**Influencing and Persuasion Skills Training for Managers and Professionals**

**Might this management training course
significantly boost your ability to
win friends and influence people?**

**YES it might, if the following is true for you**

* A huge proportion of my job is about persuasion. I have to be able to win friends and influence all kinds of people because I can't achieve my goals without their cooperation, agreement and commitment.
* The part I find most difficult is when they're unwilling to see reason, when they resist, when they raise objections.
* I find it very hard not to argue when this happens, even though I know from experience that the more I argue the more people seem to resist.
* So what I need is a set of influencing skills that will increase my success at persuasion but without being argumentative.

**What you'll take away from this management training course**

You'll have a powerful set of influencing skills enabling you to persuade without being argumentative. Practising these skills will develop your **emotional intelligence**, and this will give you understanding and confidence to use your influencing skills when you most need them - when you're meeting resistance.

When people are resisting your persuasion, your success in changing their mind depends at least as much on how you *listen*  to them as it does on what you *tell* them. This course will turn you into **a very persuasive listener**.  It'll help you master the art of listening with empathy.

**What this session will do for you**

In this session we'll aim to give you something practical you can use right away that'll help you handle a difficult situation more successfully at work. All you need do to **prepare for this session** is think about the kinds of situations you want to be able to handle more successfully.

**FAQs**

You'll find answers to many of your questions about the content and method of this course under **FAQs** (in the main menu above).

**More about our approach
to developing your influencing and persuasion skills**

**About the terms we're using**

To us the terms *influence,* *persuade, win friends and influence people* are alternative ways of talking about the same process. We make no distinction between *influencing skills*  and *persuasion skills*. To us they all refer to the set of crucial communication skills all managers and professional people need if they're to succeed in achieving their goals in the workplace. It was Dale Carnegie who famously coined the phrase, *how to win friends and influence people,*in the 1930s. Dale Carnegie training is still going strong.

**What's the difference between our approach and Dale Carnegie's, because we're saying very similar things?**

The book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* is full of clear and helpful advice. His book is an enjoyable read.

The suggestions in *How To Win Friends and Influence People* arise from the kind of practical wisdom that resonates strongly with what most of us know from experience to be true about how to get on harmoniously and successfully with others.

For example, in the section entitled, *How to win people to your way of thinking,*he has a chapter on, *You can't win an argument*.  In it he gives various pieces of useful advice which he boils down to one idea:-

* *You can't win an argument ...* because *... A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still ...* ***The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it.*** (Dale Carnegie in How to Win Friends and Influence People).

**What's our approach?**

Carnegie's advice on this particular issue and on many others he deals with in *How to win friends and influence people*makes good sense*.* The problem is, though, this kind of advice is hardest to follow just when it's most needed. The difficulty is habit. Most of our managerial and professional clients have a deeply ingrained habit - an almost irrisistable tendency to argue when someone they're trying to win round to their way of thinking resists persuasion.

That's why avoiding arguments is easier said than done. You may agree the advice is sound, but as soon as you find yourself under pressure back on the front line you're likely to forget the advice and revert to habit. To break the habit you need first to be able to spot it - catch yourself in the act - become aware of it. And you then need to learn by repeated practice and coaching to replace it with a different response, one which leads away from argument and towards mutual respect and understanding.

Here's another piece of advice from the same chapter of *How to win friends and influence people*:-

* *Buddha said: 'Hatred is never ended by hatred but by love,' and a misunderstanding is never ended by an argument but by tact, diplomacy, conciliation and a sympathetic desire to see the other person's viewpoint.*

How could anyone disagree with this idea? But, again, easier said than done. What you'll get from us is help to actually break the habit of arguing. It's a hard habit to break. We'll train you to respond to resistance by listening with empathy instead of trying to persuade with reasoned argument. It'll need a lot of practice and coaching. But unless you *do* break the habit it's inevitable you'll revert. Our aim on this course is to help you permanently change your approach so that you can keep hold of the change when you're back at work under pressure.

**What you'll learn from us on how to win friends and influence people**

The hardest part of how to win friends and influence people is responding to their *emotional*  resistance - their *unwillingness*  to go along with you. Sales people don't call it resistance - they call it raising objections.

But whatever you call it, when people feel bad about something it closes their minds, switches off their receiver, makes them unreceptive to reason. Their resistance is driven by emotion. It’s not their fault - it’s how their brains are wired - a biological fact of life. You *can*  switch their receive back on - but only by the way you *listen*  to them, not by trying to reason them round to your point of view.

The trouble is, most managers and professionals rely on their powers of reasoning to overcome resistance. They know no other way. But when the underlying source of the resistance is emotional, trying to reason with people only gets you into argument, and the more you argue the more they resist.

