

# HOW LEADERS WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

---

By Richard Searle, [www.searleburke.com/negotiation-programs/](http://www.searleburke.com/negotiation-programs/)

Leaders need to influence others. This article will reveal the three secrets used by Waleed Aly to be more influential.

Now that I have your attention let me make some apologies. Many of you will realize that I have just employed five of the tricks (there I go again) of the internet age to generate more eyes for my article. I have started with a How or a Why; I have used an itemised list; I have pretended to share a secret; I have gratuitously involved a celebrity (although Donald Trump's moniker would have worked even better), and; I have plagiarised my title from Dale Carnegie. All I need now is some confected outrage to be on a certain winner. Dale's reputation is safe though because I am planning to leave the friendships to you – and Waleed's sanctity will not be impugned in any of my subsequent paragraphs. The one claim that is true is that this article can help you to influence others!

Influence can be a good thing. Manipulation may not be so beneficial. Influence is not the same as manipulation. What do I mean by manipulation? I consider that manipulation is getting people to act in ways which serve our own interests and agenda, irrespective of and even contrary to their own interests and values. Married couples use it occasionally. I once worked with a colleague at the Business School who insisted that everything was manipulation and that "influence" and "persuasion" were just fancy words to camouflage it. I discovered that his view was quite reflective of his own narrow practices. However many senior leaders on my negotiation programs also have confessed rather sheepishly that they regularly manipulate people, and then fool or comfort themselves by calling it influence. One of the downsides of manipulation, even when it works, is that it can leave others with a sour taste in their mouth and it can nurture cynicism both in others and in the leader.

Anyone who has done a negotiating and influencing course with me will be familiar with my “Three Influence Steps”. My Step One says: “You can only influence others in terms of their own interests and what they value.” So if you want to be more influential you will need to get busy trying to understand what others value. It truly is counter-intuitive, but we may need to park our own interests initially if we want to be more influential. Poor salesmen presume that they know what others value - they will throw some steak knives in to sweeten the deal blissfully unaware that their customer is a vegetarian. Married couples sometimes err in believing that they already know what their partner wants and what they will say next. So discovery is the opening move for influence. Not surprisingly, powerful listening and questioning are your best friends in the discovery phase. Participants on leadership courses with me will be familiar with the following advice - it is safe to assume that you are a poor, unsophisticated listener unless others regularly tell you something different. You can tell that I have abandoned any goal of winning friends! I am allowing myself to make this insult because I presume that you are still reading because you genuinely are interested in being a more influential leader. Good leaders and good negotiators are excellent listeners and there are ways we all can improve our listening – see my article “Could It Be As Simple As Listening?”

So far this influencing caper doesn't sound that influential – it may even seem rather passive to you. It is time for Steps Two and Three. It is thirty years since Roger Fisher wrote the best-selling book in the world on negotiation called “Getting To Yes”. It is a very slim text and it contains a few really good ideas such as the importance of “interests”. My Influential Step Two is: “Explore the full scope and depth of others' interests and what they value”. I have a modest but powerful tool to help you do this and I call it my “Interest and Value Triangle”. Like all good triangles it has three dimensions. One dimension refers to Substantive Interests – the trick here is not to be too narrow and just focus on positions, money or quantities. This is tangible stuff but often other elements such as reputation or risk may have substantially more positive or negative value for others. You might keep banging on about the attractiveness of the salary while your manager bravely hides his fear about a move to Port Moresby. James Sebenius from Harvard Business School has an excellent chapter examining the full range of substantive value called “Creating Value” from his book “The Manager As Negotiator”.

What else might others value if it doesn't involve substance or outcomes – in other words, why isn't my triangle just a stick? One other value dimension is relational and psychological, and another is procedural value which also includes a bunch of sophisticated process moves for the strategic leader and dealmaker. I will say a lot more about psychological value in Step Three and those strategic moves are a bit too complex for this short article. Managers often view these two dimensions as a bit of fairy floss while they get their teeth into the important substance. But they represent real value and sometimes much greater value for one or other party than the more tangible outcomes. If I don't trust you, you will struggle to influence me unless you sugar coat the substantive offer. If I think the process is unfair I may cut off my own nose to reject you. The authors of the book "Difficult Conversations" argue that leaders often do not get to have problem-solving, substantive conversations with others until they have had what they call "the identity conversation" and the "feelings conversation". Others often have mixed and somewhat contradictory motives and interests, so good influencers can mine this grey area to good effect. And through the art of enrolment leaders may be able to help others see and commit to new possibilities which both value.

At this stage you might be thinking that this influencing business seems like a lot of detailed work and you may be wondering when you get to advance your own interests and agenda. Do I just give them what they want? No, not if it is not in your own interests to do so. This is the nature of influence – it involves something they value that also advances what you value. But Step Three also gives you some additional fire power. It says: "You can sometimes shape what others want and value". If listening was a key asset earlier, then story-telling is the supreme skill in this Step. Others are not always clear or fixed about what they want and their thinking can be less rational and consistent than they and we assume. The same is true for us! The psychologist Daniel Kahneman won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2002 for demonstrating that we reliably can be influenced by a range of non-rational factors when we make decisions. He and the mathematical psychologist Amos Tversky published one of the most influential academic articles of the past forty years for the fields of decision making and behavioural economics titled "Judgement under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases" in Science Journal of 1974. Kahneman has a more recent best seller titled "Thinking Fast and Slow" where he "corrects" the

bias of their earlier work by also celebrating the marvels of human cognition. And Michael Lewis the author of blockbuster novels and movies such as “Money Ball” and “The Big Short” has published a terrific new book titled “The Undoing Project” which chronicles the work of Tversky and Kahneman and recounts the human side of their extraordinary life-long collaboration.

Let me give you just two examples of how this influencing strategy works. I can offer you something and you say “no thanks I don’t value it”. I offer you the same item but frame it differently and there is a good chance you will say “yes please I value that”. How is it possible to make the same offer and get totally different valuations from the same person? If I ask you professionals whether you will pay to see a football game where you have lost the equivalent amount of cash on the journey, I can reliably predict that most of you will still attend the game. If I ask you whether you will buy another ticket to the same game because you have lost the non-redeemable ticket which you recently purchased at the stadium, some of you will change your mind and decline to see the game. Rationally it is the same choice and so should be valued the same but when I change the frame from “cash” to “ticket” it can have a big influence on your valuation of the same football game and how you act. If you want to be a more influential leader become really good at framing!

If I ask two groups to tell me the population of Russia after having written a different random number on the board for each group, the answers from each group will be different and slanted towards my random number. This is a phenomenon called “anchoring” and it surely isn’t purely rational! I can get a similar effect with different colours, with more recent but less relevant data, and many other ways. If you want to be more influential get to understand the skill of anchoring. These are just two examples of how leaders can influence what others value and choose. And remember my Step One: “You can only influence others in terms of their own interests and what they value”.

Finally, let me share this seasoned piece of advice for leaders: You can influence, beyond your wildest dreams, others and your organisation and society generally, as long as you are persistent rather than insistent on taking the credit. And some self-serving advice from me – educate your people in it.

