

# INFLUENCING SKILLS

**TEAMS**SKILLS



Domino's

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# Objectives

By completing this workbook you will:

- ⚡ Understand and explain why influencing skills are important if you are a manager
- ⚡ State how, and when, influencing skills are used in your role
- ⚡ Discuss how your social style impacts your ability to influence

# INTRODUCTION

There's a balance to be struck when navigating your working life.

The balance lies between hitting objectives and maintaining your working relationships. Getting that balance right requires influence and flexibility.

Influence can be both positive and negative, but influence alone isn't enough to become a leader – it's how you use it.

Negative influence is where you are either forcing a situation by paying too much attention to the objective, or you're avoiding conflict by paying too much attention to the relationship.

Positive use of personal power and influence is about finding a balance where we can meet personal objectives and maintain or build relationships at the same time.

The best influencers show flexibility adapting to different situations. Influencing skills are key for a manager as it is virtually impossible for a manager to be “effective” without the skills to guide and relate to the people that they lead.

By developing your influencing skills, you will be able to:

- ⚡ Enjoy willing co-operation from your team
- ⚡ Get support from your colleagues, secure support or additional buy-in to new ideas, projects and objectives
- ⚡ Gain the view, input and opinions from stakeholders and your peers




# YOUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE

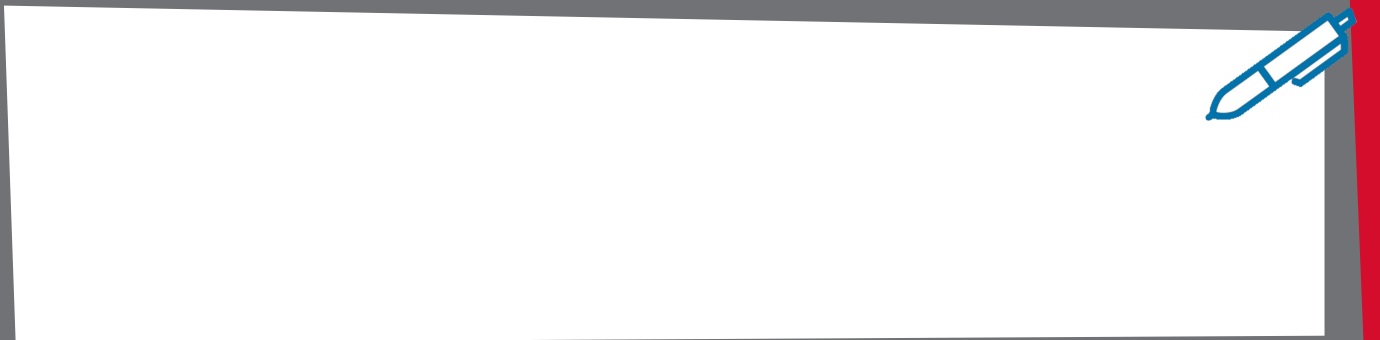
The most effective way of improving your ability to influence others starts with yourself, and the interpersonal, communication and assertiveness skills you possess.

In other words, learning to adapt your personal style when you become aware of the effects that you have on other people, while still being true to yourself.

In the space below, write down a list of situations in which you need or want to influence other people (such as getting a colleague to work an extra 30 minutes):



Now think about any difficulties you face about influencing people in the situations you have noted above:



The remaining sections of this workbook will help you consider how you influence other people and some of the different ways you can think about improving your effectiveness.

# THE NATURE OF INFLUENCE

Successful influencing relies on your ability to understand yourself and the effect or impact you have on others.

Within this, it is important to recognise that influencing is about moving things forward without pushing, forcing or telling others what to do. All too often, if you seek to influence people through bullying or coercion you will not succeed in winning their support – and their lasting impression of you is likely to be negative.

Good influencers are likely to display a variety of personal characteristics, which can help to positively influence other peoples' perceptions, for example:

- ⚡ Energy and enthusiasm
- ⚡ A calm, even tempered manner
- ⚡ An ability to be flexible and adapt to different people and situations
- ⚡ Strong listening and observational skills
- ⚡ An ability to act impartially
- ⚡ Self-confidence

However, the key abilities for anyone seeking to influence others are good judgement and effective social and information skills.

## WHAT INFLUENCING IS NOT

### Key influencing skills

**Social skills:** the ability to interact successfully with other people in any given situation.

**Information skills:** the ability to have information relevant to the debate, knowing what the issue is but also understanding the context in which it occurs.

**Judgement:** an ability to assess all aspects of the information content and social skills experience in communicating with people.

- ⚡ Bullying
- ⚡ Dictating
- ⚡ Coercing
- ⚡ Manipulating
- ⚡ Pushing
- ⚡ Forcing

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR SOCIAL STYLE

When faced with an influencing situation it is important to understand firstly how you like to get things done, both inside and outside of the workplace.

