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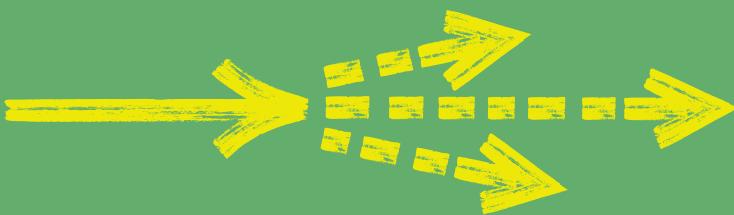
**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**

# crucial influence

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THIRD EDITION

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## LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO CREATE LASTING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

JOSEPH GRENNY • KERRY PATTERSON • DAVID MAXFIELD  
RON McMILLAN • AL SWITZLER

FORMERLY PUBLISHED AS *INFLUENCER*

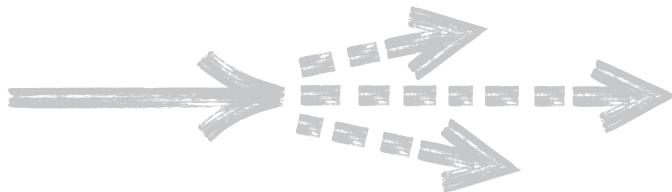
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JOSEPH GRENNY • KERRY PATTERSON • DAVID MAXFIELD

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NEW YORK CHICAGO SAN FRANCISCO ATHENS LONDON  
MADRID MEXICO CITY MILAN NEW DELHI  
SINGAPORE SYDNEY TORONTO

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The first two editions of this book were published under the title *Influencer*.

We dedicate this book  
to great leaders everywhere—  
to those who have not only added to  
an ever-growing knowledge  
of how people change  
but also restored hope,  
inspired action, and made it possible  
for each of us to amplify our influence  
to change the world for good.

Along with this collective dedication,  
we add our love and gratitude  
for one leader in particular.  
Our friend, coauthor, and colleague,  
Kerry Patterson (1946–2022),  
dedicated his life to bettering  
the lives of others.  
We, therefore, dedicate this expression  
of his hard-earned wisdom to him.

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# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We are deeply grateful to many who have helped us throughout the years in our research, teaching, testing, and learning.

First, our appreciation to our families for your influence on us. Thanks for the love and support that has changed us, inspired us, and enabled us. Thank you particularly for your sacrifice and patience when we were far from home—or at home, but overly focused, head down over a keyboard.

Second, thanks to our colleagues, associates, and team members at Crucial Learning who help in hundreds of ways—working to achieve our mission, serving customers, training the skills to help change lives, and supporting one another with care, loyalty, and competence. To all, we say thanks. A special thanks to Bruce Bennett, a gifted organizational expert who helped conceive the model of the six sources of influence.

Third, a special thanks to Chase McMillan, Mindy Waite, and Mary McCchesney, whose love of, belief in, and intrepid effort for this project made it far more than it would otherwise be. Chase maneuvered us into many of the most important case studies in this book. Mindy labored meticulously to bring clarity, simplicity, and beauty to the text. And Mary gave inspired vision and project leadership to the entire effort. Much of what is good in the present book is a credit to these three.

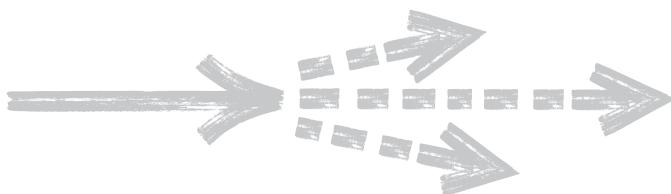
And fourth, we're overwhelmingly grateful to our friends and partners across the planet who have turned these ideas from an interesting read into a global force for positive change. We are inspired by the soul and skill they bring to our cooperative effort.

