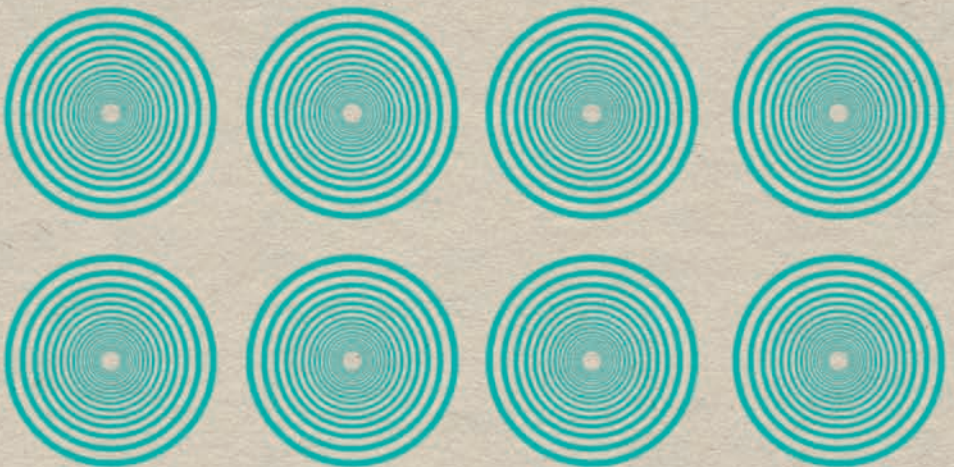




THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO **INFLUENCE**

HOW TO USE SOFT SKILLS TO GET HARD RESULTS



MIKE BRENT AND FIONA ELSA DENT



Praise for **The Leader's Guide to Influence**

‘Organizations across the globe are departing from traditional “command & control” leadership cultures in favor of more collaborative cultures where the ability to influence and gain followership is a vital skill. This book is an excellent resource for the manager who wishes to leverage their relationships for maximum impact.’

Dr. Robert Kovach, Director, Cisco Center for Collaborative Leadership

‘In today’s workplace technical knowledge alone is not enough to equip people for career success. Being able to build relationships with, and influence other people is the key. Clearly written and packed full of useful tools, examples and helpful tips by relationship experts Fiona Dent and Mike Brent, this invaluable book will help any manager understand how to make the most of their own style, build great relationships and learn how to influence other people more effectively.’

Linda Holbeche, Co-Director, The Holbeche Partnership and author of *HR Leadership* (2009) and *Aligning HR and Business Strategy* (2009)

‘The higher you want to get in your career, the more important skillful influencing becomes. Mike Brent and Fiona Dent present clear, practical and detailed ways to deal effortlessly with difficult people and tricky situations elegantly and positively.’

Dr Mark McKergow, Centre for Solutions Focus at Work (www.sfwork.com)

Here are some additional thoughts relating to the sort of questions you might like to consider under each of the headings.

1 What do I stand for?

- What are my personal values and beliefs that I hold dear?
- Using the list below select your top ten personal values – this is not an exhaustive list so add your own. This will help you to clarify what you stand for.

Ambitious	Adventurous	Authentic
Autonomous	Benevolent	Brave
Capable	Challenging	Change
Commitment	Community	Competence
Co-operation	Creativity	Curiosity
Dedicated	Democracy	Decisiveness
Dependable	Determined	Egalitarian
Empathetic	Expert	Fair
Faithful	Family	Frank
Freedom	Fun	Goodwill
Harmony	Honesty	Honour
Imaginative	Independent	Innovative
Inspiring	Integrity	Justice
Knowledge	Leadership	Love
Loyalty	Money	Open
Original	Patriotic	Peace
Perfection	Pleasure	Power
Privacy	Prosperity	Punctuality
Radical	Reliability	Respect
Security	Self-respect	Self-sufficient
Sincere	Single-minded	Success
Teamwork	Tolerance	Tranquil
Trust	Truth	Unique
Variety	Wisdom	

2 What are my ambitions?

- What are your dreams?
- What do you hope to achieve in your life?

3 What roles do I take in life?

- Think about the different people in your relationship network and the roles you play in relation to them.
- Which roles are most/least important?

