



Written by
Rebecca Houghton,

author of 'Impact: 10 Ways to Level up your Leadership' (\$29.95), is a Leadership and Talent Expert and founder of BoldHR. Rebecca builds B-Suite leaders with C-Suite impact by working at an organisational, team and individual level.

The pathways and pressure-points of influence

First – be purposeful about what YOU want. Without purpose, influence is pointless. Be crystal clear about what you want from the act of influencing. Perhaps it's about enhancing your day-to-day performance, removing roadblocks for your team, improving your relationship and influence, or increasing your perceived value and eventually, seniority. It can be as explicit as changing a stakeholders mindset, negotiating a win-win outcome, adjusting the balance of power in a relationship or asking for more resources.

Start every influencing exercise with a very clear purpose in mind, and the more that purpose is in service of others, the less distasteful you will find it.

Second – be purposeful about what THEY want. Remember, your audience does not want to say yes to your solution. They care about what will happen for them afterward. Describe, in detail, what that will look like.

By looking through the transaction (the point where you get what you want) and out the other side (to

the point where they get what they want) you will ensure your influencing evolves from transactional to strategic.

Steve Jobs did this incredibly well – he described an experience, even a lifestyle, that would happen once you purchased an apple product. He based his influence on the most important question for his listeners – why should I care?

Lastly, take time to work out your pathway of influence. A planned pathway makes the difference between ordinary ideas getting there and great ideas getting nowhere.

Plotting the pathway is obviously critical in big, complex organisations but it can be even more critical in smaller and more nuanced organisations when you cannot afford a single wrong step. And it is an essential planning step for influencing when the stakes are high.

The pathway is made up of five key influencing conversations:

- Logical. A collaborating peer or a finance partner who supports the logic of your ask.

- Social. The cultural or reputation influencers in your organisation that could derail you.
- Functional. The owner of the greatest benefit needs to be your no1 ally.
- Influential. These are the people that your target decision-maker trusts; they may not even have a formal position. You may not know who they are to start with but you need to find out.
- Personal. Find out where they stand on the issue you are influencing on, never go in blind when the stakes are high.

For most B-Suite leaders, adjusting their relationship with influence – and how much they are prepared to invest in it – is a major tipping point in how much impact they will have.

The more you exert influence, the more influential you become, and the easier it becomes to influence outcomes.

Quite simply, influencing creates influence. ■