



▶ IDENTIFYING YOUR GOALS



▶ RAPPORT – THE SUBTLE ART OF INFLUENCING



▶ MEETINGS – THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO BE PERSUASIVE!

○ Knowledge | ○ Skills | ○ Understanding

Engaging Spirits®

Prompting REFLECTION and indicating ACTION

The subtle art of influencing and the skills of persuasion can help us to achieve more of what we want more often. First though, we must know what we want.

Being Influential and Persuasive

“If you don’t know where you’re heading”, so the saying goes, “then any road is good enough”, and certainly it’s a prerequisite for effective influencing to be aware of what it is that we’re trying to achieve. Goal setting processes and techniques can provide the structure to help us crystallize our goals, and can be especially useful if it is some time since we have considered our mid and longer term goals.

Understanding our own values and motivations is a key ingredient in creating goals both in and out of work, as is the capacity to throw the mind forward to envisage what a good outcome would be. Thereafter, devising SMART objectives

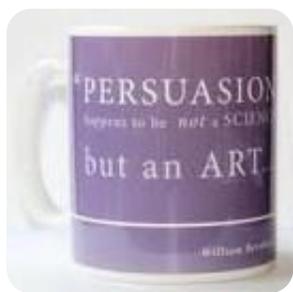
(though try SMARTER, by adding Engaged and Recorded to the list) helps us plan to achieve goals.

Awareness of, and motivation towards a goal may not be enough to ensure success though; other skills are called for when our wishes and desires meet the (perhaps conflicting) agendas of others around us, including colleagues. What is required to clearly explain our wishes, to hear the views and overcome the objections of others, to engage others in our plan and so achieve our goals? This is where good personal and interpersonal skills come to the fore, where our capacity to subtly influence, to be persuasive and to negotiate our desired outcomes are prized qualities associated with the most effective operators within an organisation.



Create rapport and have influence

Rapport is the state in which two or more people feel comfortable with each other, where news and views are readily exchanged in an open and honest manner, because the necessary degree of trust and understanding has been established. We can pace each other in a number of ways (e.g. posture or body language pacing) to help create and maintain rapport; language pacing or signposting is a particularly effective way to move a conversation on to the nub of the issue. Being aware of the effects of such pacing can help ensure that what we communicate (consciously and sub-consciously) is congruent with our message. Remember too that Human Beings spot insincerity at a glance and will soon detect any inconsistency between what is being said and how it is being said. Rapport amplifies a genuine message; it doesn’t give cover for the disingenuous.



Meetings : an opportunity to influence and persuade!

Practice the skills of influencing and the art of persuasion to improve your personal contribution to the meeting's outcomes.

The skills of persuasion are invaluable in many situations e.g. informal discussions with colleagues, and are also useful in meetings where good questioning and probing, and assertive behaviour will raise your personal contribution and can make for considerably more productive meetings.

The ability to elicit information and to understand and empathise with someone else's viewpoint requires patience and good listening skills, and rapport is invariably present in such circumstances. A concise summary demonstrates to others that you have understood their point, and encourages them to listen to your points (the law of reciprocity). It

is much more likely that your subsequent suggestion will be met favourably once the time has been taken to first understand. The stages of being persuasive amount to good 'business courtesy' – quite a different proposition to the misconception of persuasion being pushy or influencing meaning crude or heavy-handed tactics.

There is scope for good influencing and persuasion throughout a meeting, whether you are clarifying the purpose of the meeting, seeking to establish the method by which the group will get the work done, or checking for mutual

understanding during the discussion. Good rapport skills will oil the operational workings of a meeting at each of these stages. Consider brushing up on your assertiveness skills (see Engaging Spirits® : Being Assertive) if you anticipate encountering manipulative behaviour.

As well as heightening your own contribution at meetings, being persuasive can see you take more control in a meeting, e.g. in inviting quieter colleagues to contribute as you probe and listen for inputs from all around the table. With practice, we can soon count the skills of holding rapport, having influence and being persuasive as part of our toolkit.

"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal" Henry Ford

FURTHER READING:
"For your improvement"



For more ideas on the topics of influencing and persuasion see p13 of FYI (4th edition) where aspects of 'Approachability' are covered, including the hallmarks of skilled and unskilled operators, and suggestions for improving your listening, questioning and non verbal communication and skills. If the idea of deliberately doing things to try to influence others seems clandestine to you, then have a look at the 'Acting with Honour & Character' cluster.

My reflections and indicated actions . . .

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