

# Improve How You Learn

## Persuasion and Influencing Skills

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### Overview

In this Module you will be taken through the 10 steps to effective learning as they apply to your desire to improve the way you learn **Persuasion and Influencing**. Steps 1 to 3 are designed to increase your MOTIVATION. The remaining steps are designed to help you succeed.

#### 1. Be clear about what it is you want to learn

This section helps you clarify and define exactly what it is you are trying to learn and to what level of competence.

#### 2. Be clear about why you want to learn

This section helps you fully understand your reasons and the likely benefits to you of improving how you Persuade and Influence.

#### 3. Envision the end-point

This section helps you imagine and visualise as concretely as possible having succeeded in achieving your learning goals.

#### 4. Create learning targets

This section helps you formulate your learning goals in a practical way.

#### 5. Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed

This section introduces you to the different approaches to learning that you can adopt (learning styles) and the different kinds of learning involved in learning to improve your learning.

#### 6. Explore learning tactics, tools, and techniques

This section introduces you to 10 Powerful Tools, Tactics and Techniques you can use to improve the way you learn. The exercises will help to (1) *think* and deepen your understanding of the area you want to improve and actually suggests specific tasks you can (2) *do* at your computer and (3)

actions you can take off-line in your work and life environment, to dramatically improve your learning ability.

# 1 Be clear about what it is you want to learn



Consider these possibilities.

Tick the ones that appeal most to you

I want to rely less on use of authority to get things done	
I want people to feel motivated when I ask them to do things	
I want to be able to win arguments without force	
I want to win people round to my point of view	
I want to get people to cooperate with me	
I want to be confident in my ability to influence others	
Are there any other aspects of Influencing and Persuading that you want to improve?	

Does your employer already have a definition of **Persuasion and Influencing**? (For example in a management competency model or framework) If so, insert the definition here

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Are there Behaviour Indicators to support the Definition? If so, copy them into the box below.

My employer's Behaviour Indicators for <b>Persuasion and Influencing</b>	
Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators

If you do not have access to a company definition of Influencing and Persuading you can do a number of things. First look up a definition in

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persuasion>

or consult a dictionary <http://www.askoxford.com/dictionaries/?view=uk>

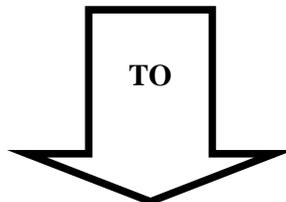
<b>Insert your definition here</b>
<b>Or alternatively use this one</b>  Persuasion and Influencing Skills involve getting people to accept your arguments and/or point of view in a way that meets their needs. They feel motivated to accept, because they understand and agree, without coercion or bullying or a feeling of being manipulated.

Then you need to write Positive and Negative Indicators. They are very important as they give meaning and concreteness to the definition and personalise it your needs. Guidance on writing personal Positive and Negative Behaviour Indicators is provided in [10 Steps to Improve Your Learning](#). Some examples are provided below to get you started. Only use them if you think they apply to you.

<b>Behaviour Indicators for Persuasion and Influencing</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinks about the audience (1 or many) before communicating</li> <li>• Tries to find out what the needs are</li> <li>• Modifies the message accordingly</li> <li>• Stresses the positive points</li> <li>• Is honest about the negative points</li> <li>• Listens carefully</li> <li>• Shows interest in the responses</li> <li>• Answers the point raised</li> <li>• Conveys energy</li> <li>• Shows personal commitment</li> <li>• Asks questions but does not criticise</li> <li>• Accepts responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not prepare for the audience</li> <li>• Sells the positives only</li> <li>• Does not listen to the views of others</li> <li>• Does not alter the argument in the light of responses</li> <li>• Uses fear and threats</li> <li>• No desire to be flexible</li> <li>• Does not give reasons or explanations</li> <li>• Does not convey personal commitment</li> <li>• Is cynical about the wider system</li> <li>• Apportions blame to others</li> </ul>
<b>More positive indicators</b>	<b>More negative indicators</b>

Re-phrase your overall goals in terms of the change you would like to see in your own behaviour and skills. Use the indicators that you think are most important to you.

**I would like to change from...**



**My new skills**

 **2 Be clear about why you want to improve your Persuasion and Influencing Skills**



Why do you wish to improve in this area?

Here are some common reasons. Tick the ones that apply to you.

