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7 Ways to Build Influence in the Workplace

Influence has countless benefits, and is a particularly lucrative asset in the business world. Here are seven ways to build your influence!

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Influence is power. No matter who you are, where you work, or what your

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Perks Companies Are Offering Now	professional goals are, achieving more influence in the workplace is critical for success.
<div>MINORITIES IN BUSINESS</div> <div>Why Social Media Attacks Were 'a Beautiful Experience' for the Honey Pot Company</div>	Gaining influence on a team can help you work together more effectively. Gaining influence in a supervisory position can make you more respected and appreciated. Gaining influence in a meeting can make your voice more likely to be heard and acknowledged.
<div>INC. 5000</div> <div>A Founder's Key to Perseverance: Embracing Struggle</div>	Influence has countless advantages, but gaining that influence, like learning a skill, takes time and effort. Fortunately, there are many strategies you can use to cultivate this characteristic.
<div>FEMALE FOUNDERS</div> <div>Empowering Black Women in Business Means More Than Ticking a Few Boxes</div>	1. Build Trust With Your Co-Workers. Influence is most often and most easily carried through trust. Only when a co-worker trusts you will he or she be open to your influence. If you're in a higher position in the company hierarchy, it's possible to convey a demand or assign a task that must be carried out by your employee, but true influence suggests a free will component. If you assigned the same task but didn't carry a higher authority, would your employee still listen to you and believe that the task is necessary to execute? This hypothetical may not be relevant to your situation, but regardless of your position in comparison to the positions of your co-workers, if you want a healthy and influential working relationship, you're going to have to cultivate trust. The easiest way to do that is to be open and honest, no matter what. State your opinions, disclose your apprehensions, and don't keep secrets. It's as simple as that.
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2. Cultivate Reliability Through Consistency. Inconsistency is the fastest way to ruin your reputation. Consistency, on the other hand, is slow but sure—if you execute your tasks effectively and on time, day after day, eventually people will come to rely on you. The same is true when you execute a consistent style of leadership, setting consistent expectations with your employees and giving consistent rewards for good work. People will come to rely on your behavior and expect you to be a consistent performer.

That consistency is vital for building influence. Otherwise, you'll have an air of unpredictability about you, and people won't know whether to trust or impugn your suggestions. If you're consistently motivated by the same principles, people will trust that your ideas are solid and reliable as an extension, and that will make it easier to get people on your side. Consistency is especially important when you're in a lower position, since it demonstrates a degree of dedication.

3. Be Assertive, Not Aggressive. Being assertive is the only way to get your ideas noticed, especially when you're competing with others for visibility, such as in a meeting. However, there's a difference between being assertive and being aggressive. You'll need to present your thoughts and ideas with a high degree of confidence, indicating your convictions, but any excessive degree of confidence could be mistaken for needless arrogance, which will compromise your perceived authority. Tread carefully, especially when you're unfamiliar with your audience or if you're presenting your thoughts on an area outside of your expertise.

This assertiveness should extend as a general quality to all your interactions, regardless of whether you're speaking to employees above, below, or at your level, and regardless of the conversation format. Being assertive, so long as you truly believe in what you're saying, is a way to cultivate a reputation of authority and earn the ability to influence your peers and employees.

4. Be Flexible. Flexibility is also important. While this may seem like it conflicts with the need to be assertive—after all, it's difficult to assert yourself fully if you're open to changing your opinion—being too stringent or adamant in your beliefs will work against you. In this case, people will come to see you as a stubborn, immovable monolith, incapable of

believing in anyone other than yourself. This can decrease the respect people have for you and compromise your overall influence.

Instead, work actively to show your flexibility while holding firm on your beliefs. Negotiations and compromises are often the best ways to do this. Stay rigid in your beliefs when someone contradicts you, but work with them to find a mutually acceptable solution. When people believe you to be flexible, they'll be more likely to listen to you even if they're stubborn in their own right.

5. Be Personal. A little personality goes a long way, especially when you're trying to build influence in the workplace. This is especially important when you're in a higher position, as a boss or a supervisor. If you isolate yourself, or try to build your perceived authority by distancing yourself from the others, it might only serve to alienate you and put you in a position where you're viewed with distrust or even resentment.

Instead, go out of your way to have personal exchanges with your employees and co-workers. You don't need to build friendships, but there's no reason why you can't get to know each other. Personal working relationships are important for cultivating a sense of team, and if people see you as another person on the team, they'll be more receptive when you disclose your ideas or opinions. The key here is to seem imperfect, approachable, and human.

6. Focus on Actions Rather Than Argument. Trying to build influence through words is useless. Even a leader with perfect diction and a background in rhetorical strategy can't hope to win the influence of his or her peers through speeches and arguments alone. If you're going to build influence in the workplace, you need to speak through your actions, or at the very least have the actions and history to back up whatever it is you're saying.

Part of this comes into play when you build consistency. Working hard consistently and getting consistently good results shows people that you're able to walk the walk. Demonstrating your ideas through real examples is the next step in this process. Instead of arguing about how your structure will work in theory, put it to the test. Show instead of tell.

7. Listen to Others. Finally, remember that influence is a two-way street. The more you believe in the people around you and incorporate their ideas into your vision, the more

they'll believe in your ideas and incorporate them into their work habits. If you want to build up this kind of relationship with your co-workers and employees, you first have to listen. Listen to everyone's opinion, and encourage people to speak up, especially if they don't often voice their opinions. Take time to respect and acknowledge everybody's opinion, and let people know that you value them.

This creates an atmosphere of mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual teamwork. If you're spearheading the initiative to build this environment, they'll come to see you as a leader, and your opinions will naturally be heard, acknowledged, and respected as a result.

Influence is an extraordinary asset in the professional world, but remember, your goal here should be to become more respected in the workplace, not to increase the likelihood of getting others to do your bidding. One is a respectable journey to greater prominence and productivity, while the other is simply a Machiavellian power trip.

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