

# REAL INFLUENCE

PERSUADE WITHOUT PUSHING AND GAIN WITHOUT GIVING IN  
AN EXCERPT

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One consequence of a transactional mind-set is that you tend to focus much of your attention on money, especially when it comes to business relationships. As a result, when you're evolving from disconnected to connected influence, you may still make the mistake of translating doing more into doing more financially.

But in reality, the most powerful ways to do more in a business relationship usually don't involve writing a check or donating something expensive to a charity. And in personal relationships, they don't involve giving your children bigger allowances or buying your partner an expensive gift. None of these is necessarily a bad idea. But none of them is likely to create lasting influence.

Instead, the best way to create real influence is to do more in ways that touch people's hearts and minds. Here are three ways to do this: Expand their thinking (the insight channel). Find ways to help them see new insights, reframe their situation, gather new information, and find new meaning in their lives.

Make them feel better (the emotional channel). Find ways to help them feel encouraged, capable, supported, energized, empowered, successful, happier, or valued.

Take effective action (the practical channel). Find ways to help them take action for themselves or for people they care about. Help them resolve issues, solve problems, build relationships, get projects done, or accomplish tasks.

If these three channels look familiar, it's because they link to the three "gets" of engagement we spoke about earlier. Back then, your goal was to understand where people were coming from. Now, your goal is to make things better for them in ways that will make you memorable. Here are some of our favorite examples of how it's done.

## ADDING INSIGHT

When you offer people a new way to see themselves and the world, you change their lives forever. That's real influence and as our next influencer shows, it can happen in a single encounter with someone.

The memorable encounter we're talking about occurred at the U.S. Air Force Academy some years ago. At the time, John was an Air Force officer serving in the Center for Character Development at the academy. Paul Bucha came to speak to the new class of cadets and John had the opportunity to escort him.

Bucha is a recipient of the Medal of Honor, the highest U.S. military decoration. It's bestowed by Congress and presented by the President, and it's awarded for extreme bravery in combat beyond the call of duty.



REAL INFLUENCE CAN BE FOUND AT ALL NATIONAL BOOKSTORES, AS WELL AS ONLINE STORES, INCLUDING AMAZON.

In his speech, however, Bucha didn't talk about the events that led to his being awarded the Medal of Honor. He didn't tell any war stories at all. Instead, he emphasized that it was essential that the cadets learn, as future officers, to support each other, be there for each other, and care for each other.

Then something happened that is still difficult for John to believe: Bucha asked the entire auditorium of military cadets to hold hands.

After an initial moment of shock, the cadets took the hands of the people on their left and right. And as they sat hand-in-hand, Bucha asked them commit to doing the best they could to learn how to take care of one another.

Because of his reputation as a Medal of Honor recipient, everyone in the auditorium did what he asked. It was an extraordinary thing to see, given that young cadets aren't known for being "touchy-feely" types. John suspects that even if the highest-ranking general at the institution had entered that auditorium and given a direct order for the cadets to hold hands, most of them would have reacted with scorn and ridicule. But no one in Bucha's audience was mocking anything. And no one who was there will ever forget that moment.

By asking the cadets in the auditorium to make this simple but profound gesture, Bucha made them truly feel something that they'd only understood intellectually before. He made them understand viscerally that they were connected for life, and they were committed to taking care of each other. It's an insight that almost undoubtedly changed how they viewed their careers and their relationships. And it's an insight that could save some of their lives someday.

Bucha could have given the standard speech the cadets expected to hear. He could have talked about his own battles and his own band of brothers. But instead, he gave the people in his audience a new way of looking at themselves and each other. That's doing more on a stellar scale.

## ADDING EMOTIONAL VALUE

One of our greatest weaknesses when we practice disconnected influence is that we hide our emotions . . . and we ask others to hide theirs. Sometimes we play on people's emotions intentionally in order to manipulate them, but we don't really know or care what those people are feeling deep inside.

Real influencers, however, want to know where other people are coming from emotionally. And in seeking ways to do more, they look for opportunities to make people feel happier, more fulfilled, and more self-confident.

Heidi Roizen, our next influencer, illustrates our point. She's a talented executive whose focus on helping other people learn and grow earned her the informal title of "mentor capitalist" in Silicon Valley and led the Harvard Business Review to feature her as an exemplar of relationship building and mentoring.

After cofounding a highly successful software development company, Heidi served as vice president of worldwide developer relations for Apple Computer and later became managing director of Mobius Venture Capital. Currently, she's a member of the board of directors of TiVo and serves on the faculty at Stanford University.

Heidi believes that you can do more for the people in your life by helping them grow, and that it's important to do this. She says, "If you're not trying to grow, you start stagnating. If you're not going forward, you're not staying the same. You're falling back, degrading. It's easy to get in a rut so deep you're afraid to try." One of her favorite quotes is from Eleanor Roosevelt: "Do something every day that scares you."