## PART I

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# HOW THE WORLD WORKS—AND HOW TO CHANGE IT

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# 1

## LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE

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*Influence is the common need embedded in almost everything we care about. If it involves people, it's an influence problem.*

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It wasn't the most harrowing research junket we had ever taken. Nothing like earlier adventures in our influence research to some of the more dangerous parts of the world. No threat of deadly parasites, no fear of being kidnapped, no wrangling with corrupt politicians.

This time, our research took us to New York City to one of the Big Apple's finest restaurants where, as part of our demanding research regime, we'd be tossing back tasty appetizers while chatting with a brilliant restaurateur. (It was a tough job, but someone had to do it.) This was all part of an ongoing project to discover how remarkable leaders leverage thoughtful influence of human behavior to achieve big results.

The person we visited on this particular day was Danny Meyer. Danny earned our attention by gaining top ratings on most major cus-

## Crucial Influence

tomer review sites for a diverse group of restaurants—for *decades*. You might suspect that his continued success results from hiring better people, designing more beautiful spaces, buying better ingredients, or crafting better dishes. But Meyer is convinced these have little to do with their success. He assures us that his competitors hire from the same labor pool, shop with the same vendors, and produce similarly delicious food. What distinguishes Union Square Hospitality Group restaurants, according to Danny Meyer, is not places and products; it is behavior. Danny's hallmark capacity is his ability to influence 1,500 employees to consistently create extraordinary experiences for their 100,000 daily guests.

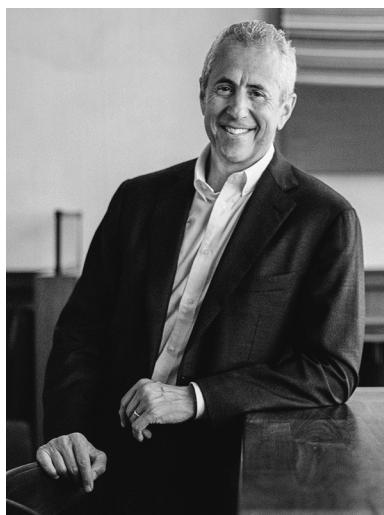


Photo credit: Daniel Krieger.

Danny Meyer: “My job is to influence 1,500 people to create special experiences for 100,000 customers every day.”

For example, a woman frantically rushed through the entrance of Gramercy Tavern, one of Danny’s establishments located in the Flatiron District of Manhattan. The potential diner was distraught because she

## Leadership Is Influence

had left her purse in the taxi that dropped her off. The blood drained from the woman's face as she realized that not only would she probably never see her purse again, but she also had no way to pay for the meal for the clients she was hosting.

An employee (let's call him Carlo) noticed the stranger's look of panic, learned of her problem, and urged her to relax and join her party—who were already seated and waiting for her.

"Don't worry about paying," Carlo comforted her. "We'll settle up some other time. For now, please enjoy yourself. In the meantime, what is your phone number?"

Surmising that the frantic customer had likely left her phone in her purse, Carlo asked a colleague to repeatedly call the number. Thirty minutes later when the taxi driver finally heard the ring and answered the call, he was many miles north in the Bronx. Carlo then flashed the Batman signal onto the side of a building to summon the Caped Crusader . . .

OK, the Batman thing isn't true, . . . but what Carlo did do was still quite heroic. He arranged to meet the taxi halfway between the Gramercy Tavern and the Bronx. He paid the driver for his trouble, retrieved the purse, and presented it to the woman just as she finished her lunch. That night she renamed her beloved corgi "Carlo."

What makes this incident remarkable is not just that it happened at all, but that similar actions routinely occur in each of Danny's restaurants. Employees go above and beyond to create an unparalleled customer experience. Danny sets himself apart from 20,000 other New York restaurateurs with the way he uses *influence*. Danny's staff members behave markedly differently from your average restaurant employee because of Danny's systematic and intentional actions aimed at influencing very specific behavior.

That's why we traveled to New York. We went to study true leadership.

