

INFLUENCER

The New Science of Leading Change

KERRY PATTERSON, JOSEPH GRENNY,
RON MCMILLAN AND AL SWITZLER



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The Big “So What”

To solve problems, leaders must be able to influence behavioral change. In this book, the authors present **proven skills, principles and strategies that you can apply to create fast, impactful and lasting change in any aspect of your work or personal life.**



Introduction



Effective leaders are influencers, i.e. they can bring behavioral change. Unfortunately, it's hard to change people—be it to get yourself to do something you dislike, to get your child to obey you, or to get criminals to turn over a new leaf.



After studying top leaders and influencers around the world, the authors uncovered several common principles and strategies that can be learned and replicated. By mastering them, you too can become a powerful leader and change agent.



In this summary, we'll present these ideas in 2 parts:

- The 3 Keys to Influence; and
- The 6 Sources of Influence



Part 1: The 3 Keys to Influence

To **successfully influence change, you need 3 keys.** These keys jointly constitute the science of leading change, and can be used

KEY QUOTES

“Leadership calls for changing people’s behavior. Influencers are those leaders who understand how to create rapid, profound, and sustainable behavior change.”

“What qualifies people to be called ‘leaders’ is their capacity to influence others to change their behavior in order to achieve important results.”

“When it comes to influencing human behavior, the sky’s the limit.”

to predictably influence behaviors at the personal, organizational or community levels.





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1. Focus and Measure

Influencers are crystal-clear about the exact outcome they want, when to achieve it, and how to measure it. They apply these 3 principles:

 **Set specific, meaningful and time-bound goals.** A goal to “help the poor” is vague and subjective, whereas a goal to “save 100,000 lives in Africa from poverty-related diseases by 31 Dec 2020” is specific. Clear goals that appeal both to the head and heart are more likely to spur action.

 **Measure frequently.** Unless something is measured regularly and given constant attention, it won’t drive behaviors. To influence change, you can’t rely on estimations—you must invest the effort/resources to collect specific data/metrics and assess your actual progress.

 **Measure the right things** that’ll *drive* the behaviors you want to change. If you’re trying to reduce sexual aggression, it may be a mistake to directly track the number of sexual assaults. If people are afraid to report the assaults, you may see a drop in assault cases when the situation is getting worse in reality. Instead, it’ll be better to measure if people feel safe from sexual assaults and if they feel safe to report such assaults.



2. Identify Vital Behaviors

Once you know your desired outcomes, you must define the behavioral change required to achieve those results. Influencers don’t dilute their efforts over dozens of behaviors. **They focus on a few high-leverage behaviors that’ll create the greatest impact.**

KEY QUOTES

“Clear goals aimed at a compelling target can have an enormous impact on behavior because they engage more than simply the brain. They also engage the heart.”

“Measurement is an integral part of the change effort, and done correctly, it informs and drives behavior.”

“In order to create profound change, you don’t have to change 50 behaviors. You usually have to change only a couple of them.”

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◯ Narrow down to just 2-3 vital actions, i.e. specific behaviors or moments that'll create a cascading effect with disproportionate results.

- When King Rama IX of Thailand turned 60 in 1988, he granted amnesty to >30,000 prisoners, many of whom were infected with the HIV virus. The virus started to spread from drug users to sex workers to families, infecting some 1 million Thais by 1993. Yet, by the late 1990s, new infections fell by 80% due to interventions by Dr. Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn. Initially, Wiwat's efforts failed because he followed experts' untested advice to educate people about the disease. After doing his own research on AIDs transmission, Wiwat found that 97% of all new cases came from sex workers. By getting 100% of sex clients to use condoms (a vital behavior), Wiwat resolved Thailand's health crisis.
- In another example, Dr. Mimi Silbert (founder of Delancey Street Foundation) successfully transformed thousands of criminals into responsible, productive citizens. Silbert focused on 2 vital behaviors to destroy the gang culture, change values and actions. She got every resident to take responsibility for someone else's success, and take others to task for every violation. In so doing, she (i) shifted their focus from selfish needs to caring for others and (ii) got people to speak up when others flouted the rules. Her strategy successfully reformed >90% of the ex-felons.



