



■ Kaushik Mitra,  
Sr. Director and Head Operations Finance  
PepsiCo, India

## Lead by Influence

**T**wenty five years ago, as a new entrant in the Industry, me and my peers were quite in awe of the senior managers and directors of the company. To us, they were powerful people, not easily accessible and wielded that invisible arm of authority which we revered and often feared. Power flowed from authority and work got done through directions down the chain of command. Hierarchical management structures were the order of the day and there was a clear demarcation between the thought leaders who gave directions and followers who executed them in an organisation. That was the era of “Command and Control” leadership.

Over the past couple of decades, companies have delayed and outsourced in order to find a more lean and optimal structure to remain competitive. As a consequence the “Command and Control” model of leadership has lost much of its relevance. Today, in most organisations which have moved to a matrix structure or, are in the process of doing so, the “Command and Control” mode is not effective and the key to success lies in the ability to “Lead by Influence”.

Let’s start by understanding what influence is and why it is important in organisations today. The dictionary says “Influence is the capacity to have an effect on the character, development or behaviour of someone or something”. Indeed, influence is the ability to have an effect on others. In the context of an organisation, influence is the ability to impact others in the workplace. It has a 360 manifestation, for instance, upwards, downwards, sideways and outside the organisation. So why is influence so important? Individuals in organisations use influence to rally people and resources around goals and initiatives. Stronger the influence of the

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leader, better are the chances of success of the initiative in achieving the desired objective.

### Authority vs. Influence

In matrix organisations today, reporting relationships and work delivery often do not go hand in hand. For instance, in a typical make-sell-deliver organisation, the sales leader is dependent on the efficiency of supply chain colleagues to deliver on sales targets since supply chain owns the product availability KPI. However, supply chain professionals don’t report to the sales leader. I am sure most of us will relate to this situation in our respective organisations. In fact, in most organisations today, leaders are expected to deliver on their objectives collaboratively with individuals and functions without the advantage of a hard-line reporting relationship or positional authority. In these leadership situations, authority is ineffective and the only way to lead is by Influence. In complex matrix environments, collaboration and leading by Influence are the keys to success.

There is another aspect of the Authority vs. Influence that we must discuss. This relates to the availability of information and knowledge. A couple of decades back, in the pre-Internet and pre-satellite television era, information and knowledge were restricted to a few privileged individuals. This led to concentration of power and fostered the Command and Control model of leadership. Today, thanks to the Internet, knowledge resides in the virtual domain and is easily accessible by all. It is no longer the privilege of a few and a source of authority. The only effective leadership axis is that of Influence.

### Influence and Leadership Style

Let’s look at influence in the context of some of the leadership theory and styles. Mouton and Blake’s Managerial Grid looks at Concern for People on one axis and concern for production/task on the other and identifies five leadership styles. The 1,9 Country Club style, the 1,1 impoverished style, the 5,5 middle of the road style, the 9,1 produce or perish style and the most effective 9,9 Team style. Leading by Influence is most akin to the 9,9 team managerial style in the Mouton and Blake framework. Similarly, leading by Influence is closest to the participative system in Likert’s study.

In Situational Leadership models like Fiedler's Contingency theory and Hershey-Blanchard's situational Leadership model, leadership effectiveness depends on the ability of the leader to flex his or her style based on the situation and context. In all models the leader's ability to Influence is a pre-requisite to success.

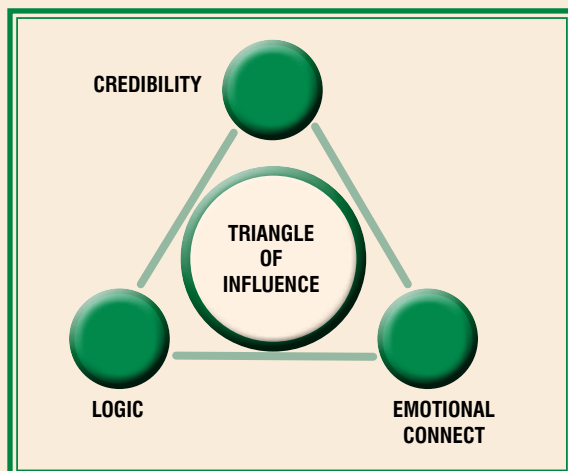
## The Influence Framework

So what does it take to lead by Influence? Let's take a look at the triangle below:

The ability to influence is not an exact science but more like an art which is an amalgam of 3 essential elements straddling both left brain and right brain competencies. The three elements are Credibility, Logic and Emotional Connect. Let's understand each of these elements better and how they work individually and collectively to help us Influence others.

### Credibility

The dictionary defines the word credibility as "the quality or power of inspiring belief". Credibility provides the "WHO" in the Influence framework. It helps answer the questions who you are, what you stand for, why people should believe you and why should they allow themselves to be influenced by you? There are several facets that go into building credibility. Being genuine is one such facet. Being genuine is one such facet. Being genuine is all about being true to oneself and one's constituents. It stems from a compelling personal vision that leads to unyielding commitment to overcome challenges and go beyond the ordinary, a deep concern for the needs of others, a sharp focus on what is meaningful and important over personal ego and a true sense of authenticity and self-confidence. Being consistent is another facet of credibility. Credibility is nurtured by acting and behaving in a consistent manner irrespective of how easy or difficult the



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circumstance is and agnostic to how important or otherwise the constituents are.