## LEADERSHIP IS INTENTIONAL INFLUENCE

Now, let's be clear. This isn't a book about customer service. Likewise, when we later visit a man in Salt Lake City who has helped thousands of felons turn their lives around, we won't be studying criminal psychology. And when we look at efforts aimed at eradicating diseases, improving patient safety, reducing violence against women, or making virtual workforces work, our interest won't be in exploring these topics either.

What we *will* be doing is looking for the common thread that connects all successful leaders—no matter the objective or the setting. We'll explore a common set of principles and skills that can help you achieve things that can only be accomplished by changing human behavior. We'll be studying *influence*.

At the end of the day, *leadership is intentional influence*. If behavior isn't changing, you aren't leading.

Despite what some have suggested in past decades, leadership isn't simply about crafting inspiring visions or challenging the status quo. Neither is it about coming up with a breakthrough product or architecting detailed business growth plans. A solitary genius sitting in a tower all alone can do those things.

Leadership is about mobilizing *others* to achieve the vision, challenge the status quo, build breakthrough products, and execute flawlessly on lofty plans. Leadership is the human process of cooperative achievement. True leaders possess the repeatable capacity to influence rapid, profound, and sustainable behavior change to produce valued results.

Now, as you hear the word *influence*, you might think that we're referring to the less impressive and more suspicious tool called *persuasion*. We're not. This book is not about solving problems or hitting new targets by applying the right combination of verbal tricks. If you're looking to reach rather modest goals by stealthily exerting your will over others, this book is not for you. Likewise, the term *influencer* these days has come to be more a measure of online popularity than the

capacity to lead meaningful change. You can't open a car door these days without the risk of hitting a self-appointed "influencer." Some of these folks might be good at getting attention, but a precious few have demonstrated the capacity to systematically engage all the elements of influence required to help people change deeply embedded behaviors to dramatically improve their lives. As we'll see, *influence* is about far more than just being an *influencer*. To that end, we've made the important decision to change the title of the book in this third edition from *Influencer* to *Crucial Influence*.

This book has much loftier and more enduring goals, requiring much stronger tools. It explores how to achieve better results everywhere—from a gold mine in Ghana to a family in Geneva to a software team in Guangzhou—by changing entrenched human habits.

We'll examine in detail why people do what they do and what it takes to help them act differently. Whether you're stopping AIDS or starting a company safety program, the key to success has little to do with pep talks, bribes, or your expert use of social media. Instead, success relies on deploying a critical mass of the sources of influence that shape all human behavior.

### A Leader Who Influenced Change

For example, after years of missed deadlines and buggy code from teams that produce large, complex software systems, Rich Sheridan, CEO of Menlo Innovations, began scrupulously studying the behaviors behind the blunders. The search began with an epiphany: "I needed to think less about the code and more about the humans that create the code."

Sheridan soon concluded that the key to consistent high-quality performance was influencing his employees to practice two *vital behaviors*: (1) admit when they have problems, and (2) speak up immediately when they won't meet a deadline. He found that when sprawling teams of software engineers did these two things consistently, products got completed correctly and on time.

His next problem was figuring out how to get dozens, and sometimes hundreds of people to do these two things.

His challenge was that your typical human is more willing to donate a kidney than to admit failure. No simple speech or manipulative technique will overcome the overwhelming inducements toward silence that most employees experience in the workplace.

By carefully working to influence these behaviors with the strategy we'll share in this book, Sheridan was able to change his team's behavior and overcome Menlo's quality control concerns.

### **Change Requires Influence**

Sheridan's record of accomplishment at Menlo Innovations is a testament to true leadership. He and his team have developed a culture around these two behaviors that results in unmatched on-time, on-budget, on-spec performance. And they did so using precisely the same principles of influence that Danny Meyer uses to inspire first-class hospitality.

Throughout this book, we'll explore influence strategies from leaders like Rich and Danny who are successful because they understand that *leadership is intentional influence*. They have systematic and repeatable ways of thinking about why people do what they do and what it takes to help them change. They think about influencing behavior, talk about it, and practice it, and all of them have created remarkable changes in domains where failure has been the norm—often for decades.