You can find vital behaviors using 4 strategies:

- Spot the obvious. Consider what you already know (or consult experts) to identify vital behaviors that are obvious yet underutilized. For example, most of us know that to have good health, we must eat well, exercise and avoid smoking. Yet, we may not do so because the actions are tough or unpleasant.
- Find the crucial moments, i.e. the specific situations where you're most at risk of failure. For example, a fast-food chain discovered that 80% of its customer service issues surfaced when (a) the restaurant was short of ≥ 2 staff, (b) ≥ 1 oven was down, or (c) there was an unexpected influx of customers. They could now find vital behaviors to target these crucial moments of staff or equipment shortage.



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KEY QUOTES



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"Stories provide a window into the storytellers' culture."

- Look for positive deviants—cases where the problem should exist but doesn't—and identify what the deviants do differently. The Carter Center was trying to eradicate the Guinea worm disease in many villages. When they found a village that wasn't plagued by this disease, they investigated it and uncovered a simple solution used by the village women: they used their skirts to strain their drinking water, thus filtering out the larvae behind the disease.
- Bust cultural taboos that hinder desired outcomes. Get people to talk about an issue and use these stories to uncover invisible cultural norms or unwritten rules (e.g. "you must never criticize your boss" or "if in doubt, just shut up"). In healthcare, it's a taboo to point out the mistakes of your seniors. However, if every surgeon thanked others (be it a nurse or housekeeper) for reminding them to wash their hands, this vital behavior would make it less threatening for junior staff to speak up and hence reduce the risk of infections.

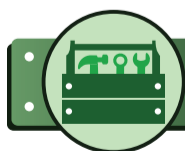


After identifying possible vital behaviors, test the solutions with other failed groups to see if they deliver the desired results.



3. Use the 6 Sources Of Influence

Now that you know the exact results you want and the vital behaviors that'd get you there, you must get people to implement those behaviors. **Influencers don't limit themselves to just 1-2 favorite techniques. They use 6 different sources of influence to motivate and enable the vital behaviors, thus guarantee change.** In Part 2, we'll zoom in on each of these sources of influence.



Part 2: The 6 Sources of Influence



These 6 sources of influence jointly address 2 driving forces across 3 domains:














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KEY QUOTES


“By getting six different sources of influence to work in their favor, influencers increase their odds of success tenfold.”

“The first problem influencers often face is that good behaviors feel bad while bad behaviors feel good.”

“Compulsion first replaces then erases motivation. You can never hope to engage people’s commitment if they don’t have permission to say no.”


	 MOTIVATION (Is it worth it?)	 ABILITY (Can I do it?)
 PERSONAL	 Personal Motivation: <i>Help them love what they hate</i>	 Personal Ability: <i>Help them do what they can't</i>
 SOCIAL	 Social Motivators: <i>Provide encouragement</i>	 Social Ability: <i>Provide assistance</i>
 STRUCTURAL	 Structural Motivators: <i>Change their economy</i>	 Structural Ability: <i>Change their space</i>

- All human behaviors depend on 2 drivers: ability and motivation. Whether you do something depends on (i) whether you can do what’s required (ability), and (ii) whether you think it’s worth it (motivation).
- These 2 drivers can be applied in 3 domains: personal, social and structural.

 You can apply the sources of influence individually, though you’ll increase your chances of success by applying all of them.

