



Influencer

The Power to Change Anything

By Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler

Published by McGraw-Hill, 2007

ISBN 9780071484992

Introduction

To get a glimpse of what it takes to exert profound influence, to literally change anything, it helps to travel to San Francisco and meet influence master Dr. Mimi Silbert. Consider what she has been able to do by applying the best of today's influence strategies to one of today's most noxious problems.

Silbert is the founder of the Delancey Street Foundation, a one-of-a-kind organization that's part corporate conglomerate and part residential therapy. It consists of several dozen businesses, all headed by Silbert.

What's unique about this institution is the employee population. In Silbert's words, "They are nasty, racist, violent and greedy. They are thieves, prostitutes, robbers and murderers." Her typical new hires have had four felony convictions. They've been homeless for years, and most are lifetime drug addicts.

Within hours of joining Delancey, they're working in a moving company, restaurant, car repair shop or one of the many other Delancey companies. And apart from Silbert herself, these felons and addicts make up the entire population at Delancey. No therapists. No professional staff. No donations, no grants, no guards — just a remarkable influence strategy that has changed the lives of more than 14,000 employees over the past 30 years. Of those who join Delancey, over 90% never go back to drugs or crime. Instead, they earn de-

grees, become professionals and change their lives. Forever.

A trip to Atlanta will lead to some other powerful influencers: Dr. Donald Hopkins and his staff at the Carter Center. Since 1986, they've focused on the eradication of the Guinea worm disease. When West African and sub-Saharan villagers drink stagnant and unfiltered water, they take in the larvae of Guinea worms, which burrow into abdominal tissues and slowly grow into enormous worms, as long as three feet.

Eventually the worms begin to excrete an acid-like substance that helps carve a path out of the host's human's body. Once the worm approaches the skin's surface, victims rush to the local water source and plunge their worm-infected limbs into the pond for cooling relief. That gives the worm what it wants — access to water in which to lay hundreds of thousands of eggs, thus continuing the tragic cycle.

Hopkins was interested in this particular disease because he knew if he could get 120 million people in 23,000 villages to change just a few vital behaviors for just one year, there would never be another case of the infection. Ever. And despite that audacious challenge, he and his colleagues will soon succeed in eradicating the disease.

Find Vital Behaviors

As with Hopkins, if you want to influence change, you have to start by deciding *what* you're trying

Buy the Full Book!

www.amazon.com www.bn.com www.chapters.ca

to change. Influence geniuses focus on behaviors. They recognize a few behaviors can drive a lot of change, so they don't dive into developing influence strategies until they've carefully identified the behaviors they want to influence. They start by asking, in order to improve our existing situation, what must people actually do?

Silbert is quick to point out that if you want to change ex-cons' lives, you can't rely on values, homilies or emotional appeals. When residents wake up in their dorms the first morning and you say, "Good morning," they assault you with profanity in return. A pep talk on courtesy just isn't going to cut it in this venue.

So she focused on changing behaviors, not on preaching homilies. She studied the behaviors that needed changing, hoping to find a few that would provide focus and leverage in transforming criminals into citizens. She's now convinced that just two behaviors open the floodgates of change.

"The hardest thing we do here is try to get rid of the code of the street. It says, 'Care only about yourself, and don't rat on anyone.' However," Silbert continues, "if you reverse those two behaviors, you can change everything else."

With this in mind, she requires each person to take responsibility for someone else's success. Second, she demands that everyone confront everyone else about every single violation.

Best practices can often provide the vital behaviors you need to influence. In many areas, research has already been done to point the way. For example, to be healthy with Type I diabetes, two vital behaviors have already been identified: test your blood sugar four times a day and adjust your insulin appropriately to keep your blood glucose in control.

Another technique, drawn from social research, is to look for positive deviance: discover and study settings where the targeted problem should exist but doesn't. Then identify the unique behaviors of the group that succeeds.

When members of the Carter Center began their assault on Guinea worm disease, they searched for villages that should have had the disease but didn't. They were particularly interested in studying villages that were immediate neighbors to locations rife with the disease. Eventually, they found one where people rarely suffered from the awful scourge despite the fact that

Teach your people the ideas in this execuBook summary

execuGo Media is now offering

execuClasses

60-minute business master classes taught (quite literally) by the people who wrote the book on their subjects — the authors of the great books we summarize into execuBooks

Contact us and ask about customizing execuClasses for your exact needs and interests:

Toll-free: 1-866-888-1161 (9 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST)

Email: info@execugo.com

villagers drank from the same water supply as a nearby, highly infected village.

In that village, the women fetched water exactly as their neighbors did, but when they returned home, they did something different. They took a second water pot, covered it with their skirts, and poured the water *through* their skirts into the pot, effectively straining out the problem-causing larvae. That was the vital behavior and a practical solution to stopping the disease.

But as you try to implement a change initiative, sometimes people will make mistakes. So you must also search at the outset for recovery behaviors. If someone drank unfiltered water, for example, they could put the whole village at risk when the worm started to emerge and they sought relief from the excruciating pain by soaking themselves in water. The vital recovery behavior was that friends and neighbors had to speak up when the Guinea worm sufferer was unwilling to admit he or she was infected. And during the weeks or months it took the worm to exit the human body, the villagers had to ensure that the sufferer went nowhere near the water supply.

Change the Way You Change Minds

Once you've identified the behaviors you want to change, you're ready to do what most people are looking to achieve when they buy a book on influence — to convince others to change their minds.

The most common tool we use to change others' expectations is verbal persuasion. We employ verbal persuasion as our first influence tool because it's not only enormously convenient (we carry our mouths with

us everywhere) but it also works a great deal of the time. When people trust both our knowledge and our motives, they generally comply with our requests.

