

Leadership Brief

Influencing Without Authority

In today's workplace of partnerships and teamwork we are often asked to lead initiatives and collaborate with people who do not work for us. When we try to accomplish results by simply telling people what to do, they may respond with resistance or inaction. In turn, we may become frustrated and argue that the task is unreasonable. Comments such as *"I can't get the teams to work together; my title isn't important enough"* or *"I can't get her to listen to me; she doesn't work for me"* suggest the need to exercise influence.

Influence involves more than getting people to do what you want. It entails helping them to feel committed and enthusiastic. We have opportunities to influence when we sell an idea to senior management, when we seek to build organizational partnerships, and when we want to achieve successful outcomes with subordinates, customers, vendors and others.

Ways to Influence How you influence depends on what is important to the other person.

- ☞ Think about who you need to influence. Who is the key decision maker? Who else might be affected and how?
- ☞ Understand the points of view of those you want to influence. Solicit ideas and anticipate the objections they may raise. As you work on your recommendation, incorporate their ideas. Understand the challenges and difficulties your idea may present to others; show how these can be addressed.
- ☞ Seek resources. Who might be able to help you sell your idea? Who can you bounce ideas against to better understand the implications of your plan?
- ☞ When presenting your ideas, explain the "why." Outline the reasons for your request using logic, benefits and facts.
- ☞ Point out how your idea is beneficial to those you want to influence. How does it help achieve their objectives and support what is important to them?
- ☞ Make your information clear and interesting. Use stories and helpful graphics. Show your enthusiasm.

"How you influence depends on what is important to the other person."

The ability to influence without authority is an important leadership skill. Developing your ability to influence can help you accomplish your objectives, gain commitment, and build cooperation and teamwork.

