

ELEMENTS OF INFLUENCE



The Art of
Getting Others
to Follow
Your Lead

Terry R. Bacon

author of **POWERFUL PROPOSALS** *and* **THE ELEMENTS OF POWER**

ELEMENTS
of
INFLUENCE

ALSO BY TERRY R. BACON

*Selling to Major Accounts:
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(1999)

*Winning Behavior:
What the Smartest, Most Successful Companies Do Differently*
(2003, with David G. Pugh)

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(2011)

Readers can find more information on these books, as well as *Elements of Influence* and other current topics in talent management and human performance, at www.terryrbacon.com. Additional information on the research behind *Elements of Influence*, including power-and-influence profiles of forty-five countries, is also available at www.theelementsofpower.com.

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Follow Your Lead

TERRY R. BACON

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PREFACE

I have been studying leadership for the better part of my professional life, and I've become convinced that leadership—true leadership, authentic leadership—is never an act of control, coercion, or dominance. Leadership arises from the core of who a leader is. It's an act of influence. Authentic leaders do not seek to compel; they seek to inspire. They do not impose their will on others; rather, they live according to core beliefs and principles that attract others; they initiate change because they envision a better way, and others follow that path because they believe it is a better way.

To be sure, countless people have masqueraded as leaders: Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Benito Mussolini, Idi Amin, Samuel Doe, Pol Pot, Suharto, Saddam Hussein, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Erich Honecker, Slobodan Milošević, Ratko Mladic, Jean-Claude Duvalier, Manuel Noriega, Augusto Pinochet, Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong-il, Robert Mugabe, Ferdinand Marcos, Muammar Gaddafi, Omar al-Bashir, Fidel Castro, David Koresh, Jim Jones, and other despots have claimed to be leaders. All vested themselves with godlike authority, exalting in the glory of self-congratulation, but used their power to trick, bribe, enslave, or terrorize others into submission. To call this leadership is to call cheating on exams an act of scholarship.

I've also come to believe that management, albeit a noble and necessary profession, should not be confused with leadership. Management is a by-product of organization; it arises from the need to control the elements, people, and processes of an organization in an efficient and effective way. Managers control those reporting to them by virtue of the authority vested in their positions, and although this legitimate

authority gives them the right to command others and to control the operations and budgets in their areas of responsibility, it does not make them leaders. To be sure, managers may also be leaders, but leaders are not necessarily managers. In fact, authentic leadership often emerges in individuals who lack formal authority. It may even be that having formal authority stymies leadership development in people who might otherwise emerge as leaders but are instead seduced by the siren call of positional power and never learn to lead through their authentic selves. Management is a noble and necessary profession, but leadership is to management as painting is to painting by numbers.

Despots coerce; managers control; leaders influence.

What has intrigued me most about leadership is not why leaders choose to lead, but why followers choose to follow. As I've studied leaders in history or in the organizations I've worked with, I've asked myself, "Why would anyone follow this person? What is it about this person that is compelling, interesting, attractive, or inspirational?" Naturally, there are different reasons to explain why people follow a leader. A brilliant leader may inspire through his knowledge, and followers may, in essence, say to themselves, "I can learn something from him." A well-networked leader may build a followership through the energy of social connection, her followers wanting to be as engaged and connected as she is. A powerful, well-positioned leader may draw followers who are ambitious and want to hitch their wagons to a rising star. Sometimes, followers are simply inspired by who the leader is or what the leader represents (think of Bill Gates in technology innovation and entrepreneurship, Martin Luther King Jr. in civil rights, Calvin Klein in fashion, or Germaine Greer in feminism).

As I studied successful leaders, I realized that what is fundamental to all of them is that they are powerful in some ways. They may be powerful because of what they know or can do, how well they can communicate, how attractive or likable they are, what role they play, how much information they control, how well networked they are, how well people regard them, or what people think of their character. I explored these and other sources of power in my previous book, *The Elements of Power: Lessons on Leadership and Influence*. Building a base of power is a prerequisite to leading or influencing anyone. Without power, there is no leadership or influence. With power, people have the *capacity* to lead or influence but will not do so until they act, until they do something that causes other people to follow their lead. This book is about the things leaders do to influence others.