The way people view you is a very important factor when trying to communicate, particularly when in a situation where they may have differing views or preferences.

Securing an outcome which is favourable to your needs may come down to the way you deal with others. The more you can learn about yourself, the better you are positioned to get the most out of relationships. This knowledge can also help you to consider the social styles of others, and help you to behave in a way that will enhance the effect you have on others.

You can use social styles for yourself and also for your team members, peers, bosses and other people who you deal with.

Your social style is a summary of “what you say and do” when interacting with others.

Where did your social style come from?

If you were to ask several of your team to follow you around for a couple of days and record how you behaved, you would see some interesting results.

First of all, you would see that you engage in a wide range of different behaviours. Next you would notice that you tend to use some behaviours less than others.

Simply put, you use some behaviours more than others, because they are the ones which make you feel most comfortable when relating to people. These behaviours became comfortable for you early in your life and it's unlikely you will dramatically change these ways of responding to others.

Knowing your style will help you to:

- ✓ Understand yourself
- ✓ Manage your own behaviour
- ✓ Understand others
- ✓ Have more effective interactions with others

# SOCIAL STYLES

There are two strong behaviours used in this model. The first is the level of control over others and the other is the extent to which we display our emotions. Simply put it looks at assertiveness and responsiveness.

We can think of the degree of responsiveness as those people who:

- ⚡ Show emotion
- ⚡ Do not show emotion

We can think of the degree of assertiveness as those people who:

- ⚡ Show control
- ⚡ Do not show control

There is no right or wrong style.

We said at the start that your social style is about your outward behaviour, which greatly affects the way you are perceived.





Below is a summary of each section of the chart on the previous page.

<b>Controller</b>	<b>Promoter</b>	<b>Analytical</b>	<b>Support</b>
Someone who does not show emotion, but shows control	Someone who does show emotions and control	Someone who does not show emotion and does not control	Someone who does show emotion but does not control
<b>Characteristics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task/Job orientated</li> <li>• Likes to be in charge</li> <li>• Fast moving</li> <li>• Ambitious</li> <li>• Sets high standards</li> </ul>	<b>Characteristics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Social" orientated</li> <li>• Likes to please others</li> <li>• Stimulating</li> <li>• Vigorous</li> <li>• Inspirational</li> </ul>	<b>Characteristics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study analysis orientated</li> <li>• Likes "things" organised</li> <li>• Systematic</li> <li>• Dependable</li> <li>• Perfectionist</li> </ul>	<b>Characteristics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service-to-others orientated</li> <li>• Likes close relationships</li> <li>• Sensitive</li> <li>• Co-operative</li> <li>• Takes time with others.</li> </ul>
<b>How would you approach them?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear, brief, specific</li> <li>• Stick to business</li> <li>• Ask specific questions</li> <li>• Provide alternatives / choices</li> <li>• Refer to objectives / results</li> </ul>	<b>How would you approach them?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support dreams / intentions</li> <li>• Leave time for socialising</li> <li>• Be general; not detailed</li> <li>• Be stimulating / fast moving</li> <li>• Offer incentives for risk-taking</li> </ul>	<b>How would you approach them?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare in advance</li> <li>• Be straight forward, direct</li> <li>• List pros and cons</li> <li>• Proceed logically</li> <li>• Provide tangible evidence</li> </ul>	<b>How would you approach them?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break the ice before business</li> <li>• Find common ground</li> <li>• Draw opinions with questions</li> <li>• Watch for early dissatisfaction</li> <li>• Provide personal assurances</li> </ul>

So now we have discovered the Social Styles model, considering each section where would you place yourself?

Controller

Promoter

Analytical

Support

Why?

