

**Be a Positive PM “Change” agent.
Learn how to use Persuasion & Influence in a Win-Win way!
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Abstract

“Knowledge is useless until it is transformed into benefit through action.” (Hill, 1992, p 225)

We as project managers are the new *leaders* in business. We are entrepreneurial in nature...our projects are our businesses. Successful leaders are “magnets”. Others flock to them, to eagerly follow their lead. They wield power whether formal or informal and are master communicators and persuaders. We need to learn from these successful leaders. Communication, cooperation, maximizing team member value, getting the right decisions made – and in a timely fashion...these are among a few of the “soft skills” that project managers need to master to become effective leaders and achieve continued project success. How can we as project managers without formal power effectively and positively influence our stakeholders – senior management, sponsors, team members, etc? Persuasion is the key that will unlock this power. This paper outlines the power of the “12 Universal Laws of Persuasion” (Mortensen, Maximum Influence, 2004) that are based on human behavior. Persuasion is a behavior that can be learned. The power of positive thinking and attitude is indisputable in project success and successful persuasion. Napoleon Hill’s “5 P’s of Success” and Kurt Mortensen’s “5 C’s of Trust” will round out the changes that we need to make. Like many things, persuasion must start from within us first before we can expand out to others.

Introduction

“Willing cooperation produces enduring power, while forced cooperation ends in failure.” (Hill, 1992, p 221)
At times, influence and persuasion seem so elusive for us as project managers. We are always struggling with different ways to motivate our staff and to obtain cooperation with other managers and key stakeholders/team members. *Do we use control? Do we use reward? Can we achieve cooperation? Are we effective communicators?* There are many powerful tools to learn, but we must begin with the changes we need to make in ourselves first. Then we can move to understanding the laws of behavior and how they impact our ability to persuade. We must remember that there are only three parts to consider: the communicator, the audience and the message.

Internal Changes

“Before trying to master others, be sure you are the master of yourself.” (Hill, 1992, p 241)

Seventeen Success Principles (p78-89)

1. Definiteness of Purpose. Clearly identify your goals. Develop a 1-year and a 5-year plan and detail your goals by month, week and even each day. Daily review these goals and they become a part of your conscious and your subconscious mind. In this way you will have the advantage of both the conscious and subconscious working for you.
2. The Mastermind Power Principle. It is very difficult to stand a lone. Even the greatest successful leaders needed to have a Mastermind team. Find an individual or individuals with whom you can share your plans for success. You must meet on a regular basis, support each other in their plans for success, be sincere and be trustworthy.
3. Applied Faith. This is the ability to “let go” of those things over which you have no control. Once you have completed all your actions – those things over which you do have control, and have faith during the period that actions will occur over which you have no control, you can enter a more relaxed state of mind. You then have a state of confidence that attracts positive reactions from every source.

4. A pleasant Personality. Do you smile? Do you warmly greet others? Do you have a positive mental attitude? Do you attract others to you? You must be positive, sincere, flexible, and have a sense of humor. Mirror those characteristics that you find pleasant in others.
5. Going the Extra Mile. Are you satisfied with doing just what was asked? Are you willing to do just a bit more – without expecting anything in return?
6. Personal Initiative. Do you shy away from taking action on something that only you see it's required value at this time knowing full well that the impact later on will be significantly greater if delayed?
7. Self Discipline. It teaches us to direct the energy generated by our thoughts into feelings and actions, which will be advantageous and strengthening. It is directing our energy into the most useful, successful channels.
8. Controlled Attention. Maintain focus and attention until clarity is achieved. Thinking with another person on a certain subject brings new insights and new truths.
9. Enthusiasm. It is a feeling of confidence, an awareness of a relationship between oneself and the source of power to achieve. As you speak with enthusiasm and positiveness and move with confidence, observe how it grows and spreads to others.
10. Imagination. Imagination is your mind's exercise, its challenge and its adventure.
11. Learning from Adversity. Look at every adversity as carrying within it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit. With this knowledge you can ride out any storm that besets your life. Your attitude will determine its effect – good or bad.
12. Budgeting Time and Money. Both of these are fixed resources. Learning to effectively budget your time and money may be hard to master, but will be most rewarding.
13. Positive Mental Attitude. Your ability to master maintaining a positive mental attitude will significantly aid your ability to be positive in any situation. Fill your mind up with positive thoughts so that there is no room left for negatives. Solving challenges from a positive perspective leads to better solutions for the long term.
14. Accurate Thinking. Focus on your goal. Plot out your path to accomplish it and move steadily, positively toward it with faith.
15. Sound Physical Health. Our thoughts do impact our health. Positive thoughts, good attitudes, taking actions to maintain our health all create harmony within our bodies. These generate physical manifestations of order and system.
16. Cooperation. Cooperation expands from within us outward. Our bodies are healthy when there is organization and teamwork with all of our organs. Our lives are happy when cooperation flows between us and the world around us.
17. Cosmic "Habitforce". This is our connection to the universe. Connecting and blending with the patterns of the universe will bring harmony, peace of mind and success.