A number of books on influence have appeared in the past few

decades, but many of them focus on how marketers, advertisers, and retailers influence consumers. Although their insights are valuable, most people don't write marketing copy, design ad campaigns, determine product prices, or develop sales strategies. Most people have more typical influence and leadership challenges: They want to know how to persuade potential donors to contribute money to a cause, how to convince the boss to give them a raise, how to compel people to vote for the candidate they favor, how to get a teenager to keep her room clean, and so on. This book is about these kinds of everyday influence challenges. No matter who you are, where you work, or what you do in life, how do you get others to follow your lead?

A WORD ABOUT PRONOUNS AND COMPANY NAMES

When offering illustrative examples in this book, as much as possible, I have avoided the awkward use of dual pronouns: he or she, his or her, him or her, and himself or herself. Although these constructions are meant to be inclusive, they are a clumsy use of English. Instead, when I am speaking hypothetically or illustratively, I either have used the plural forms of these pronouns, which do not signify gender, or have varied my pronoun usage, sometimes referring to someone as *he* and sometimes as *she*. My pronoun choices are random and are meant to illustrate that the gender of my hypothetical subjects is irrelevant.

In this book, I also refer, variously, to Lore, Lore International Institute, Korn/Ferry International (and its thought leadership arm, the Korn/Ferry Institute), and Lominger. Korn/Ferry International is the parent company. Korn/Ferry began as an executive search firm but has been expanding into leadership and talent consulting through internal growth and acquisition. It acquired Lore International Institute in November 2008 and Lominger several years earlier. All these companies are now part of Korn/Ferry, but if earlier work had been done under an original company name, I use that name for the sake of accuracy.

GLOBAL RESEARCH STUDY ON POWER AND INFLUENCE

In appendix B, I describe a research study I conducted at Lore on global power and influence. That research began in 1990 and continues

today. It is based on a proprietary 360-degree assessment, the Survey of Influence Effectiveness. During the past twenty years, our database has grown to more than 64,000 subjects and over 300,000 respondents, and it has given me and my colleagues insight into the strength of people's power sources, how frequently they use different influence techniques, how effectively they use them, how appropriate those techniques are for their culture, and how skilled they are in twenty-eight areas related to leadership and influence effectiveness. Because this study was global, it has allowed us to identify differences in the uses of power and influence in forty-five countries around the world. For more information on my findings from the global research, see www.theelementsofpower.com.

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Many people helped me during the creation of this and my previous book on power, and I deeply appreciate their contributions. First, I would like to thank my colleagues at Korn/Ferry International for their assistance. Bruce Spining helped with my research at various points during the project. Joey Maceyak managed the Survey of Influence Effectiveness (SIE) database and built the programs that helped me extract and analyze the data. Susan Kuhnert kept me organized and assisted me with research and management of the project, and David Gould created the figures that appear in this book. I am also indebted to Donna Stewart for her cross-cultural research and to Jade Masterson for her tenacious and successful pursuit of permissions. Many thanks to these fine people.

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Debra, for her love and understanding throughout a seemingly endless writing process. Book writing is a passion that people who don't write may not fully comprehend. Debra understands, although she's a photographer, not a writer, and she grants me my occasional fits and allows me to disappear into my cave and sit in front of a keyboard until the tap is opened. Thanks to her for a lifetime's worth of patience.

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INTRODUCTION

We human beings are social creatures, and our world works because of the many ways we interact with and influence one another. We get our way with others by developing bases of power—which derive from a number of personal and organizational sources—and using that power to influence how others think, feel, and act. We succeed in business as well as in life when we learn how best to influence others to do our bidding, accept our point of view, follow our lead, join our cause, feel our excitement, or buy our products and services.