1. Personal Motivation: Help Them Love What They Hate

How can you get people to do something they don’t want to do? Most people assume that others’ lack of motivation is due to personal flaws (e.g. “He’s too lazy”). They try to force people to do things, only for it to backfire. We often don’t act in our best long-term interests because we’re trying to avoid short-term pains. **Influencers increase personal motivation by making painful things pleasurable using 4 tactics:**

 **Offer people the freedom of choice** instead of confronting or coercing them. Ginger Graham (CEO of Guidant) needed her employees to put in extra shifts for the upcoming holidays. Instead of imposing extra work hours, she called for a company-wide meeting, praised people for their contributions and shared how their new stents have helped doctors to save lives. She explained the unexpected surge in demand and asked for help to meet the production shortfall. Within 30 minutes, employees brainstormed solutions so they could work over the holidays while keeping themselves and their families happy.



Make abstract visions and strategies tangible and motivating. Create first-hand experiences (e.g. field trips) so people can see, feel, or touch the results directly. Instead of lecturing about the value of education or living a better life, Dr. Silbert helped former-felons to experience what it was like to earn a degree and develop new skills. Over 90% of her 14,000 graduates permanently left crime and went on to become professionals.



Stories are a powerful tool for influencing large numbers of people with relatively little time/resources. Tell compelling stories with believable characters—create such a vicarious experience that the audience are immersed in the characters' thoughts and feelings, and gain new perspectives in the process.



Make it a game. Make vital behaviors fun, engaging and motivating with these elements:

- Keep score: use clear, timely feedback to make task-completion more satisfying.
- Compete against others and yourself to motivate progress.
- Use charts and other tools to show constant improvement.
- Choose measures that are within the participants' control.



2. Personal Ability: Help Them Do What They Can't

Behavioral change usually requires new skills. If people lack the ability to take action (or believe they can't learn the required skills), they won't do what they should. **Influencers improve people's ability to execute the vital behaviors by practicing specific behaviors and equipping them with technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.**



Deliberate practice. Dr. Anders Ericsson found that the difference between amateurs and masters came not so much from the duration of their practices, but *how* they practiced. Masters used deliberate practice to steadily perfect their craft. Specifically:



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“Transform numbers into names, statistics, faces, and charts into human conditions, and everything would change. What seemed like an interesting abstraction would become a moral imperative.”

“In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and snap! The job's a game.”
—Mary Poppins



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“Take complex tasks and make them simple; long tasks and make them short; vague tasks and make them specific; and high-stakes tasks and make them risk free.”

“Interpersonal interactions can be extraordinarily complicated, and most will improve only after individuals receive instruction that includes deliberate practice.”

“Develop greater proficiency at deliberate practice as well as the ability to manage your emotions, and you significantly increase your chances for turning vital behaviors into vital habits.”

- Concentrate fully on a task to identify what you’re doing, what’s working or not working, and why.
- Provide timely feedback with clear benchmarks. Have short intervals between practice and testing so you can instantly measure your performance against pre-specified standards, and rapidly refine your approach.
- Dissect big, long-term targets into bite-sized goals for focused practice. To deliver 5-star service in your restaurant (a long term goal), use deliberate practice to train your waiters in multiple technique-specific behaviors and processes, e.g. setting the table or serving a glass of wine.



Equip people with a blend of technical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills required for change.

- Interpersonal skills are important in behavioral change, yet we don’t usually get to practise them with a coach or feedback. Dr. Wiwat managed to get 100% of sex clients in Thailand to use condoms by getting experienced sex workers to train the younger ones. Inexperienced sex workers practiced recommended scripts until they were confident of exactly how to respond if customers refused to wear condoms.
- Even if we know something, we may not do it. We only adopt a new behavior if (a) it’s worth our effort and (b) we can do what’s required. Cultivate a growth mindset—help people realize that their abilities aren’t fixed, i.e. they can learn and change.
- Build resilience and self-discipline. Start with baby steps, but progressively add harder tasks that require greater effort and persistence. This builds ability, confidence, and the realization that roadblocks are temporary and a part of learning.
- Managing emotions. We respond to events in 2 ways: (a) on impulse (e.g. honking and yelling at a driver that cuts in front of you) or (b) with calm reasoning (e.g. slowing down to keep a safe distance). Equip people with the techniques to manage emotional impulses and evaluate their actions rationally:



KEY QUOTES

- (i) Focus on other things than the source of temptation
- (ii) Delay acting on the impulse (which will fade naturally)
- (iii) Examine feelings consciously instead of being unconsciously driven by them: Explicitly label the desire (e.g. “I need chocolate now”) → Bring up a conflicting goal (e.g. “I need to stay within my calorie quota”) → Debate logically with the emotion (which also delays the action).



3. Social Motivation: Provide Encouragement

We're heavily influenced by our social networks, due to our need to feel connected, accepted and respected. Even a simple social cue (e.g. a nod, frown or snigger) can prompt us to do or avoid something. **Great influencers use at least 3 best practices to amplify their social influence and the impact of social support:**



Use the “Power of One”. The actions of 1 respected person can have a disproportionate influence on others' behavior. When a CEO asked for feedback on how he could be more approachable, no one responded until a well-respected manager stepped forth. Once people saw how well the CEO responded to the manager's feedback, they started to speak up more candidly.

- However, people will only follow the actions of someone they respect and believe to be credible. To gain trust and respect:
 - (i) Ask yourself: “Why should they believe and follow me?”
 - (ii) Walk the talk by adopting the vital behavior yourself and show that it delivers results.
 - (iii) Be prepared to make visible sacrifices (including your time, money, ego and other goals) to prioritize the vital behavior.



Engage formal and informal leaders.

- To implement change, you need the support of formal leaders in the chain of command, e.g. the CEO of a company or the dean of a faculty.

“Learn how to tap into the power of social influence, and you can change just about anything.”

“When a respected individual attempts a vital behavior and succeeds, this one act alone can go further in motivating others to change than almost any other source of influence.”

“You must regularly demonstrate your sincerity by generating incontrovertible evidence that you believe in what you say.”




KEY QUOTES

“Here’s the real influence key. The rest of the population – over 85 percent – will not adopt the new practices until opinion leaders do.”

“If you can’t talk about it, you can’t change it...Changes in behavior must be preceded by changes in the public discourse.”

- In addition, you must work with opinion leaders who’re well-connected and respected by others. Usually, the large majority won’t adopt a new practice until the opinion leaders do so.
- Partner with both formal/informal leaders. Invest a disproportionate amount of time with them, listen to their ideas/concerns, and build trust and rapport. Share your ideas through them to boost your influence.


 **Create new norms.** People conform to social norms. To influence change, you may need to break old norms and normalize the new vital behaviors. You can use 2 approaches:


- Publicly discuss the old/new norms. Unhealthy norms are often perpetuated by a “culture of silence”. You can’t address a problem if it’s taboo to talk about it. Make it safe to discuss controversial issues, including the problems with existing norms as well as people’s concerns about the proposed changes.
- Create 2x accountability: get people to hold themselves and others accountable for vital behaviors. Work with formal and informal leaders to design social support (to reinforce desired behaviors) and social deterrents (to discourage undesired ones).



4. Social Ability: Provide Assistance

Most complex problems can’t be solved by 1 individual; they require people to work in concert, including those who’re contributing to the problems. **Influencers build social capital to provide the help, approval or cooperation needed for individuals to adopt new behaviors.**

 If a vital behavior involves interdependent tasks/processes (e.g. each person in a just-in-time production line is linked to the person before/after them), you’d require team effort.

 When groups of people work synergistically together, they deliver results that’re much greater than the sum of their individual parts.



- In face of novel or complex problems, no one can have all the answers. A group with diverse expertise can jointly develop a strategy that wouldn't have been possible with 1 person.
- Others can also offer fresh perspectives to uncover blind spots.