Another important driver of credibility is knowledge. With knowledge comes confidence. In order to influence others, one needs to have a deep understanding of the subject matter. Credibility also stems from being unselfish and making sacrifices for the cause that one stands for. Finally, it's about the courage of conviction in one's ideals and vision. Great influencers like Gandhi and Mandela have shared these common traits which gave them tremendous credibility in the eyes of their constituents. Credibility is a journey and takes time to build but also like a glass ball easily breakable. Leaders must have credibility to be able to influence others. If we think of influence as a tree, credibility is akin to the roots of the tree on which the foundation of influence is built.

### Logic

If credibility answered the WHO of Influence, logic answers the WHY. This is the science behind influence. In the professional domain, logic prevails most of the time. Leaders and managers who are able to think logically with facts and communicate them well are the ones who are able to influence others. Most business decisions are objective and not judgemental. It involves an analysis of the situation and facts and based on that a logical judgement is made. Marketers need to provide a logical reason to consumers for consuming their product, sales teams need to do the same with their customers, finance looks at data and challenges internal stakeholders on investment logic, HR is constantly working to provide the rationale for employee satisfaction. So, looked at it any way in an organisation, we are using logic and rationale all the time to communicate and take decisions. This is at the heart of Influence in the workplace. Going back to the tree analogy, if credibility was the root, logic is more like the stem and branches of the tree. It provides the structure to the tree of influence.

### Emotional Connect

Research has shown that emotions shape attitude and drive decisions and behaviour. Ability to influence is heav-

ily dependent on emotional connect. This is probably the most endearing element in the influence mix. If credibility answered the WHO and Logic the WHY, emotional connect provides the HOW of Influencing. Emotional connect is about how well we are tuned to the emotions of others that we interact with. It helps us build trust which is the cornerstone of the HOW of influencing. Simply put it is much easier to influence others if they trust you. Think of this situation in the personal space. In family relationships, ability to influence stems from trust. Interestingly, in the personal space, emotional connect is a much stronger lever of Influence compared to logic. Unfortunately, in the professional space, we do not leverage this powerful influence lever enough. The focus is more on credibility and logic. Dale Carnegie in his famous book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, spoke about the power of influence and the simple things that go into creating that influence like being sincere, showing genuine interest in others, being a good listener and showing respect. Empathy is another strong contributor to building emotional connect. Leaders and managers who have high empathy levels find it easier to influence others. Coming back to our influence tree, if credibility is the root and logic the stem and branches, emotional connect is akin to the fruits and flowers of the tree. It is how people see us and how they feel when they interact with us.

The triangle of influence can be summed up in three Latin words: Ethos, Logos and Pathos. Ethos is all about credibility, logos is all about logic and rationale and pathos talks to the emotional connect. In our lives, we are influencing people all the time. Managers have to influence upwards, that is their bosses; sideways, that is their functional and cross functional peers and downwards, implying their respective teams. Logic is the dominant lever for upward influence as senior managers look to their team members to provide sound rationale all the time. Credibility and emotional connect plays a very important role in peer to peer influence situations. The dominant lever of influencing downwards is most certainly emotional connect. Employees are influenced most by how their managers make them feel.

## How do we apply the Influence Framework?

The influence framework is applicable as much to work situations as it is in the personal space. It can be used by employees to develop themselves for higher levels of responsibility and by managers and leaders to be more effective in the matrix organisations of today.

For employees, aspiring to progress their career journey, it's important to work on the three aspects of Influencing skills above. As one moves up the responsibility ladder,

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individual performance is not good enough. The focus shifts to getting things done by others and in today's organisations the way to do that is by influence.

For leaders, the maze of the matrix can be quite daunting. Execution in the matrix structure is challenging and at times frustrating. However results are driven 90 per cent on the back of execution. Therefore to execute in the matrix environment, one has to lead by Influence. That means working on building Credibility, using Logic and rationale and most importantly leveraging that powerful influence lever of Emotional connect with the 360 network both internal and external. This is the key to succeeding in organisations today.

The influence framework can also be applied to communication. Effective communication is not only about the savviness of the communicator or the quality of the language but also the emotional connect with the audience. The best messages are simple; the buy-in comes from a combination of Credibility, Logic and Emotional connect. A lot of our time in the work space is spent on conflict resolution. Think about how we can use elements of the Influence framework in conflict situations. Most of the times, all we have to do is to assume positive intent and show empathy to others' perspectives. It is also about providing context for a particular opinion and getting alignment on objectives. Looked at it any way, leveraging credibility, logic and emotional connect provides the best chance of resolving conflicts in the workspace. In the personal space, most of the time all you need is emotional connect and more often than not logic does not work well in resolving conflicts.

## Conclusion

We are most certainly in an era where the "command control" mode of leadership does not work. Knowledge is no longer power in this age of "Big Data". Organisation structures are flatter and matrix. Execution remains the key to success. In this context, manager and leaders will have to lead by influence to be effective. This will require working on their ethos, logos and pathos. ■