We should be clear about one thing from the start: Influence is not some magic power only a few people have. Every person on the planet exercises influence all the time. Influencing is what all of us seek to do whenever we want someone else to do something, to agree with us, to believe something, to choose something, to think in a particular way, to accept our perspective, or to behave differently. Even the simple act of greeting other people is an act of influence (you are trying to persuade them that you are friendly and not hostile, and you want to influence them to treat you in a friendly, nonhostile manner in return). A baby tries to influence its mother when it cries. Children try to influence their parents when they ask if they can watch a television program or go outside and play. Teachers try to influence their students; salespeople try to influence their customers; employees try to influence their boss; advisers try to influence their clients; lobbyists try to influence elected officials; advertisers try to influence consumers; leaders try to influence their followers; and authors, like me, try to influence readers.

We tend to think that power and influence belong only to those who are very powerful and influential—to kings and presidents, government officials, generals, billionaires, movie stars, renowned athletes, and others among the rich and famous—but this is a fallacy. Influence is so common and so much a part of the fabric of daily life that we usually fail to recognize it when it happens. In virtually every human interaction, there will be multiple attempts at influence, some verbal and some nonverbal. The person I'm speaking to nods her head (wanting me to believe that she agrees with what I've said or at least understands it). I ask for her opinion (this is an influence attempt called consulting). She tells me what she thinks and indicates why she thinks it is true (another influence attempt, since she is trying to persuade me to accept her idea of truth). I suggest we meet with someone else (an influence attempt) to discuss the matter further. She agrees but wants to bring along an expert who can validate her perspective (another influence attempt).

Round and round we go, each one of us trying to influence the other so we can shape the outcome—and this is what human interactions are: a continuous negotiation for agreement or acceptance as we all attempt to exert our will, point of view, or interests. In English, the word *influence* can have negative connotations, as in *influence peddling* in Washington or one person exerting *undue influence* on another. But these negative examples of influence give a bad name to what is actually a ubiquitous and, for the most part, ethical human practice. The fact is that you could not get along in the world if you were not able to influence others *and if you were not willing to be influenced by them* on a nearly continuous basis. As other authors have noted, “No one escapes psychological ‘axwork,’ the constant reconfiguring of our beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior by unrelenting and ubiquitous forces. . . . Persuasion is constantly remaking us into persons who are measurably changed. Sometimes imperceptibly—ofttimes dramatically.”¹

Influence is part of nearly every communication and occurs in virtually every human interaction. Influence is crucial to business, too. It is so fundamental to leadership that there could be no leadership without it.

So what is influence? *Webster's* dictionary defines influence as “the act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command,” or “the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways.” The research on power and influence shows, however, that while it may happen without an *apparent* exertion of force, influence can also be overt and quite tangible, as

when a merchant offers a customer free shipping if the customer will accept the price being stated (an influence technique called exchanging) or when a product developer says to a colleague, “I need your help on a project” (an influence technique called stating).

Influence is the art of getting others to take your lead—to believe something you want them to believe, think in a way you want them to think, or do something you want them to do.

ETHICAL INFLUENCE

When influence is ethical, the person being influenced (the *influencee*) consents to be influenced, although most of the time that consent is implicit and unstated. A friend asks me for a favor, and I agree to it. A colleague calls me and suggests that we meet to talk about an urgent business opportunity, and I move other appointments on my calendar so that we can meet right away. I am listening to a debate between two presidential candidates. They are discussing the economy and one of them seems to have a better grasp of the issues and a better solution to the problems—and I decide to vote for that candidate. During an annual physical, my doctor tells me that my cholesterol level is too high and advises me to see a nutritionist who can help me learn to eat healthier foods—and I make an appointment with the nutritionist as soon as I leave the clinic. In each of these cases, I am not being coerced. I have a choice. I could decide to say no to each of these influence attempts, so I am, in effect, consenting to be influenced.

If I have no choice, however, then the influence attempt is coercive or manipulative and therefore unethical. A man points a gun at me and demands that I give him my wallet. A solicitor tells me that my generous gift to the nonprofit she represents will aid people in a developing country, but in fact she is pocketing many donations as part of her “management fee.” An angry man pushes his way to the front of the line at my service counter, demanding that I serve him first and give him what he wants or he’ll report me to my supervisor.