"It may do no good to stop, look and listen, unless you also think." (Hill, 1992, p 246)

Definitions (Mortensen, 2004, p9)

"Persuasion is the process of changing or reforming attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or behaviors toward a predetermined outcome through voluntary compliance. If you properly implement the strategies of Maximum Influence, you'll persuade others not only to want what you want, but also to be eager to do what you want. Note that persuasion is not the same as negotiation, a term that suggests some degree of backing down or meeting in the middle. Rather than compromising, as in negotiation, effective persuasion will actually convince the opposing party to abandon their previous positions and embrace yours."

"Influence is who you are and how you, as a person, will impact the message. This includes whether you are viewed as trustworthy and credible, for example."

"Power increases your ability to persuade and influence. This power can be seen with people who possess knowledge, have authority, or use coercion during a persuasion process."

“Motivation is the ability to incite others to act in accordance with the suggestions and ideals you have posed. Motivation is your “call to action,” or what you want your audience to do.”

“The world stands aside and makes room for the person who knows where he is going and is on his way.” (Hill, 1992, p 253)

5 P’s of Success

In order to achieve Maximum Influence, we need to understand and master the 5 P’s of Success. It takes awareness, knowledge, continuing education and consistent practice.

1. Psyche: You must **believe** in yourself. You will not be able to achieve your goals until you believe you can achieve your goals. You must be able to put aside negative comments from others and move forward with your plan. Learn to follow your heart.

2. Persistence: This is your driving force. Without persistence and idea will be just that, only an idea. Persevere through adversity. Never let obstacles in your life take your eyes off your goals or stop you from driving toward them.

3. Personal Development: Things never stay the same, they always change – one way or the other. It can be compared to inertia – something in motion wants to continue in motion and something at rest prefers to stay at rest. Personal expert Brian Tracy says, “If you can get yourself to read thirty minutes a day, you’re going to double your income every year.” The more you learn and desire to learn, the more positive you are about your future and what you hope to accomplish. Invest in your future by investing in your personal development.

4. Passion: Are you passionate about project management? Do you become excited and animated when the topic of project management best practices is mentioned? Do you want to convert others to your cause of project improvements and the value that can be achieved? Sometimes passion alone is enough to persuade others. It springs from a combination of belief, enthusiasm and emotion. Find it, embrace it and share it with others.

5. Persuasion: Are you able to get other people to do what you want them to do, when you want it and still win friends and help them enjoy doing it? That’s a big order, but it’s not impossible. Understanding how to use influence to draw people of their own free will to you and your goals is within your grasp. Study the “12 Universal Laws of Persuasion” (Mortenson, 2004), practice them, understand your audience and move forward with a positive win/win goal.

“Nature yields her most profound secrets to the man who is determined to uncover them.” (Hill, 1992, p 260)

Hierarchy of Persuasion

Effective persuasion will have a lasting impact. There are three key factors that must be present;

1. You as the speaker must be credible and believable
2. An audience is required and you must know their current state and their desired state
3. You must have a substantive message with clear action that engages both the conscious and sub-conscious mind in both logic and emotion.
- 4.

The Hierarchy of Persuasion (Exhibit 1) shows five levels of persuasion. At the bottom of the pyramid you will find Control and Coercion. Both of these may get results but they are clearly short lived and leave a ‘used and abused’ feeling to those on the receiving end. At the other end of the spectrum you achieve commitment. This is an internal change, self-initiated that has a lasting and sustaining impact and leaves a positive relationship between all parties. There are times when we are forced into actions in the base of the pyramid, but we should strive to attain true commitment by our stakeholders so that the long-term (life-time) value of the project can be maximized.