**If reasoned argument won't help you win friends and influence people, why not, and what influencing skills do you need?**

The trouble with reasoned argument is it ignores people's emotions. Emotions that are ignored don't go away - they remain beneath the surface keeping the mind closed. On this course we'll help you develop *another way* of responding when you experience resistance, a set of influencing skills based on **emotional intelligence**.  These powerful persuasion skills will replace your tendency to resort to reasoned argument with a much more successful way to win friends and influence people.

One of the key skills in this set is ***listening with empathy***. When you listen to someone with empathy you encourage them to express their doubts and fears - in other words, their objections. Far from making people more resistant to persuasion, this is the fastest way to open their minds. As they express their feelings they rapidly calm down and become more open-minded, more receptive to persuasion.

But the trouble is the impulse to argue is usually very strong, and the idea of allowing – even encouraging – people to express negative feelings may go deeply against the grain. That's why we give you lots of practice and coaching. We'll help you break the habit of trying to persuade by reasoned argument by practising the skill of listening with empathy. Empathy is a very powerful way of enabling people to discharge their resistance harmlessly and open their minds to persuasion.

**A good rule of thumb**

* A*s soon as you become aware of even the slightest resistance, focus your attention on helping them express the emotion behind it as strongly as they can and so that they can* ***let off steam***. Alertly following this principle will go a long way to help you win friends and influence people.

**But HOW can you do this? What actual words can you use?**

Here's a simple but effective method you can practise for listening with empathy in those moments when you sense you're meeting resistance. Below these quidelines is an example of a salesman using this approach to handling an objection:-

Pay very close attention to the person you're trying to influence. Try to identify and reflect back as accurately as you can the following three things:-

* **How they feel** (Try to name their feeling, e.g., *“You don’t look too happy,” “I imagine you must be frustrated”, “You seem upset/angry”.*)
* **What the feeling is about** (What specific event or experience are they reacting to? What has happened?)
* **Why they are reacting this way** (What specific need, belief or difficulty of theirs is making them react this way? In other words, what really matters to them?)

Then **pause and keep paying attention**, giving them time to let off steam, time to think, and time to say more. When they do say more, repeat the process. Often when you succeed in making someone feel understood they respond with a spontaneous, *“Exactly!”*

**EXAMPLE -
here's a salesman using this influencing skill in response to a customer's objection**

Objections don't have to be seen as negative things, regrettable obstacles in the path of making a sale, to be made little of, or got round, or even if possible avoided altogether. By using the influencing skill of listening with empathy they can be treated as valuable and necessary steps along the road to a sale, to be encouraged and brought out into the open:-

CUSTOMER (raises a serious objection): *You let us down badly with late deliveries last month.*

SALESMAN (instead of arguing or trying to make excuses, takes it on the chin, and listens with empathy): *I fully accept what you say, and I greatly regret this has happened. I imagine it's made you lose confidence in us and want to look for another supplier.*

CUSTOMER (letting off steam): *That’s true.*

SALESMAN (more empathy): *So to win back your business I imagine I'll have to make you confident it won’t happen again. You’ll need to be convinced we’ve taken the problem seriously, have found the cause, and have a reliable solution.*

CUSTOMER (although he's still doubtful, his mind is beginning to open): *That would certainly help.*

SALESMAN (speaks frankly, but takes nothing for granted): *I'd like a chance to convince you.*

CUSTOMER: *Okay, go ahead. We'd rather stick with who we know, provided we can trust them. But you’ll have to be very convincing.*

SALESMAN (continues being frank and open): *Thank you. I’ll do my best.*

The salesman now swiches from listening to telling. But even as he does so he still pays very close attention to the customer to see how he's reacting. At the slightest sign of a frown or a raised eyebrow, or even a blank expression, he swiches back to listening and reflects:-

* e.g., “*I can see I haven’t fully convinced you”, “Something’s still worrying you”, “You’re still concerned about …”, “You’re not happy with what I’m telling you”*.

He does his best to address each concern to the customer’s satisfaction. He ends up with, *“Are you convinced enough to place another order with us?”* If so, job done. If not, he goes round the cycle again, asking:-

* *“What further obstacle needs to be overcome before you are sufficiently convinced to place an order with us?”*

Once more he does his best to satisfy the customer’s concern, and then tries again to close the sale.

**As well as listening with empathy
what's the other crucial influencing skill?**

The other skill you need is **speaking assertively**. On this course you'll be able to master both of these crucial influencing skills.

* Below is an outline of a conversation showing how by trying to persuade with reasoned argument but without using these two crucial influencing skills, you're likely to fail. Person A needs something from Person B. B is resisting. You can see what happens when A tries to persuade with reasoned argument. The two minds are drifting apart, losing connection – and A fails in his attempt to influence B:-

A:  *I want you to ...*

B:  *I can't because ...*

A:  *Yes, but ...*

B: *I know, but ...*

A:  *Yes, but ...*

B:  (digs his heels in and remains un-persuaded)

A:  (not getting anywhere, gives up)

Notice the *“yes buts”*. Listen in to almost any meeting or discussion where controversial issues are being discussed, and you'll hear people saying *“yes but”*  to one-another (or similar words). It's an argument. As they argue their frustration rises and they end up in a *‘dialogue of the deaf’*. This approach rarely helps you win friends and influence people.