Get people to teach one another to leverage human capital, reinforce key messages and solve problems with minimal risks. A VP realized that his company's projects constantly exceeded budget and timelines because no one would admit they were behind schedule. He knew it'd be futile to attack the issue directly, since this cultural norm was perpetuated by the senior leaders. So, he enlisted all the leaders to train their staff on how to have highstakes conversations about project issues. As the leaders taught others to address risky problems instead of hiding the truth, they were also sending subtle signals and developing new norms. Within months, people started to speak up about project issues and problems were resolved.



Often, widespread change is only possible with group solidarity. Dr. Wiwat could only stop the spread of the HIV virus if *every* sex worker insisted their clients wore condoms. If some accepted unprotected sex to earn more money, others would follow suit and the initiative would fail. Wiwat held meetings with all the sex workers and business owners to explain why AIDs would eventually kill them and their livelihood unless there was 100% support. Compliance rates jumped from 14% to 90% after that.

Let's wrap up this section with another example. Dr. Muhammad Yunus left his career as an economics professor to alleviate the chronic poverty in Bangladesh's villages. He uncovered a vital behavior that could break the poverty cycle—by helping small business owners to secure and repay loans of just a few cents/dollars. Dr. Yunus started a bank to offer microcredit without collateral. He insisted that all loan proposals must be co-signed by 4 other microcredit clients, to ensure that budding entrepreneurs worked in teams and leveraged social capital to develop their business plans. This was so successful that 98% of the clients could repay their loans with full interest, improve their living conditions and educate their kids to break the cycle of poverty.

KEY QUOTES

"When facing changing, turbulent, or novel times—calling for novel solutions—multiple heads can be better than one."

"With a little help from our friends, we can produce a force greater than the sum of our individual efforts."



5. Structural Motivation: Change Their Economy

Often, deeply-entrenched behaviors are the result of structural incentives or disincentives in an economic system. **Influencers ensure that any extrinsic rewards and punishments will support rather than undermine the desired vital behaviors.** They apply several principles:



Use extrinsic rewards (e.g. bonuses, perks, awards) as a third-tier strategy. In short, focus on motivating vital behaviors first with intrinsic motivators (Source 1), followed by social motivators (Source 3), *then* extrinsic motivators.

- Don't use extrinsic incentives as your 1st motivational strategy, since they won't work without intrinsic motivators, and may even backfire. Research found that if you offer extrinsic rewards for something that people already enjoy, they'll end up doing less of it when the reward is removed.
- Once the right intrinsic motivators are in place, use additional extrinsic rewards to amplify the results, ensuring they're timely, satisfying and tied to vital behaviors:
 - (i) Link rewards directly to the vital behaviors. Addicts who wanted to quit alcohol and cocaine became even more motivated when vital behaviors (e.g. moderate consumption of alcohol) were pegged to simple perks like phone privileges and vouchers.
 - (ii) Reward vital behaviors, not just outcomes. When you reward results (e.g. # of customers service calls), you may unintentionally incentivize unwanted behaviors (e.g. agents rushing through each call). On the other hand, if you've identified the right vital behaviors, any improvement in those behaviors will eventually bring results. Behaviors are also directly within people's control and can be instantly rewarded.
 - (iii) Less can be more. A few small, thoughtful rewards can be more effective than too many big incentives.



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KEY QUOTES

"Changing the economy means simply to ensure that positive and negative incentives aren't undermining the influence message you're trying to send."

"Small incentives that are immediately linked to vital behaviors can yield amazing results with some of the world's most difficult problems."

"Reward small improvements in behavior along the way. Don't wait until people achieve phenomenal results. Instead, reward small improvements in behavior."



Use punishment judiciously. Punishments usually produce short term effects at best, and can even create undesirable side-effects.

- Before you dish out punishments, apply the other influence strategies and issue clear warnings of the specific penalties for wrong behaviors.
- If all else fails, use discipline as the last resort. A consumer goods company couldn't eliminate centuries-old racist behaviors until they announced that any staff who made racist jokes would be instantly fired. Once the first offender was fired, the undesirable behaviors ended.