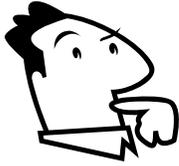
Increased confidence at work	
Greater self esteem	
Admiration/respect from others	
Overcoming frustration	
Holding back my job performance	
Holding back my career	
I am getting things wrong	
I feel I don't understand things	
I have been told by my boss	
I have been told by my colleagues	
I just feel I want/need to improve	

Any other reasons?



## 3 Envision the end-point

This is a crucial stage, which is often missed.



Not envisioning the end-point can deprive you of early pleasure of clear progress and it can also undermine weaken your motivation when the going gets tough.

Imagine you have succeeded in your overall aim.

First of all what is the aim?

Think about these questions

- Picture yourself performing at the desired level.
- Where will this be?
- Who will be involved?
- Exactly what would you be doing, what would you be saying
- What will others be doing and saying?
- How will you feel?



If it is enough to merely imagine the end-point, that's fine. If you can right it down then do so.

<b>Where and when?</b>	
<b>Who else is involved?</b>	
<b>What are you doing/saying?</b>	

<b>What are others doing/saying?</b>	
<b>How will you feel?</b>	

One effect of envisioning the end point in as much practical detail as possible is that it helps to energise you, to get going and keep going, and to maintain effort especially in the face of set-backs and difficulties.

Keep a record and keep it where you will see it regularly. Add images and graphics. Personalise it.



### **Make yourself a Change Shield**

Another more concrete way to envision the end-point is to make yourself a shield of change.

If you are that way inclined draw a picture of yourself being strategic. Be creative, have fun with it. Try and capture the changes you want to see in yourself.

Create a Change Shield for yourself or better still with friends or colleagues at work. For guidance see [10 Steps to Improve Your Learning](#)



## **4 Create learning targets**

Learning targets are derived from the overall objectives and create



- Greater precision
- A sense of being in control and managing the process
- The ability to monitor your own progress
- The satisfaction of seeing progress
- Knowing when you have arrived

<b>I will know that I have improved from one level to the next because of</b>
<b>Things I know</b>

<b>Things I can say or do</b>
<b>How I will feel</b>
<b>I know I will be making progress if...</b>

# 5 Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed

## Learning styles



In order to learn well you need to

- Have experiences and plenty of them
- Review and reflect on that experience
- Draw lessons and insights from the experience
- Plan to gain new experiences that result in

improved performance

Most of us have strong preferences for one or more of four styles of learning. From your knowledge of yourself, do you know which your preferred learning styles are?

<b>Activist</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea
<b>Pragmatist</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea
<b>Theorist</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea

<b>Reflector</b>	This is me Not really sure No idea
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If you are not sure about your preferred learning styles, go to [10 steps to improve your learning](#) for an introduction.

If you have a strong preference for one or more of these modes that will indicate how you are likely to begin but it is important not to get stuck in one mode at the expense of the others.

**Different types of learning**



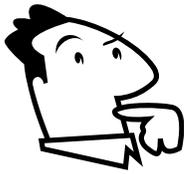
The types of learning involved in improving your Learning From Mistakes are

<b>Practical skills requiring practice and feedback to get right</b>
Analysing, objectively, the reasons for undesired outcomes
<b>Feelings and attitudes you need to get right</b>
Calmness before the discussions Constructive interest in others views
<b>Understanding of concepts and theory</b>
The nature of influencing as distinct from controlling (as defined by the Positive and Negative Indicators in Step 1) Different modes of influencing Effects of body language Managing meetings
<b>Things to commit to memory</b>
Facts relevant to the discussion Names of key players

It is by understanding that different kinds of learning are involved in improving your learning persuasion and influencing that appropriate tools tactic and process can be consciously adopted to improve the power of how you learn.

## 6 Explore learning tactics, tools, and techniques

You should choose according to



- Your preferred learning styles
- The types of learning involved
- Feasibility
- Time available
- Cost implications
- Accessibility

### Ten things you can do to improve HOW you learn Persuasion and Influencing

#### 1. Brainstorm the difference between effective and ineffective influencing



Spend a few minutes writing down words and short phrases that come to mind in response to these questions

When someone is being effective when trying to influence you, what is it that they are doing?

When someone is being ineffective when trying to influence you, what is it that they are doing?

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Consider the key differences between effective and ineffective influencing behaviours?  
 Which ones are most critical to you?