Now, you may not work in a software development firm or a restaurant, but there's a good chance that human beings are involved with some of the things that challenge you the most.

Perhaps you'd like to help a troubled son who has just returned from his third drug rehab. You may be baffled about how to reduce turnover in your call center, improve customer service in your government office, or raise graduation rates in your high school. One of the best ways

to get better at addressing each of these challenges is to get better at influence. Influence is the common need embedded in almost everything we care about. If it involves people, it's an influence problem.

*Wondering how you can make change happen? Read our study How to 10X Your Influence and learn how the Crucial Influence model can increase your odds of success tenfold.*

*Read it at [CrucialInfluence.com](http://CrucialInfluence.com).*

## WHY WE LACK INFLUENCE

Learning how to motivate and enable others to change their actions may be the most important skill you'll ever acquire. Given the value of knowing how to help other people act differently, you'd think that at every backyard barbecue or office party you could find someone who is an expert in influence. In fact, you'd think we'd be so consumed with the topic of influence that our children would collect influence trading cards, complete with pictures of world-class leaders. As a result of all this study and passion, we would speak a unique language, carry a full array of models, and master a specialized set of skills for both enabling and encouraging others to change their behavior.

Of course, none of this is true. Most of us can't verbalize our personal theory of influence or even recognize that as leaders we need one! That's why few of us can remember the last time we saw a change attempt conducted at our place of work yield anything more than the occasional T-shirt or mug emblazoned with the name of the effort. And we're in good company. Our review of the past 30 years of change literature reveals that fewer than one in eight workplace change efforts produce anything other than cynicism.

We're equally challenged at home. For instance, every year we spend billions on diets and lose little more than our money. Fewer

than 10 percent of us succeed when we set out to change our excessive spending, inadequate exercise, and other unhelpful habits.

Communities fare no better. Two-thirds of the felons released from our “correctional” system return within three years—completely uncorrected—while having earned an advanced degree in crime. Stopping the spread of pandemics requires people to change habits, yet millions of individuals are infected every year because we humans are bad at changing habits.

As a result of all of these failed influence efforts and unfulfilled dreams, most of us grow impatient. We ask, “Why aren’t people doing what they should be doing, and why can’t I get them to change?” Eventually, we settle on the strategy recommended by essayist David Sedaris: “I haven’t got the slightest idea how to change people, but still I keep a long list of prospective candidates just in case I should ever figure it out.”<sup>1</sup>

But there *are* real leaders out there.

## FINDING INFLUENCERS

To expand our understanding of influence and the central role influence skills play in what matters most to us in life, we began a systematic study of what works. This ongoing research took three forms: the literature, the leaders, and the learners.

### The Literature

As most researchers do, we began by reading. Our research team pored over more than 17,000 articles and books to find scholars and practitioners who have mastered various aspects of influence. From these, we identified those who had succeeded at influencing rapid, profound, and sustainable changes in ways that most of the world thinks are impossible.

## The Leaders

Next, we tracked down these rare individuals and closely examined their work. For instance, we traveled to Thailand to study the work of Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn, who saved over 5 million Thai citizens from contracting HIV/AIDS. While he had little to no organizational power as he began his campaign, he found a way to influence the behavior of his 60 million fellow Thai citizens. Years after he finished this work, we caught up again in Bangkok. Over dinner, about as casually as you'd mention you had downloaded a new app, he reported that his government asked him to help 9 million people stop smoking in the next five years. And at the time of writing, he was on track to finish a couple of years early. The most effective leaders don't stumble into success; they develop repeatable ways of systematically influencing lasting change.



Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn was director of Thailand's Center for the Prevention and Control of AIDS.

Other remarkable leaders we'll talk about in this book who are effecting change include:

## Crucial Influence

- Martha Swai, an influencer in Tanzania, who helped reduce spousal abuse across the entire nation through the use of, of all things, a unique kind of radio program.
- Dain Hancock, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, who influenced remarkable behavior change across a cynical and resistant 13,000-person workforce, helping him land a \$1 trillion contract.
- Antanas Mockus, a math-professor-turned-mayor in Bogotá, Colombia, who, during a terrible water shortage, reduced water use by 40 percent among his constituents in a matter of months.