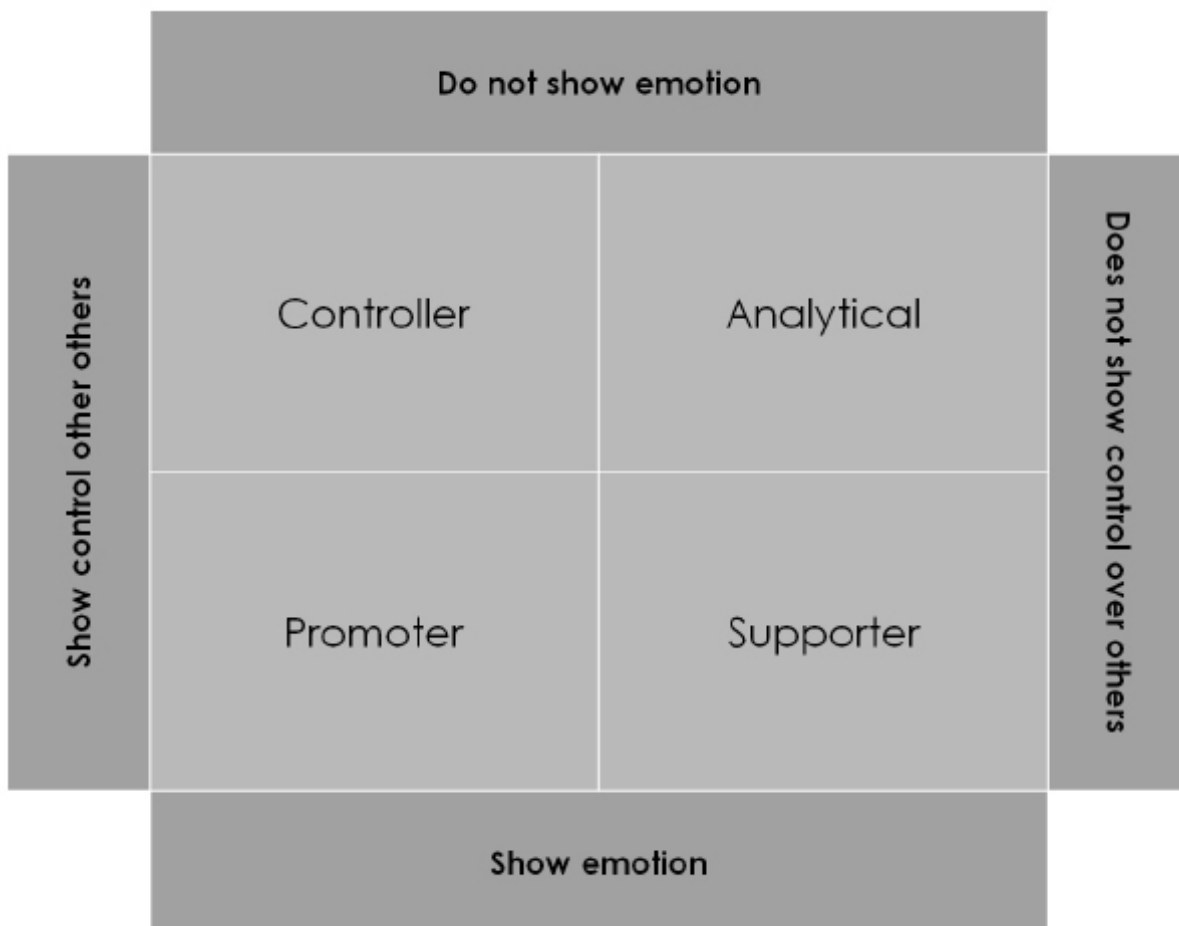




On the grid below, plot the key people you were thinking about earlier.

Make sure you include everyone you work with, including your boss and their boss!

Think about what they do and what they say. Use the summary on the previous page to help.





# BUILDING RAPPORT

We have already indicated through social styles that influencing people requires you to think about how you come across to others.

**Remember: “I don’t care what you know, until I know you care about me”. In other words, if you want to influence people you have to build a relationship with them first.**

Having built some rapport, your next step is to prompt discussion with the person or people you are seeking to influence. This is primarily about creating the best conditions for others to engage with you and come forward with their opinions and suggestions.

Only through interacting with people can you understand what they think and where they stand on any given issue.

The two main ways of prompting discussion are to:

- ⚡ Ask open and searching questions – to probe, test and challenge others through effective questioning to enable you to get to the ‘heart of the matter’
- ⚡ Listen actively – to encourage people to speak through
- ⚡ ‘active listening’, for example using nods, eye
- ⚡ contact, silence, smiles and comments to
- ⚡ prompt others to share their views