<b>Influences me</b>	<b>Fails to influence me</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates in an open and honest way</li> <li>• I respect their knowledge</li> <li>• Actually listens to me, wants to know my point of view and understand my needs</li> <li>• The argument appeals to my needs</li> <li>• The logic is clear</li> <li>• The argument is geared to results not power or status</li> <li>• My help and cooperation is asked for</li> <li>• A good relationship is being built/maintained, in a friendly manner</li> <li>• Appears to believe in what they are saying</li> <li>• Enthusiasm.</li> <li>• A good role model</li> <li>• Encouraging body language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of true engagement in discussion</li> <li>• Being told, no reasons given</li> <li>• They are not convinced themselves</li> <li>• Giving orders</li> <li>• Selling their rather than allowing dialogue</li> <li>• Pushy</li> <li>• Dogmatic, won't listen to any argument</li> <li>• Arrogant manner</li> <li>• Not listening to me</li> <li>• Lack of relevant knowledge or competence on their part</li> <li>• Authoritarian</li> <li>• Feeling of being manipulated</li> </ul>
<b>What are the implications for the way you attempt to influence others?</b>	
<b>I should MORE...</b>	<b>I should do LESS...</b>

## 2. Observing



Identify people in your organisation, or in your personal life, who you think are already good at influencing. If possible select two or three.

### Watch what they do. Notice what they say.

At the time or shortly after write down what you think it is they do that makes them effective influencers. Write down exact examples. She said (Exact words used) ... He did...

Apply the same process to people you see and hear on the radio or on TV.

## 3. Shadowing



If you cannot observe people who are skilled in Persuasion and Influencing in the normal course of your work and life, ask for opportunities to shadow them, especially in contexts where their influencing skills are needed.

Contexts such as meetings, negotiations, selling and promoting, committees, working parties all offer scope for Persuasion and Influencing skills.

## 4. Asking and seeking explanation



Asking and seeking explanations is one of the most powerful yet under-utilised forms of personal learning and development.

Having identified a number of colleagues ask for half an hour of their time, explain your reasons, and ask them the following questions

What is your basic approach to Persuasion and Influencing?

Give me some examples

What do you personally do to ensure that you are influencing effectively?

Do you have any practical tips that always work for you?

Compare the answers from the different people and your own brainstormed thoughts.

## 5. Modelling



Having observed and questioned people whom you regard as having good Persuasion and Influencing skills **set** yourself small goals to emulate or copy their behaviour. It will not always work at first and be modest with your goals but gradually you will become more comfortable, especially if you also do some of the exercises below.

- Immediately reflect on what happened.
- What worked well? What did not work so well?
- What will you do differently next time?

We are almost constantly in situations when we need to use Persuasion and Influencing skills.

Try and change the way you

- Make a complaint
- Seek information
- Ask for help
- Seek to be understood
- Sell an idea
- Sell a product
- Support your recommendations
- Win an argument

Start with small but specific changes, make sure you get feedback if you can, reflect on what happened, resolve to try again.

## 6. Role-playing



Role-playing at home or in another supportive or safe context can be a very powerful form of learning.

Ideally an audience is needed but you can start in front of a mirror or recording yourself on audio or video will help you move towards unconscious competence in at least some aspects of the skills before taking on the real world.

If you can practice in front of a person you trust or a group all the better because it adds the critical dynamic of engaging with people whose reactions and behaviour you cannot predict and to whom you need to respond as the discussion unfolds.

## 7. Projects, syndicate work, getting involved and seek feedback



There is no substitute for experience. If your work does not offer rich opportunities for use of Persuasion and Influencing then seek projects and assignments which allow you to get involved with people from other contexts, departments or even companies or social organisations like sports clubs or charities.

Critical to your learning improved Persuasion and Influencing is seeking and interpreting feedback.

## 8. Partnerships and networks



Form your own learning networks of people with similar needs/interests to your own, especially in terms of seeking to improve their Persuasion and Influencing. The networks can be people-based or electronic.

## 9. Coaching



A personal coach can be very powerful and is widely used by public figures and senior executives but is of course relatively expensive. One option is to offer a quid pro quo. Offer coaching and support in a skill that you have to a colleague in exchange for coaching from the colleague in the skills of Persuasion and Influencing.

An in-house coach can be helpful especially if he or she can see you in action. A coach can provide practical guidance, and discuss how things went after the event in order to extract maximum learning.

## 10. Build your own personal model of Persuasion and Influencing



There are six main stages. **First**, do something. It can be anything – try and influence an outcome in the usual manner. For example, try to persuade through negotiation rather than use authority.

**Second**, reflect on how it went and, where possible, obtain feedback from those people who were affected or were in a position to observe (e.g. what could have been done differently, or have been improved?)

