

Every day, training in the new global village becomes less and less intimidating thanks to what we know about how we affect each other in the business world.



Sphere of Influence

By Kevin J. Sensenig

The cover of a recent U.S. business magazine posed the question: “Will your people follow your lead?” While this is a good question for leaders to consider, it is also a powerful question that we as trainers should ask ourselves because our ultimate achievement rests in the ability to effectively influence decision makers and participants in the organizations where we deliver training. Rather than focusing on our role and content, and trusting that our participants will adjust to us, it is increasingly important that we establish an environment of inclusion and influence, particularly in international training programs.

As people interact around a shrinking globe, both in person and electronically, the ability to build and strengthen relationships right from the beginning is absolutely critical to the success of projects and organizations. Trainers who lack the ability to nurture relationships or who are pressured to deliver immediate results without taking the time to establish a foundation of rapport, tend to be less productive in the long run. So how does one build relationships, strengthen positive influence, and establish an environment of inclusion when working with audiences around the globe?



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Relationships first

In his 1936 book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie suggested three sets of principles to build productive relationships that support an environment of inclusion and influence. These time-honored principles can be successfully applied in today's global business environment. Here is a brief overview of important principles for building influence and inclusion:

1. Fundamental techniques for strengthening relationships. Relationships built on trust are the foundation for successful influence and inclusion. Carnegie identified principles that can help international businesspeople connect with their global counterparts effectively to work toward common goals. Principles such as “Become genuinely interested in other people,” “Give honest and sincere appreciation,” and “Be a good listener; encourage others to talk about themselves,” can be invaluable in establishing successful relationships in person or via technology.

2. How to win people to your way of thinking. These principles contain advice for influencing both individual and team action and cooperation. Carnegie demonstrated by example how a thorough understanding of another's point of view is the basis for successful collaboration. Principles such as “Show respect for the other person's opinion,” and “Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires,” enable professionals to build cooperation even in the most diverse work groups.

3. How to change people without giving offense or arousing resentment. A leader who has established credibility and earned trust can then influence others to make positive changes—without offending anyone. Principles

such as “Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly,” “Let the other person save face” and “Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to” establish an environment where team members and training participants can embrace change more readily because they feel they are helping to build a new direction rather than being given a new approach to follow.

While the principles make good sense for leaders and trainers, it can be difficult to incorporate many diverse opinions, especially if leaders or trainers fail to champion their own ideas and let their own contributions be watered down. To garner more influence in a global environment, business leaders and trainers need to shift their focus from diversity to inclusion. Rather than focusing on what makes people different, leaders can achieve the most with others by exemplifying the common goal of the team and how each team member can add value to the desired outcome based on their unique contributions. Trainers, too, can apply Carnegie's principles to help participants interact effectively with their counterparts from around the world.

Global perspectives on influence and inclusion

When it comes to the interaction between team leaders and their team members, the expectations differ in various cultures. It's important for trainers to understand these differences and expectations in developing global leaders and in building influential relationships with trainees. For example, in many European and Asian countries, trainers who display too big of a smile may be perceived as artificial and insincere. To effectively influence training participants, trainers need to adapt their emotions and approaches to be more in line with the audience,

while helping the group to expand its comfort zone and grow through the training experience.

Although usually selected based on unique skills and experiences, good team leaders strive to include all the team members' perspectives. Rather

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than asserting themselves (adopting the attitude “because I said so”), they make the most of everyone's contribution to create synergy while influencing the team in the most productive direction. To accomplish this, team leaders have to be aware that team members from different countries have different norms and expectations of how teams should function. Let's look at the involvement and responses of various players.

Team leaders' involvement. Perceptions of a team leader's role and level of influence vary around the world. For example, in Eastern cultures (typically

found in parts of Asia and the Middle East), an individual's position determines his level of influence. In highly traditional Eastern cultures, age and title signify experience and wisdom, and hence determine someone's level of influence. Status, family, and education level can also play a significant role. In these types of hierarchical work environments, superiors tend to set direction using a parental or directive model. People are unlikely to disagree publicly with someone who ranks higher in the organization. In the same way, team members defer to the team leader. They are accustomed to waiting for the leader to state the direction and propose an idea, and then the team's approach is to support the leader. In these cultures, a team leader or trainer has to make a concerted effort to solicit and include everyone's input while appreciating their traditional view on such outward involvement.

Team members' involvement. Significant differences in team member involvement may pose challenges to a leader seeking inclusion. In Western cultures a team leader may set the tone and suggest a direction. She is used to a robust interaction among active team members with ideas being challenged openly. When leading a cross-regional team, it's important to discard any preconceived notions on the functioning of teams. As the team gets to work, leaders need to remain aware of the level of everyone's involvement and reach out to less active contributors. People whose culture demands that they defer to the boss or team leader may hold back until asked directly for an opinion.

Once team leaders are confident that everyone has been included and that they have built excellent relationships with every team member, they can then proceed to influence the

team in the desired direction. Here, Dale Carnegie's "Big Secret of Dealing with People" comes in handy. He writes: "There is only one way under high heaven to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it. The only way I can get you to do anything is by giving you what you want." And what people want most is to be important, he argues. The applicable principles therefore are, "Give honest and sincere appreciation" and "Arouse in the other person an eager want."

Team members' responses. How people respond to a stated idea presents another challenge to leaders who strive to successfully influence teams. In more authoritative cultures, team members may place a positive spin on their disagreement that can be misinterpreted as full agreement. Leaders have to learn to listen for the intent of the response rather than taking it literally. In a global environment, active listening is especially critical for leaders. It means listening for the meaning behind a statement, listening for the intent of a response as well as "listening" to body language.

