

CASE STUDY

Influencing Decisions

Imagine that you are a manager responsible for choosing which new project to support. Your budget is limited, and you can support only one new project. You must make a decision by tomorrow morning. Your staff just finished presenting their ideas to you, and you are finding it difficult to choose. Each project has merit, and you feel that they all have an equal chance of success. As the meeting comes to a close, your team members each make a last-minute appeal to win your support.

Jose: "You are a great leader and have always made great decisions for the team. I'm sure you'll choose the best one this time, too!"

Kira: "You've always said we should aim high. I think my idea will help our company reach new markets and raise us to the next level."

John: "I think my idea has the highest chance for a good return on our investment with the least risk. My market research is solid, and I think my idea is our best choice."

Sandy: "I talked to the folks in marketing and they said that we were really onto something with my idea. I think they really support this project and hope you choose it."

Questions:

1. What influence tactics did each staff member use?
2. Which influence tactic do you think would best persuade you to choose that person's idea? Why?
3. Which influence tactic do you think would be least effective in persuading you to choose that person's idea? Why?

SO WHAT

For the most success, match the influence tactic you use to the context and to the person you are trying to influence.

Role of National Culture in Influence Effectiveness

Your ability to effectively influence others is enhanced by high cultural intelligence, or your ability to function effectively in culturally diverse environments. Understanding diverse cultures, values, and perspectives enhances your sensitivity to what is important to others and how to best influence them.

Influence tactics are also most effective when they are consistent with the social values in the national and organizational cultures. For example, consultation is likely to be a more effective influence tactic in a country with strong democratic traditions than in a country in which obedience to leaders is a strongly held cultural value.³⁷ This chapter's *Global Issues* feature describes the importance of understanding the appropriateness of using different influence tactics in different national cultures.

Persuasion Skills

Influencing others often requires persuading them to do or to believe something. Because persuasion gets people to do things differently because they *want* to, not because they have been ordered to, it is a more effective way to lead. The manager who wants more resources, the supervisor who wants to keep a key employee from leaving, and the company president who wants to sell her idea to the board of directors all need to be persuasive. Because most people are resistant to altering their habits, managers need to use persuasion skills whenever they need to create change.⁴⁴

Table 10-3

Influence Tactics and Responses to Them**Influence Tactics**

<i>Coalition tactics</i>	Engaging the help of others to persuade someone to do something; referring to the support of others to convince someone to agree to a proposal or to change his or her attitude toward something
<i>Consultation</i>	Requesting someone's advice to solve a problem or mutually setting goals to increase a follower's commitment to the leader's decision; being willing to modify the goals or solution based on the person's concerns and suggestions to sustain commitment
<i>Exchange</i>	Offering to exchange something of value now or in the future for someone's cooperation; usually used after other tactics have failed due to the higher cost
<i>Ingratiation</i>	Flattering or praising someone to put them in a good mood or to make them more likely to want to help (e.g., complimenting your manager's outfit before asking for additional project funding), or using humor; ³² seen as more credible when used early rather than after other influence attempts have failed
<i>Inspirational appeals</i>	Appealing to someone's aspirations, values, and ideals to gain his or her commitment, or increasing people's confidence that they can do something in order to increase motivation; for example, Wayne Hale, Chairman of NASA's Space Shuttle Mission Management Team during the space shuttle Discovery's Return to Flight mission, stated, "So the fundamental question remains, do we have those qualities that made our ancestors successful? Do we have the judgment to weigh it all in the balance? Do we have the character to dare great deeds? History is watching." ³³
<i>Legitimizing tactics</i>	Enhancing one's formal authority to make a certain request by referring to rules, precedents, or official documents; should be used early if doubts about the request's legitimacy are expected
<i>Personal appeals</i>	Asking someone to do something "because we're friends" or asking for a personal favor
<i>Pressure</i>	Using coercion or persistent follow-up or reminders to gain influence; risks undesirable side effects such as resentment
<i>Rational persuasion (or reason)</i>	Using logic and facts to persuade someone

Responses to Influence Attempts

<i>Commitment</i>	Endorsing and becoming an actively involved participant as a result of the influence attempt
<i>Compliance</i>	Going along with what the influencer wants without being personally committed
<i>Passive resistance</i>	Rejecting the influence attempt but not getting in the way of what the influencer is trying to do
<i>Active resistance</i>	Rejecting the influence attempt and actively trying to stop the influencer from doing what she or he is trying to do, or trying to change the influencer's attitudes

Source: Gary A. Yukl, Table 6.8, p. 172, "Leadership in Organizations", 7th ed., © 2010.

with subordinates or peers often begin with a simple request or with a weak form of rational persuasion because these techniques are easy and relatively low in personal cost (such as a weakened friendship). Anticipated resistance may be met with a stronger form of rational persuasion and softer tactics including consultation, personal appeals, inspirational appeals, and collaboration. Continued resistance is then countered with harder tactics or abandoning the effort if the request does not warrant the risks of escalation.³⁶

This chapter's *Case Study* feature illustrates the use of different influence tactics among employees trying to influence a leader's decision.