As a mentor, Heidi gets great satisfaction from doing more by helping entrepreneurs frame their thoughts, manage their feelings, and take action even in the face of fear and uncertainty. She often finds them paralyzed with indecision. She says, "There's so much uncertainty, it's difficult to know the right thing to do. But as an entrepreneur, making no decision is often the worst thing you can do. You get frozen in your tracks."

In these situations, she says, people's fears are nearly always more extreme than the reality. "I walk them through a thought process, step by step," she says, "and that helps them rethink the situation and then take action."

One common technique she uses to help them get unstuck is to ask them this question: What's the worst thing that can happen?

"Maybe you won't make your rent payment," she might tell them. "Okay, will the landlord kick you out immediately? Instead, could the intellectual property you have be worth something? Perhaps you can compensate the landlord that way. Or maybe that won't work, and you'll need to move out of the building, and the landlord will rent to someone else. But maybe it will take him a few months to get someone else, so he'll give you time to try to get it turned around. . . ."

As she helps them deconstruct their fear, it releases its grip. That allows them to think more clearly, get their emotions lined up, and then take action. "Make a decision, then act, then course correct," Heidi says. "That's often much better for these entrepreneurs than freezing up in the situations they face."

This advice, coming from a person of Heidi's stature, is extraordinarily valuable. Thanks to her guidance, dozens of entrepreneurs who might have missed their great outcomes due to crippling fear are succeeding wildly. And it's all because Heidi chooses to do more in her mentoring relationships.

One problem we often see when we come into a company is that each person is in a "silo" - sitting alone behind walls, not knowing or caring about the problems other people are experiencing in their own silos. This is bad from a business standpoint, and it's even more toxic to people's emotional health.

So one way in which we add value when we consult with business leaders - especially teams coming to grips with very stressful situations - is to spend time helping them break down their silo walls and see each other as human beings. To do this, we ask them to share the answers to questions like these:

- Where were you born?
- What were your parents like, and how did they communicate with each other?
- What's a seminal event from your childhood that has shaped your personality and your values?
- What's the hardest thing you've ever had to do or overcome?
- Who or what helped you through that time, and how? (This could be a person, religious faith, a book, or anything.)
- What is your greatest shortcoming—one that, if overcome, would lead to your being much more successful?
- What is your greatest strength—one that, if you were able to tap it more fully, would lead to your being much more successful?
- Can you think of a situation during the next month in which you will have the greatest opportunity to overcome the shortcoming you named?
- Can you think of a situation during the next month in which you will have the greatest opportunity to tap that strength?
- How committed are you to doing this?

In one meeting like this that Mark led, the answers participants shared with him stunned their colleagues. For instance, one man said that he used to leave at 7:00 every night and everyone would tease him about going to see his mistress. During this



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exercise, he revealed that he left to fight a losing battle to give his father with Alzheimer's dignity. Half the group started to cry and asked why he hadn't told them. He said, "We don't talk about such things here."

Following that, another man said that during the same period, he used to leave at 3:30 in the afternoon and people would say the same thing about going to see his mistress. His confession was that he was going to get treatment for a blood cancer that is incurable, but was currently in remission. More of the men started to cry and asked him why he hadn't told them, and he said, "Just like Joe said, we don't talk about such things."

After this exercise, the people in this group never viewed each other in the same way again. Instead of seeing each other as chess pieces that either helped or thwarted them, they each felt they belonged to an elite team of special human beings who were strong, who persevered through extreme adversity, and who did the right thing under times of extreme stress. They felt honored to be in such a group.

Similarly, our friend Mark Lefko - whose roles include serving as a troubleshooter for forum groups of the Young President's Organization (YPO) that experience difficulties adds value by getting people to come together, communicate openly, and share problems, fears, concerns, and vulnerabilities.

He says, "Often the individuals in these groups are used to being the decision maker, the authority figure, the person in charge. But they eventually come to see there is a lot of power in coming together. Many times they don't realize that the issue they have is widely shared, whether it's about an employee that's a risk to their company, or a problem with their children, or a mistake they made that they deeply regret."

He adds, "Whatever the challenges and opportunities might be, it's about being supportive of one another, validating one another, offering insights and perspectives and advice. When one member has an issue, we pull the issue into the group, and everyone learns and gains."

## ADDING PRACTICAL VALUE

Meredith Blake is a nationally recognized attorney and social entrepreneur. Currently, she's the CEO of ProSocial, an innovative agency working with influencers to create social change movements. Among her achievements was designing the social action campaign that accompanied the release of An

Inconvenient Truth, the Oscar-winning documentary by former Vice President Al Gore.