**Third**, build a simple model on how you should do it better next time based on your awareness of mistakes and experience. It can be anything you like. Possibilities include checklists, diagrams, flowcharts, and mnemonics. The challenge is to try and capture in terms that are appropriate to you and the situation you find yourself in. The model should focus on exactly what you should be doing to get Persuasion and Influencing right. In effect you are writing advice to yourself in as vivid and personal a way as possible. Try to avoid standard theoretical advice at the outset. Focus on the things you know you need to improve your Persuasion and Influencing.

The **fourth** stage involves doing some more Persuasion and Influencing, but this time with the aid of your new 'model'. Afterwards, reflect on how well it went, obtain feedback where possible. Then reflect on how useful was the model in helping you improve your Persuasion and Influencing.

**Fifth**, revise your model in the light of the experience and feedback. It may be helpful at this stage, but only at this stage, to seek more 'expert' advice on your model by additional reading (see step 6.1 for sources), showing it to others, including training and development specialists. Do not, however, include anything that does not make sense to you in the light of experience.

**Finally**, try the behaviour that should lead to improved Persuasion and Influencing but this time more consciously guided by your 'improved' model.

The advice you develop for yourself in this way will be more powerful than any other model or theory, however sophisticated and elaborate, which has been developed by a specialist or expert on your behalf. Because you have created a model in your own

words, based on your own conclusions drawn from feedback and your own experience, you are able to achieve internalised deeper learning. This is in contrast to the more superficial learning that is often the result of lectures and more theory-based teaching.

For more on this technique see [The Learning Spiral](#)

# 7 Create a Personal Learning Plan to improve how you learn **Influencing and Persuasion**

Your personal learning contract is a statement of commitment to yourself and is also a means to monitoring progress.



The contract can be as detailed and as structured as you see fit (this varies greatly from person to person) but it should at least contain statements of

<b>Why do you want to improve how you learn <b>Influencing and persuasion</b>?</b>
<b>Why?</b>
<b>The level you are starting out at (as precisely as possible)</b>
<b>The level you wish to achieve (as precisely as possible)</b>
<b>The specific actions you are going to take including the tools, tactics and techniques you are going to use</b>

<b>This week</b>		
<b>Next week</b>		
<b>By the end of month one</b>		
<b>Month two</b>		
<b>Month three</b>		
<b>Month six</b>		
<b>Beyond six months</b>		
<b>How you will know you are making progress?</b>		
<b>How you will know you have succeeded?</b>		

Keep a record and look at it from time to time. If you can involve others in your commitment you will increase your chances of success.

## **8 Get going**



If you have got this far you are already going, but the critical thing is to take action that enables you to feel you are actually improving. There are several ways to do this.

- Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen in a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim.
- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Aim for early success. It reduces the risk of giving up early on.
- Remind yourself of the expected benefits and potential rewards. Look back at your envisioning exercise or your Change Shield.

## 9 Keep going



Getting going is hard enough, but to keep going is often harder still.

- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Recognise that guilt and anxiety about progress is inevitable
- Re-adjust goals and timescales to be more realistic in the light of experience.
- List early warning signs that may block you progress and think about responses that would help

Danger signs	Responses



Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen for a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim

Identify your personal reinforcers that will help you to keep going regardless of

- Set-backs
- Disappointments
- Frustrations
- Unexpected problems

<b>What might they be?</b>
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- Pressures from other sources

**What might they be?**

Reinforcers are REWARDS you can give yourself (treats) that you would not otherwise have had but for the progress you have made. They include a meal out, chocolates, an outing, champagne, a weekend away, etc or whatever takes your fancy.

Equally reinforcers can be PUNISHMENT that you inflict on yourself for lack of progress that you had committed to. This can be denial of the promised treats or something stronger like paying out to a charity. On balance rewards work better than punishments.

What support do I need and what can I put in place?

**My REINFORCERS are**

## **10 Celebrate success**



Finally don't forget to mark the achievement of having moved from one level of performance to another. It is always a satisfying feeling to know that you have done it, but there is also the intrinsic satisfaction of performing at a higher level than previously.

Some forms of learning are acknowledged through accreditation and certificates, but vast amounts of personal learning and growth are not recognised in this way. Much of the most important learning (tolerance and understanding, effective parenting, leadership, teamwork) is not recognised in this way.

Try to find ways of expressing the pleasure of the learning you have achieved.

**If I achieve my overall goals my overall REWARD will be**

Ultimately, the best way is simply to think and act in new ways and feel the benefit for you and for others, and then commit yourself to further learning.