4 Who am I?

- What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What do I enjoy doing?
- What do I dislike doing?
- What would I like to be doing?
- How might others describe me?

5 What are my objectives in life?

- What do I want to achieve in my life?
- What would I like to be remembered for?

6 How will I measure success?

- You could refer back to your values here.
- What does success mean to me?

Each of these questions is interlinked and answering one will undoubtedly help you answer some or all of the others. Having answered and analysed your responses to the six questions you should now be in a position to create a summary of your brand. Again, like any brand you should think about your personal story (for more on storytelling see Chapter 20), so the challenge is for you to express your brand as a short summary statement, a motto and a symbol that reflects your brand.

FOR INSTANCE

Brand Fiona

SUMMARY: The people in my life are my key focus, my family, my colleagues and my clients. My passion is to support and help them to be self-reliant, be the best they can be and achieve their own success. I can do this by:

- Keeping myself fit and healthy
- Demonstrating commitment and passion for my work
- Being there for others and helping them
- Developing new and creative approaches to people development
- Having fun, enjoying work and keeping a good balance in my life.

MOTTO: To be true to myself, authentic with others, seize the moment and live life to the full.

SYMBOL:

Like any commercial brand you will have to continually refine and develop the focus of your personal brand as you go through your life. Some aspects of your brand will remain stable – those areas affected by your closely held values and beliefs, however, others will change as you mature, develop and experience life. Having a personal brand gives you a focus and structure for your impression management, and provides you with an elevator pitch when interacting with others. An elevator pitch is a concise and clear summary of your point of view on any given topic. Imagine you are in a

lift/elevator with a client and you only have 2 minutes to get your point across, what do you say?

FOR INSTANCE

You start a new job and during the first few days you are meeting lots of different people most of whom say something like tell me a bit about yourself. Having spent some time reflecting about values, ambitions, roles and objectives you should be able to communicate in a positive and succinct way a clear impression of yourself. Such as, saying a little about why you are joining the company, what you are looking forward to, your previous experience and a little personal information.

IN SUMMARY ...

Creating and managing the impression you make on others is key to your success as a leader and manager. Every time you interact with someone you are having an impression upon them. This impression will then have an effect upon the way they deal with you in the future. So:

- Think about the impression you want to make in any given situation.
- Analyse the context and environment.
- Plan.
- Dress and act appropriately.
- Constantly be aware of others by gauging and reading their reactions to you in different situations.

7

Listening

Listening is a complex process. In our view people who have mastered the art of attentive listening do two key things:

- ask frequent and appropriate questions
- use their eyes as well as their ears to observe and notice the other people they are communicating with.

The influential leader and manager recognises the importance of attentive listening as one of their key tools for success. In our experience, many of the leaders and managers we work with indicate that they find it difficult to listen effectively, and they believe others do not listen to them. In fact, research has shown that most of us listen at less than 30 per cent efficiency. Listening is the most used of the communication skills yet unlike speaking, reading and writing no one teaches us how to do it. Influential leaders and managers understand the importance of this skill, and their ability to demonstrate

■ Attentive listening is one of the key
■ tools for success

this to others. They therefore work hard to develop their listening skills.

There are two other important aspects for effective listening.

- listening to hear what is being said, both the words and the non-verbal communication that supports the words
- listening to understand what has been said, this involves testing understanding, clarifying and summarising as well as asking questions.

So, when in dialogue with another person you will be watching them, hearing them and working to understand them. It's not just about hearing the words; the really skilful listener grasps the facts, feelings and emotions behind the words. When you are listening it is very easy to become distracted and this can undermine your listening capability. Some of the major distractions to be aware of include:

- Physical and environmental distractions
 - external noise, for instance, phones ringing, traffic noise, laughter and playing with mobile phones
 - doodling, finger tapping, shuffling papers and playing with pens
 - room temperature – too hot or too cold.
- Your own internal distractions
 - your reactions to the speaker, caused by dislike, lack of respect or trust
 - your reactions to the topic, disinterest, disagreement, heard it all before, or prejudice
 - your frame of mind, you may have some other pressing matter on your mind which is affecting your listening behaviour
 - premature judgement
 - planning and rehearsing your response.