

# Influence

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DS 6011: Capstone Part I  
School of Data Science  
University of Virginia

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# Why does influence matter?

Influence - the ability to persuade someone to think or act in the way you want.

An essential part of leadership

To influence, it is necessary to be a good leader

*“He that thinketh he leadeth when no one is following, is merely taking a walk.”* - John C Maxwell

# When will you influence in Capstone?

Getting buy-in for a plan

Making a case for more resources like data

But first, make sure the plans and requests are defensible

# Leadership vs Manipulation

Goals of both: persuade someone to think or act in the way you want.

Manipulation is a one-way street: it benefits the manipulator

Leadership: often involves putting mission and others first

# What do good leaders do?

**Earn Trust** by building Mutual Purpose

**Listen** carefully and connect with people

Example: Customer has a “crazy” idea.

Ask questions to understand the origin and merits of the idea

**Serve well.** Ask questions to deliver the right solution.

**Takes time / practice / effort**

# What do good leaders do?, contd.

## **Take Ownership**

- Own deliverables
- Own up to mistakes

# Admit when you're wrong

It is not hard to make mistakes...particularly in data science

If you catch mistakes, fix them ASAP

If there is downstream impact, admit early and openly

This should help remediate and contain issues

# Big Secret to dealing with people

*The only way I can get you to do anything  
is to give you what you want – Dale Carnegie*

What is the thing people want?

To feel important / valued / relevant

This is important at all ages

Retirees risk losing this feeling



# Superiority

Others are likely to feel superior to you in some way

To win them over, help them feel sincerely important

*Every man I meet is my superior in some way,  
and in that I learn from him.* -Ralph Waldo Emerson

# How to quickly trash a relationship

DemEAN / criticize the other person's ideas / work

Try to get them to follow your lead after that!

Building a strong relationship requires sincere encouragement and appreciation

# Arguments

It is best to avoid arguments

Show respect for the other person's opinions

*If you argue and rankle and contradict, you may achieve a temporary victory sometimes; but it will be an empty victory because you will never get your opponent's good will – Benjamin Franklin*

# How to build interest

Become genuinely interested in others and the problems they face

Make the benefit clear to the other person

# Working Backward

For building interest, *work backward* from the solution

Ask: what does success look like?

Plan the path to get there

Add milestones along the way

# Working Backward Example

Task: Build a classifier that can predict student dropout

Timeline: 5 months

What questions should we ask?

What are some useful milestones?

# Imposter Syndrome

Anxious feeling you don't belong somewhere

Very common (at school, work)

How to handle: be thoughtful, inquisitive, prepared

# References

How to Win Friends & Influence People. Dale Carnegie.

Leadership Strategy and Tactics. Jocko Willink.