* Below, in contrast, A responds to B’s resistance with a blend of *empathy* and *assertiveness*  (the two skills that really do help you win friends and influence people). These are the two powerful influencing skills this course will help you master:-

A:  (Listens with empathy instead of saying *'yes but'*) *I get the impression your concern is ...*

B:  (Spontaneously lets off steam)  *Exactly!*

A:  (Speaks assertively)  *What's worrying me is ...*

B:  (Becoming more receptive)  *Mmm. I see what you mean.*

This is much more persuasive. And it avoids argument. Argument raises the temperature, wastes time and jeopardises the relationship. Of course there may still be work to do before B fully agrees, but A has greatly increased his likelihood of success. He has responded to B’s resistance not by arguing but by showing understanding and allowing him to let off steam and calm down. This has created a rational atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. If you want to win friends and influence people this is the atmosphere you must create.

**Our central point, in a nutshell**

* If you find yourself arguing, stop. You're much more likely to win friends and influence people if you learn to use empathy and assertiveness instead of argument whenever you meet resistance.

**Examples of conversations at work**

**Example of the argumentative approach to persuasion**

* Here's Nicola, a member of the customer support team. She's trying to influence Hugo, manager of the software development department, in order to get the technical assistance her customer urgently needs. Instead of using the two crucial influencing skills she tries to reason with him. She's unaware that her argumentative approach is making it easy for him to refuse to cooperate:-

NICOLA:  *Hi, Hugo. I’ve got a customer with a software problem. We need to get it fixed as soon as possible.*

HUGO:  *I’m afraid he’ll just have to wait.*

NICOLA:  *But he says he can’t wait.*

HUGO:  *I dare say. But I’ve no programmers free right now.*

NICOLA:  *Can’t you release someone? Its urgent.*

HUGO:  *Sorry. Every customer says his need is urgent.*

NICOLA:  *Yes, but how am I supposed to keep the customer happy if I can’t get him the service he needs when he needs it?*

HUGO:  *I don’t know. My people can’t be everywhere at once. They’re fully stretched.*

NICOLA:  *Maybe, but what am I going to tell the customer? He’s not going to like it!*

HUGO:  *You’re not the only one with pressures!*

Both Nicola and Hugo are doing the best they can, and with the best of intentions. But an unresolved stalemate like this doesn't bode well for the business. Let's see what difference it makes when Nicola uses a combination of empathy and assertiveness:-

**Example of what you can achieve with a blend of empathy and assertiveness**

* This time Nicola uses the two crucial influencing skills, *listening with empathy* and *speaking assertively ,* and this makes it very difficult for Hugo to remain uncooperative:-

NICOLA (assertive with empathy):  *Hi, Hugo. I need to talk to you. I’m afraid I'm bringing you another headache.*

HUGO (likes her frankness):  *So what’s new? Come in, Nicola. What can I do for you?*

NICOLA (assertive):  *My worry is that one of our major customers has a problem with the software. And things are going to get very difficult if we delay fixing it.*

HUGO (feels he, too, can be frank):  *Hmm. The trouble is, half my programmers are already tied up with customers, and the other half are committed to new software development.*

NICOLA (empathy): *I can see it’s a very difficult balance you have to strike.*

HUGO (her empathy wins his trust, and he lets off steam):  *Too damned right!*

NICOLA (more empathy):  *And now I’m adding to the pressure on you.*

HUGO (now, having let off steam in response to her empathy, he starts to soften and see things from her point of view):  *True, but I can see you're only trying to do your job.*

NICOLA (assertive):  *What alarms me is that this customer carries a lot of weight in the business community.  It could damage our reputation and that would be hard for us to recover from.*

HUGO (she has almost brought him round, but he still puts up token resistance):  *They all say it’s urgent. You don’t think he’s just trying it on?*

NICOLA (firm and assertive):  *It’s losing him revenue as we speak. I’m very concerned it'll hurt us in the long run if we delay.*

HUGO:  *Okay, you’ve got yourself a programmer.*

NICOLA:  *I appreciate it, Hugo. I’ll keep you in the picture about the customer’s feedback when the job's done.*

**Yet more reasons why you might benefit
from this influencing and persuasion skills training**

* You'd like to be able to win friends and influence people honestly and without manipulation.
* You'd like to be able to handle disagreements in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understading, instead of seeing them degenerate into conflict.
* You need to find a way to persist in getting what you want from people without nagging.
* You need to know how to negotiate win-win agreements.
* You need to be able to deal more successfully with difficult or irrational people.
* You need to be able to oppose people strongly sometimes, but without arguing and without being disrespectful.
* You need to be more effective and quicker at resolving disputes,
* You need to be able to disagree without conflict.