When it comes to resistant problems, however, verbal persuasion rarely works. Verbal persuasion often comes across as an attack. It can feel like nagging or manipulation.

If people routinely enact behaviors that are difficult to change, you can bet they've heard more than one soliloquy on what's wrong with them — and to no effect. They aren't going to give up what gives them intense pleasure or constitutes an important window into their view of self simply because of a well-turned phrase.

Consequently, whenever you use forceful and overt verbal persuasion to try to convince others to see things your way, they're probably not listening to what you say. Instead, they're looking for every error in your logic and mistake in your facts, all the while constructing counterarguments. Worse still, they don't merely believe you're wrong — they need you to be wrong in order to protect the status quo. And since the final judge exists in their own heads, you lose every time.

The great persuader is personal experience. With persistent problems, it's best to give verbal persuasion a rest and try to help people experience the world as you experience it. Opt for a field trip — or several of them — in which real-life reality can confront them.

One large U.S. manufacturing plant sent a team of skeptical workers to Japan to see for themselves how productive plants were there. The employees were so skeptical they initially ignored the evidence of their own eyes, convinced the people were working hard simply because they were being watched. Only after they sneaked into the plant at night and found that shift working equally hard did they believe the threat those Japanese competitors represented.

Another approach is to create a surrogate for actual experiences. Dr. Albert Bandura cured people of their snake phobia in a mere three hours by having them first watch somebody else play with a boa constrictor, then place the snake on their laps. By watching what happened to other people, subjects were able to experience the outcomes almost as they it were their own (and move on to actual experiences, entering the room after donning protective gear and playing with the snake themselves, until they were comfortable enough to get rid of the gear).

Radio Tanzania broadcast a play that addressed misconceptions about AIDs transmission in that country, changing behaviors as people got caught up in the drama and accepted its message.

The Radio Tanzania example, and Norman Lear's success in the 1970s injecting family-planning themes into popular sitcoms such as *All In The Family* and *Maude*, show the power of changing minds through vibrant and credible stories. By using stories in your own change efforts, you transport people out of the role of critic and into the role of participant.

The more poignant, vibrant and relevant the story, the more the listener moves from thinking about the inherent arguments to experiencing every element of the tale itself. Stories don't merely trump verbal persuasion by disproving counterarguments; they keep the listener from offering counterarguments in the first place. Stories also contain the emotions that help to motivate people. If emotions don't kick in, people don't act.

Master Six Sources of Influence

At the end of the day, in considering change, a person asks, "Can I do what's required?" and "Will it be worth it?" The first question asks, "Am I able?" The second asks, "Am I motivated?"

Motivation and ability comprise the first two domains to consider in making change inevitable. Those two domains must then be subdivided into personal, social and structural sources. Those three sources of influence reflect separate and highly developed literatures — psychology, social psychology and organizational theory. By exploring all three, we ensure we draw our strategies from the known repertoire of influence

simple

smart



aheadspace.com

Share a headspace with the best minds
in business

See page 4 for details

techniques, applying six sources of influence in the situations we encounter.

To understand how those six sources operate, let's return to the villages of Nigeria and the battle against Guinea worm disease:

- **Personal motivation.** This is how to make the undesirable desirable, at a personal level. When the worm is exiting, people are motivated to soak their painful sores in water, the exact opposite of what the village needs. If you don't deal with personal motivation, your influence plan will fail.

- **Personal ability.** You have to help people surpass their limits, by training or other assistance. Since people don't know how to filter the water — they may be careless or mistakenly transfer filtered water into a pot still moist with unfiltered water — they need to be trained.

- **Social motivation.** You must harness peer pressure to help people attempt the change. As you're an outsider, the villagers will resist you and your ideas. You need to figure out how to use social motivation to get them onside.

- **Social ability.** People have to help each other succeed. If ever there was a circumstance where the phrase "It takes a village" applies, it was in the Guinea worm disease effort.

- **Structural motivation.** You must design rewards for going down this new path and develop accountability processes. Since the infected villagers needed to work near the water supply to put food on the table, the reward system was at odds with the vital behaviors for success, and had to be addressed.

- **Structural ability.** You must change the environment. The villagers needed tools to filter the water and care for their wounds in a way that kept them away from the community water supply.

Conclusion

As people like Mimi Silbert and Donald Hopkins show, if you bundle the right number and type of influence techniques into the right influence strategy, you can change virtually anything. Remember to find vital behaviors, use

experiences and stories, and draw on all six sources of influence to create the change you desire. **e**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler are leaders of the VitalSmarts training consultancy.

Related Reading

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler and Stephen R. Covey, McGraw-Hill, 2002, ISBN 9780071401944.

Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler, McGraw-Hill, 2004, ISBN 9780071446525.

Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds, by Howard Gardner, Harvard Business School Press, 2006, ISBN 9781422103296.

Need a Competitive Edge?

Share a headspace with the best minds in business — visit aheadspace.com. Now you can learn, teach and inspire your people with a complete collection of resources and tools. These simple, smart, enterprise-wide learning solutions enable 100% of an organization's employees to quickly learn and apply the world's best business concepts at an unbeatable return on investment.

The resources include two of execuGo Media's most popular product lines — execuBooks business book summaries and execuKits turnkey workshop toolkits — plus innovative inspirational tools called execuClips. They enable all employees to build competitive advantage by equipping each other with a world-class business education easily and effectively right where they work.

To learn more, visit www.aheadspace.com or contact us at clientcare@execugo.com or 1-866-888-1161.