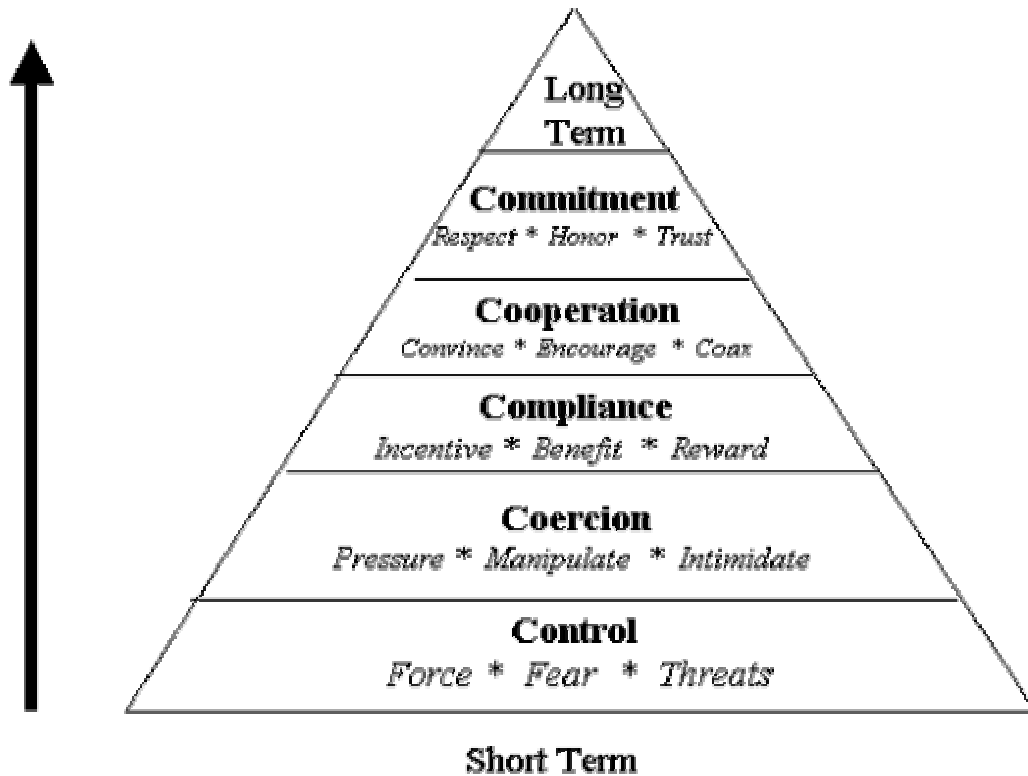


Exhibit 1

“Who told you it couldn’t be done, and what great achievements has he performed that qualified him to set up limitations for you?” (Hill, 1992, p 220)

12 Universal Laws of Persuasion

As project managers we regularly use 3-4 of these laws, whether we knew them as laws or not. Good persuaders knowingly use 7-8 of these laws on a regular basis. Master persuaders know and use all 12 laws to achieve full commitment from others. To be effective, these laws must be delivered “below the radar” to the sub-conscious. Your stakeholders shouldn’t be aware that you are using them. If you aren’t polished in your delivery, you can be seen like a police car on the side of the road and you will have failed to persuade them.

These laws are not used at random. You must analyze your audience and select only those laws that apply to each situation. You must be able to read your audience and their reactions. You will be a master communicator!

1. The Law of Dissonance

A common example of this would be New Year’s resolutions. We resolve to loose weight or exercise more. As the year progresses, weeks go by and months go by and this dissonance creates a feeling like a rubber band being stretched within us that must be resolved before it snaps. We have 6 options to reduce this dissonance: denial, modification, reframing, search, separation and rationalization. Let’s say that you have asked your team to provide electronic status reports each Friday by noon and they don’t. A rationalization response might be: She doesn’t create her report until Monday morning so she really doesn’t need it at noon on Friday. If I get her my status report by Monday morning, that should be fine.

2. The Law of Obligation

This law is based upon “reciprocity”, when others do something for us we feel the need or push to do something for them in return. If someone says “hello” you respond with “hello”. If someone gives you a gift, you feel the need to respond with a gift. You were contacted by another project manager for temporary usage of one of your key resources, it didn’t impact your project significantly and so you obliged them. They know feel the need to repay the obligation at some point in the future.

3. The Law of Connectivity

Are you “likable”? Do you fit in? Do people feel comfortable around you? There are four main factors involved in connectivity: attraction, similarity, people skills, and rapport. What do you wear to work? Are you concerned about your appearance? Do you smile and greet people every day? Are you sincere and do you have a true interest in the other person? Do you call people by name? Are you respected? Never criticize others or talk about your problems. People want to tell you about themselves and their problems. Be a good listener. How you use your body language and how you interpret theirs speaks more than what words you use. Begin to use more of your other senses when you connect like sound, touch and smell (amount or type of perfume).

4. The Law of Social Validation

This can be viewed as the “herd mentality”. If others are doing it, I should be too. This can be both beneficial and detrimental to the project manager. If you tolerate behaviors from part of your team that you don’t want the whole team to emulate, then you must change the pattern before it becomes socially validated. This is harder to change once it becomes an acceptable standard of operation. You can also use other team members as positive “plants”. If your team hasn’t fully committed to the project goal, having a few committed team members plugging the value and encouraging the rest of the team to commit will move the team in your direction.

