

BECOMING MORE INFLUENTIAL by Kevin McKee

“One of the things I learnt when I was negotiating was that until I changed in myself I could not change others”
Nelson Mandela

A colleague and I were speculating: *“If you had just an hour to coach someone could you help them to be enduringly more influential?”* Our conclusion was that indeed you could. (Form an orderly queue please.) There are certain pieces of, mainly non-verbal, behaviour which are inordinately significant in personal influencing that you can learn to change quite quickly. This article is about ways of harnessing these and other behaviour changes and amplifying their effect for maximum positive results.

Influencing skills development is a hardy plant that can flourish in quite unsupportive environments. As a young manager I was an isolated delegate from my company attending an “open” influence skills programme. Nobody back in my organisation actively supported this piece of development yet it demonstrably increased my effectiveness. (An outcome which increased over time.) Imagine how much greater the benefits are when you give influencing skills development some context and continuity.

From our extensive experience the hierarchy of return on an investment from different approaches to influence development runs upward from:

1. **Open Programmes** – great for the individual but restricted organisational effect.
2. **In-house Programmes** – increase the impact by sending cohorts of better influencers into the organisation.
3. **Team Influence Events** – better still as colleagues can support and challenge each others’ skills and apply the skills to shared issues.
4. **Integrated Skills Development** – this is where the training is connected with a particular change in the organisation, e.g. training change agents, improving customer service. The skills and the task in hand mutually reinforce each other

NB These are group development events. One-to-one coaching on Influence could fall into any of these categories.

Of course a concerted piece of influence development will enable individuals to change several pieces of behaviour. A modern programme will also address issues of personal/business focus and influence strategy. But if you only have an hour ...