## LISTENING HABITS THAT DO NOT HELP TO INFLUENCE OTHER PEOPLE

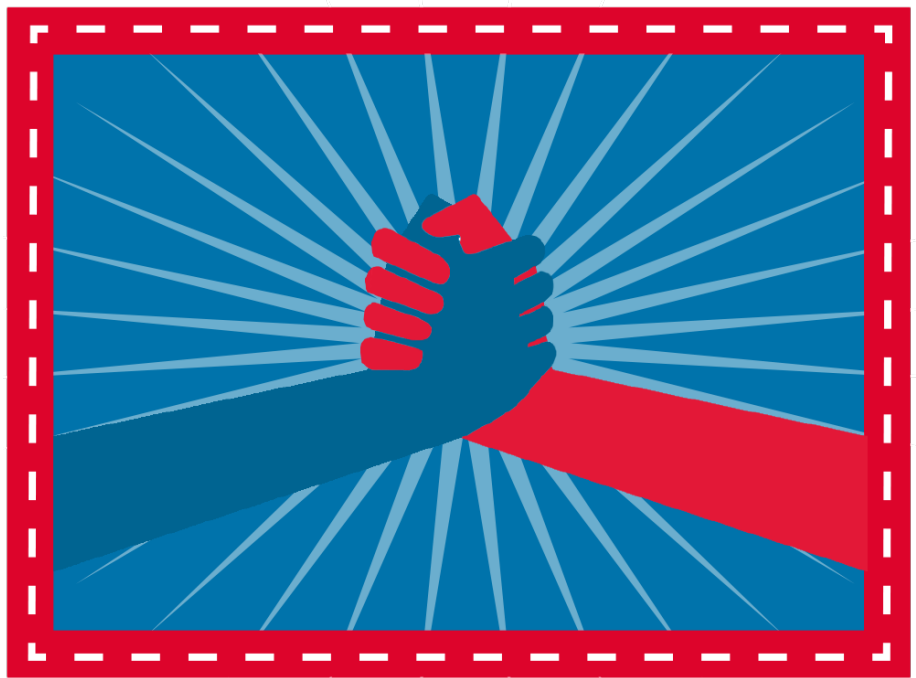
- ⚡ Pseudo-listening – appearing attentive, perhaps even saying ‘yes’ while thinking about something else.
- ⚡ Turn-waiting – waiting for others to finish so that you can say what you think. As you plan your response, you are not listening.
- ⚡ Selective listening – filtering out the bits you do not want to hear or do not agree with.
- ⚡ Defensive listening – looking for faults in other people’s views or areas you can disagree with.
- ⚡ Insensitive listening – taking people’s words at face value without trying to understand what is behind them.

Ultimately, your objective is to win the hearts and minds of the people you are seeking to influence, i.e. to convince them on both an emotional and intellectual level that the way forward you are proposing or endorsing is the best solution.

Much of this will depend on your own communication skills and your ability to win over people in difficult situations.

However, it is also important to stress that people respond to arguments and information in different ways, depending on their personal preferences.

As a result, an appeal to someone's reason, affection, intuition or desire will often help to generate the support you are seeking.



# WAYS TO ENGAGE AND INFLUENCE

**In summary, there are four basic questions you need to consider when planning to influence people through any communications exercise:**

- 1** What do you want to achieve from the communication?
- 2** Who is your audience?
- 3** What is your key message?
- 4** What communication format is going to have the best impact?

By far the most common and useful way of influencing people is through face to face communications, such as meetings, one to ones etc.

Influencing people can sometimes be a difficult and demanding process. People respond in different, sometimes unpredictable, ways when others are trying to influence their thoughts and actions.

Arguments are common and conflict is not unusual. This is true enough in one to one situations, but is particularly so in group situations.

## **Other things you should consider when planning to influence people through face to face communications, include:**

Having a structure to what you want to say, for example preparing and practising, focusing on the agenda required, sticking to time and following a logical sequence of key points.

Avoid making it up, reading from a script, gabbling and going over your allotted time.

Maintaining the interest in what you are saying, ensuring you are speaking clearly, varying the tone of your voice, altering the speed of your delivery (not too slow or fast), smiling and maintaining eye contact with those listening. Avoid repeating yourself too often and watch the signals you give out through your body language, such as slouching, looking bored, yawning etc.

Responding positively to challenges and objections, through actively listening (for example: nodding and using “Mmm...”, and “Yes” in response to questions), using questions to check your understanding of the objection being made (this sometimes heads off the challenge in itself) and politely signalling when you disagree (for example “As things stand...” and “What I would say is...”). Avoid saying, “Ah yes, but...” when challenged.

# PLANNING TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE THROUGH COMMUNICATION



Taking one situation from your list on page 4, start to plan your communication:

What is the situation?

What do you want to achieve?

Who is your audience and their social style?

What is your key message?

In what format are you going to communicate for the best impact?

# THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Being yourself, without defensiveness or hidden agendas, and sharing your experiences and feelings to establish empathy.
- Describing what you see rather than being judgmental, for example “on the basis of what you’ve said, you don’t look to be supportive...”
- Being empathetic – showing you understand people’s situation needs and feelings.

Maintaining your assertiveness, but avoiding displays of unnecessary emotion (weakness or aggression) and unhelpful behaviours, such as irritators (“I think what I’ve said is very reasonable”), immediate counter-attacks and talking over the top of people.

Keeping people and problems separate, recognising that in many cases other people are not just ‘being difficult’ – real and valid differences can lie behind conflicting positions.

Exploring options together, being open to the idea that a third position may exist and that you can get to this idea in collaboration with others.

Listening first and talking second – to stand any chance of influencing others you must first understand where other people are coming from before feeling you must ‘defend’ your own position.







# NOTES



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**TEAMS**SKILLS