The film was released the same week that Meredith's first son was born. "Becoming a parent caused me to move from being self-focused to becoming much more selfless," she says. "Long before they could speak, my children were teaching me how to strive to reach my potential."

Meredith's desire to keep growing after becoming a parent put her in a unique position to add significant value when the team at Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen's Vulcan Productions approached her firm with an idea for a PBS series on mental health and emotional wellness. Allen was committed to making a difference with this project, but he didn't know how to create the most positive influence.



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Meredith found that point of focus in early childhood attachment. She says, "I was brought up during the era when many were following the tenets of Dr. Spock, who said that children were being manipulative when they cried, and you shouldn't pick them up. It turns out that's wrong. It makes them think they can't count on you. Instead, children need to create a secure base in a primary relationship in order to gain more stability and independence. The first relationships in life influence everything else. The first eighteen months influence how neural pathways are laid out in the brain, and are extraordinarily important for mental health and well-being." Working with Vulcan Productions and PBS,

Meredith's firm incorporated early childhood attachment into the project and made it a thread that permeates the entire series, titled This Emotional Life. Ten million people tuned in to the series, exceeding viewership goals by forty percent. There is also a growing online community with newsletters, webinars, and other free content.

But Meredith had an idea for doing more. "I have two children," she says, "and when I was pregnant and giving birth, I didn't hear anything about the importance of attachment. In the hospital I was given a nylon bag with coupons for infant formula, but no information about how to create more secure positive attachments in children. I'm in a high demographic. How are people with even less resources going to find out what to do?" She was especially concerned about the parents who were the most strapped for cash and had the least time to spend with their new babies.

To address this need, she helped develop a kit for parents called "Early Moments Matter." For families who can afford it, it costs ten dollars per kit, and the revenue is used to generate



free kits for people who can't afford them. Meredith's agency helped to create a network with hospital systems across the country. They brought promotional partners on board to help bootstrap the additional money needed to distribute the kits to hospitals and give them to less affluent parents.

By doing more - not just helping Paul Allen and Vulcan Productions find a great outcome with This Emotional Life, but expanding that outcome to include thousands of new parents in need - Meredith added exponentially to the value of the project. And in the process, she helped fulfill her most important personal goal: to be a role model for her own children.

"Children absorb so much, their brain is a moving train," she says. "I feel a responsibility not only to feed and clothe and shelter and help them grow, but to lead my fullest life and model that for them."

When you focus on doing more, your goal is to seek ways to help other people—not yourself. But one of our power influencers offers a practical suggestion for helping others by helping yourself.

Larry Senn chairman of Senn Delaney, an international firm focused on shaping organizational culture says you can do more for the people in your life by making a stronger commitment to keeping yourself healthy.

This may sound self-serving at first, but it's not. When you're in good shape, you're better able to take care of your family and you're more likely to be around to positively influence their lives in the future. And when you're healthy, you have more energy and mental clarity so you make better decisions both at work and at home.

Larry practices what he preaches. At age seventy, he started doing Sprint-triathlons. He's now seventy-six years old, and runs six triathlons per year.

He says, "It all ties back to purpose. My highest purpose is my family. I have a huge obligation to be able to keep healthy for them, and I need to do an exemplary job of taking care of myself. I need also to do an exemplary job for my clients, and to serve them well I need to be at the top of my game, which requires discipline in terms of fitness and diet and growth and evolution as a person."

By the way, Larry often wins in his age group when he runs triathlons. This year he won in Long Beach, Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach, and San Diego. "I'm not fast, but there aren't many guys left in my bracket!" he jokes. "In these triathlons they paint your age in giant letters on your calf, and I get lots of comments. It's fun to pass guys in their twenties and thirties on my bike and hear them say, 'Wow! Go for it!'"

Doing more may not make you a triathlon champion or give you the power to make an entire auditorium full of military cadets hold hands. But it will demonstrate, more powerfully than any words or manipulative gimmicks can, that you are worthy of people's attention and respect.


Moreover, as Larry Senn and Meredith Blake prove, doing more can be a direct path to helping yourself as well as others. When you go beyond what's expected of you by adding insight, adding emotional value, and adding practical value, you gain new insights into your own strengths and values. You find creative ways to solve problems and discover a greater empathy for other people. You act each day in ways that make

you proud of yourself. And ironically, by focusing solely on doing more for others, you transform yourself into a happier, healthier, and more successful human being.

## USABLE INSIGHT

After you interact with people, are they better off than they were before they met you?

## ACTION STEP

For the next week, hold yourself accountable to a new standard of making every interaction - whether it's a business meeting, an exchange with a grocery checker, or a conversation with your partner or child - a value adding experience. Can you provide insight into a problem? Offer practical help? Or simply make the person feel a little better than he or she did before your interaction? 

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