In Chapter 3 see how Martha Swai used a story to change a nation.

We studied other notable leaders who helped longtime felons become productive citizens, saved thousands from dying from hospital errors, and lifted millions out of poverty—to name but a few of their accomplishments. And it turned out every one of these leaders had done it in precisely the same way. All used the same influence principles we are about to share.

## The Learners

It's one thing to *explain* success in retrospect. It's another to repeatedly create it. Our confidence in the value of the leadership skills you're about to study has increased over the decades since this book was first published. We've watched thousands of parents, supervisors, managers, and executives like you learn these skills and put them into practice. A small sampling of the kind of rapid and remarkable changes they've led include:

- The owner of Gallery Furniture in Houston, Texas, dramatically reduced damage happening during deliveries.
- The CEO of telecom giant MTN increased innovation in a workforce spanning Africa and the Middle East.
- A senior manager at the biotechnology firm, Genentech, improved decisions by involving more stakeholders without creating wasteful delays.
- A director at Intermountain Healthcare turned customer service skills into consistent habits across a large hospital.



In Chapter 2, Laura Grams and Lisa Doyle at HCA Healthcare discover the behaviors that are vital to retaining and engaging nurses.

## Crucial Influence

- VPs of HR and Learning at HCA Healthcare influenced nursing retention during periods of high turnover.
- An eBay executive fostered greater collaboration between siloed teams.
- A Willow Creek Food Pantry manager made it safer and less stressful for patrons to use their services.
- State Farm leaders dramatically increased cross-selling success.
- Leaders at Fundación Paraguaya helped thousands in need increase their household income.
- A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) executive increased retention and promotion of underrepresented groups in senior positions.
- A group of Certified Financial Planners helped at-risk clients change their spending habits during a major recession.
- Newmont Mining site managers saved lives by increasing safety compliance.
- The Pakistani superintendent of police stemmed corruption and reduced traffic fatalities by 60 percent.
- MoneyGram HR managers influenced employees to resolve more problems at the peer level before escalating them.
- Pizza Hut managers improved team responses to crowded stores, product failures, upset customers, and equipment problems.
- Leaders at KIPP schools increased principal retention from 2.3 years to 4.7 years.

We'll go into detail on some of these campaigns in the book, but we claim no ownership of the ideas we will share. We hope we have added value by organizing them in a portable and practical way for you. But the wisdom they contain is the product of a century of research by a legion of intrepid social scientists and evidence produced by countless leaders.

## **Leadership Is Influence**

Our goal is to help you see that in almost every vital role you play, influence is an essential competence. We are confident that the time you'll invest in studying what comes next will be well rewarded as you learn to better understand why those you care most about do what they do, and more importantly, how to help them change.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Joseph Grenny** is an author, speaker, and social scientist for business performance. He has advised leaders on every major continent, from the boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies to the communities in Nairobi, Kenya. He has cofounded three not-for-profit organizations: Unitus Labs, The Other Side Academy, and The Other Side Village.

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**Al Switzler** is a renowned consultant who has directed training and management initiatives with leaders from Fortune 500 companies worldwide. He also served on the faculty of the Executive Development center at the University of Michigan.

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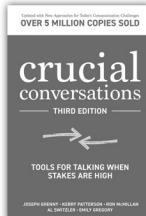


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## Also from the Crucial Learning Author Team

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*"This is a breakthrough book. I found myself being deeply influenced, motivated, and even inspired."*

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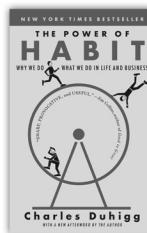
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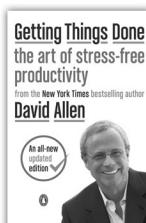
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## LEADERSHIP

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