5. The Law of Scarcity

How many of us are moved to take action when we think that time is running out or that what we want may not be around or available to us? This law can drive us wild. We don’t want to miss out on anything we could have had and will move around any restriction that is placed upon us. This pertains not only to physical products, but also to time, information, price and knowledge. Let’s say that you need to find a department for the prototype deliverable. No one is running to take this opportunity. You position this opportunity in very beneficial terms, perhaps even indicating a favorable light by senior management for the *first* department that moves on this. You then find them knocking at your door to be selected.

6. The Law of Verbal Packaging

What words do you use? Are you positive or negative? Do you speak fast or slow? When your project has hit a snag, do you paint the picture in a negative light or position it in a more positive light? Be careful when you select your words, emotion-packed words can cause harm to others. Use assumptive and assertive language. Instead of saying “If you get the report done, we will...” say, “When you get the report done, we will...” It does have a different impact and will move others to action.

7. The Law of Contrast

We always like to feel that we have a choice of different options from which to select. When we offer alternative proposals we provide contrasts. Let’s say that a proposal to purchase a major system was required. We knew that senior management was leaning toward an expensive solution that would not be the best fit for the company. We take the time to find what we feel would be a better fit. We then offer comparisons between the two (or more) solutions in an effort to provide sufficient proof to consider the alternative solution.

8. The Law of Expectations

We radiate our thoughts to others whether we realize it or not. What we expect from others, stated or thought, become the reality of our thoughts. How many times have you “proved” to yourself that someone was difficult to

deal with or was always the most helpful to you? What you expect is usually what you get. Work on trying to change your thoughts and expectations and be astounded by the new results you achieve!

9. The Law of Involvement

Create and awaken the curiosity in others. Use questions to guide your stakeholders. Create an atmosphere of cooperation and sharing for your teams. Be inclusive rather than exclusive. Sometimes you can use competition to increase involvement.

10. The Law of Esteem

Use praise to release energy and motivation. Many of us do not enjoy high self-esteem. We are constantly told how we should look and act, what we should drive, etc. Many of these images are far from the general population and cause us to lower our self-esteem. Everyone wants praise. Do you give credit to your team for their suggestions? Do you criticize others in the open rather than in private? Do you ask for their opinions? Emphasis on boosting the esteem of your team and stakeholders will go a long way to generating the success and commitment of your team.

11. The Law of Association

What image do others get when they think about your projects, teams and past efforts? People want to be on winning teams, connecting and following with successful leaders. You need to be associated with positive things. You have the ability to create a positive atmosphere by using the senses – colors, smells, music and symbols. Do your weekly meetings have food; i.e. cookies, candies, etc.? Does your team associate good feelings with your activities? Are you always able to get the best specialists on your team? Look for ways to create positive association on your projects.

12. The Law of Balance

We have been talking about reaching both the conscious and sub-conscious minds. The conscious deals mostly with the logical mind and the sub-conscious deals with emotional heart. Effective persuaders understand what balance their audience needs and includes both in their presentations.

“Your reputation is that which people think you are, your character is that which you are.” (Hill, 1992, p 260)

5 C’s of Trust

As master persuaders and leaders, we need to become a “magnet” for our stakeholders. Understanding how to create trust and respect is crucial to our success. The 5 C’s identify where our focus needs to be as we begin to make changes and self-improvement.

1. Credibility

How credible are we? Do we know our subject matter? Have we obtained Project Management Professional (PMP®) status? Are we continually improving our personal knowledge?

2. Confidence

Do we believe in ourselves? Do we let others talk us out of our dreams or do we move confidently forward trusting that our belief is valid and our decisions are the best they can be given the knowledge we have received?

3. Congruence

Are we internally and externally in sync? Do we do what we say and say what we do? People don’t want surprises regarding trust and respect. They want the comfort to know where you stand and that you are firm in your stance.

4. Character

Are you a moral person? Do you have strong character and ethics? Are your stakeholders confident that you will have their best interests at heart? Will you be up front and honest with them?

5. Competence

Do you have the ability to perform? Can you achieve success? Do you attempt to lead projects that are beyond your ability? Do you look for projects that will expand your knowledge, but where you can be a confident, competent?

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Summary/Final Words

Persuasion and influence has the ability to make a profound difference in our successes, both at the business level with our project stakeholders and at the personal level with our relationships. In matrix organizations where we have very little formal power, the ability to persuade will allow us to better control our situations and resources. As you move into leadership positions, you must improve your ability to analyze your stakeholders, their needs, and their personal “balance”(logic/emotion). You must be a better listener and success orchestrator.

This is something that doesn’t happen overnight. It will require study and practice. However, it is something that you have the ability to achieve. With hard work and practice, you will become a successful MASTER PERSUADER!

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