6. Structural Ability: Change Their Space

Nonhuman forces in our environment—buildings, colors, sounds, etc.—have a huge impact on how we behave. **Influencers are (i) mindful of such environmental factors and (ii) know how to shape them to enable vital behaviors.**



Pay attention to how inanimate factors in your surroundings affect behaviors. For example, if you want people to approach you, no amount of encouragement will work if your office is intimidating and inaccessible. If you want people to eat less, give them smaller plates. If you want to reduce crime, start by cleaning up the litter, graffiti and vandalism in the area.



Start shaping your surroundings with these strategies:

- Make invisible cues obvious. Provide explicit, visible cues to remind people of the behaviors you're trying to influence. Emery Air Freight got its freight workers to fill up every container to 95% by adding a line with the words "fill to here" in each container. A hospital increased doctors' hand hygiene compliance from 65% to almost 100% by showing them lab images of the amount of bacteria on their hands (which the doctors had assumed were clean).
- Information affects our decisions. Highlight data that reinforce vital behaviors. Present timely, visual, and accurate data that support your goals. Remove data that adds



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KEY QUOTES

"You are a product of your environment. So choose the environment that will best develop you toward your objective."
- Clement Stone

"Information affects behavior. People make choices based on cognitive maps that explain which behavior leads to which outcomes."

clutter. In the battle against the Guinea worm, the Carter Center secured political support after they presented data to show that the disease was 3000x worse than what the leaders had thought.

- Leverage physical proximity. We tend to interact more (and thus build better relationships) with people we're physically close to. Scientists at Bell Labs were 3x more likely to collaborate with people they sat next to, than those they sat 30ft away from. Corporate teams that're physically separated are more prone to silos and infighting. Dr Silbert deliberately assigns rival-gang members as roommates, knowing that proximity helps to build relationships.
- Make vital behaviors easy to perform and hard to avoid. Just by moving things around in your home and office, you can make desired behaviors easier to do and undesirable ones harder to do. To reduce your food consumption, change all your plates to smaller ones, and place food in inaccessible shelves and opaque containers. Ideally, change the surroundings such that people have no choice but to enact the desired behavior, e.g. by building the behavior into daily routines or standard processes.



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KEY QUOTES

"The frequency and quality of human interaction is largely a function of physical distance."

"You don't merely make good behavior desirable. You make it inevitable."

"If you bundle the right number and type of influences into a robust influence strategy, you can change virtually anything."



Conclusion & Other Details in the Book



You can change almost anything with the 3 keys to influence: focus and measure, define vital behaviors, and using the 6 sources of influence. However, bear in mind that:

- Leading change requires heavy-lifting. You must invest time and effort to diagnose the problem, explore and test solutions. It won't work if you merely tinker with change or jump in with the most-convenient interventions.
- Always diagnose the problem before prescribing solutions.
- You won't have the perfect influence strategy from the onset. Be prepared to learn through trial-and-error. Start with what you think are the most effective solutions, then keep testing and refining them until you have the ideal mix of the 6 sources of influence.

🔍 This book is full of detailed case studies and scientific evidence to illustrate how the influence principles and strategies work. The examples offer useful insights and ideas to help you develop influence strategies for a wide range personal, organizational and societal challenges. You can get more details and resources from influencerbook.com, including:

- A worksheet to help you plan for influence projects;
- Segments of interviews with influencers; and
- A self-assessment of your influence skills and potential areas for development.

About the Authors

Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron Mcmillan, and Al Switzler are the cofounders and leaders of VitalSmarts, an innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, which has taught more than two million people worldwide and worked with more than 300 of the Fortune 500 companies.



For more details, please go to <https://www.vitalismarts.com/>

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“For many people, realizing that they don’t have to agree brings a sense of great liberation, relief, and empowerment.”