaviors.	Change the environment to support the change: tools available, layout and design of physical space, work and information flow, proximity of others to the target individual(s), etc.

The first of these two concerns refers to the *motivation* that has to be present in anyone who successfully shifts their behavior. The second speaks to their *ability* to do it. Six strategies are derived by approaching motivation and ability through three perspectives: personal, social and structural/environmental. (See table)

### Why I Like this Book

I like this book because its six strategies are comprehensive. They provide an excellent road map for managers who want to induce change in an individual employee, a unit or, indeed, an entire organization. The authors, however, urge us not to just take the first strategy that seems appropriate and implement that one. Instead, learning from the experience of their influence role models, they suggest that we design a strategy that combines more than one of the six sources of influence.

I like it because their approaches address those classic elements that drive development of an employee—found also in Hersey and Blanchard’s *Situational Leadership—Commitment* (Motivation & Self-Confidence) and Competency (Ability). Whether lack of will or lack of skill/

knowledge stands in the way of change, the *Influencer* model offers a route forward.

And I like *Influencer* because it emphasizes the central goal of *behavior*—vital behaviors that need to be changed. At the same time, it reminds us that we humans make choices around behavior based on our assumptions about both current reality and probable consequences. These are what Peter Senge and others have called our “mental maps.”

One of the book’s chapters is entitled, “Change the Way You Change Minds.” The most powerful route to transforming someone’s cognitive map and, from this, their behavior is to have them safely, successfully and usually incrementally experience the new behaviors. I am reminded of white knuckle flyers overcoming their aversion to airplanes by first viewing videos about flying and talking about it, then sitting in a plane’s cabin at the gate, then experiencing a practice taxi ride on the tarmac and finally taking off and landing.

The book returns frequently to the change heroes’ stories for practical examples of

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*“...managers can learn several practical strategies to change performance-related behavior in their own organization”*

how to generate permanent behavior change. For example, at Dr. Silbert's Delancey Street Foundation,

- They insist on two vital behaviors: Each resident must (1) take responsibility for someone else and (2) confront anyone about any single violation of the rules. This demand both harnesses the *social motivation* of peer influence and, when people succeed at Delancey as a result, shows how heretofore undesirable behavior (“rating” on someone) leads to desirable outcomes for all.
- Using *structural ability*, they purposely house as room mates former members of competing street gangs.

### “So What” for Managers

From this book I think managers can learn several practical strategies to change performance-related behavior in their own organization. In a nutshell, here is the recommended approach:

1. Get clear on the behaviors you want changed or stopped and what vital behaviors you want to see in their place.
2. Determine to what extent the obstacle to change is lack of motivation and/or lack of skills and knowledge.
3. In developing your overall plan, consider strategies that draw on the three sources of influence: personal, social support and structural.

When you read this book, you will learn much from the master influencers which were its inspiration.

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