For all of the focus on diversity and multiculturalism, the Western world tends to focus largely on differences among people and to work accordingly. In Eastern business cultures, professionals tend to be accustomed to working on teams made up of members from many countries. They more quickly look at the common purpose of the team rather than the differences in team members. I recently had the opportunity to work with a global client's technology lead group located in Taipei. The team, made up of members from Taiwan, China, Brazil, and Italy, worked diligently on ways to improve their collaboration and accountability with a focus on meeting



Seven Principles for Effective Influence

Of the many principles in Dale Carnegie's book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, here are some simple, yet highly effective pointers for leaders who want to build relationships and influence people in global business:

- "Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Learn how to pronounce people's names accurately and remember their names, regardless of language difficulties. For example, address them by their real name, not an anglicized nickname. It builds immediate rapport, which is the prerequisite for influence.
- "Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely." Learn certain phrases in the foreign language, such as hello, goodbye, please, thank you, would you be so kind as to ..., won't you please, would you mind.
- "The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it." Particularly in cultures where saving face is paramount, losing an argument can destroy rapport with the "winner." "You can't win an argument," writes Mr. Carnegie. "You can't because if you lose it, you lose it; and if you win it, you lose it." Why? Because the loser will now feel inferior and will resent any further attempts at influence. Regardless of culture, arguments are also futile because "Nine times out of 10, an argument ends with each of the contestants more firmly convinced than ever that he is absolutely right." "...You may be right, dead right, as you speed along in your argument; but as far as changing another's mind is concerned, you will probably be just as futile as if you were wrong."
- "Begin in a friendly way" is a timeless principle applicable to any culture, as demonstrated by Aesop, who in one of his immortal fables wrote how the sun can make you take off your coat more quickly than the wind. "Kindness, the friendly approach and appreciation can make people change their minds more readily than all the bluster and storming in the world," writes Dale Carnegie.
- "Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers." Again, this is a timeless, international principle, as demonstrated by the writings of Chinese sage Lao-tse, 25 centuries ago: "The reason why rivers and seas receive the homage of a hundred mountain streams is that they keep below them. Thus they are able to reign over all the mountain streams."
- "Ask questions instead of giving direct orders." Asking questions makes requests more palatable, stimulates the creativity of people, gives them a feeling of importance, and saves their pride. Say things such as, "Do you think this would work?" or "You might consider this."
- "Make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest." Here are six specific steps recommended by Dale Carnegie:
 1. Be sincere; concentrate on the benefits to the other person.
 2. Know exactly what it is you want the other person to do.
 3. Be empathetic. Ask yourself what it is the other person really wants.
 4. Consider the benefits that person will receive from doing what you suggest.
 5. Match those benefits to the other person's wants.
 6. When you make your request, put it in a form that will convey to the other person the idea that he personally will benefit.

A leader who is seen as proficient at hearing everyone, creating team synergy, and guiding teams toward the best outcomes is highly respected in an international environment. By earning respect in this way and by being inclusive and using good influence skills, a leader will be heard and followed.

the increasing expectations on the team. Little was made of the interesting mix of nationalities and cultures represented on the team.

Contrast this with an opportunity I had to work with a North American firm on a team that was much more homogenous based on nationality and culture; yet, much of the team members' focus was on dealing with their differences based on being located in different regions of the United States. Of course, neither of these organizations is good or bad based on how they view themselves.

What we as trainers can learn from this is that inclusion is not a simple matter of looking at the group and identifying participants' differences; it is truly about understanding people's perspectives on how they interact with one another on a daily basis.

Training global employees

Training and development professionals who want to help businesspeople fulfill their roles as global leaders need to have a heightened awareness of cultural differences so they can be role models in addition to trainers. Trainers need a good grasp of the significant differences found between ethnic groups within a single country.

For instance, India has more than 100 ethnic groups speaking more than 29 major languages that may bring many different expectations to the classroom and the workplace. China, too, has a mix of peoples of different ethnicities; Brazil has a significant influence of people from European descent; and Egypt's population is really a blend of many different cultures, roots and religious beliefs. In Europe, people of northern and central European ancestries may be found in the same classroom as trainees who immigrated from Turkey, India, or Pakistan. It's not

enough to assume a given perspective of trainees based on the country in which the training will be delivered.

The application of positive human relation principles to build influence and inclusion is essential in all five phases of solid international training:

1. Analyze the need for training.

When conducting a needs analysis, arrive at a thorough understanding of the cultural issues that may be at play. Appreciate how participants from different regions may portray their training needs, and apply multiple analytical approaches to uncover their true needs.

2. Design the training. Appreciate differences in learning expectations in different regions. Are participants accustomed to a highly participant interactive delivery style, or do they view trainers like bosses—experts or masters rather than facilitators? Are trainees careful in voicing opinions in the presence of colleagues or superiors in the class? These issues must be considered in the training design.

3. Develop the training. Ensure that materials and visual aids are inclusive of global participants. Incorporate a variety of examples that are relevant to the audience without being so demographically specific that materials become cliché. Build diverse perspectives and representation throughout the materials so all participants can connect in meaningful ways. Use regionally applicable case studies and examples.

4. Implement the training. Effective trainer-participant interaction depends on the trainer's awareness of the cultural issues in a particular region. Know the trainees' communication styles so everyone's input can be heard. Trainers who are truly participant-focused can build levels of influence and inclusion in every training environment.

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5. Evaluate the training. Cultural considerations can cause tremendous variation in the ratings trainers will receive from one country to another. In some cultures, trainees never give extremely high or low marks on an evaluation form. For example, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, a rating of three to four may mean the trainer did an outstanding job worthy of a perfect five in North America. Use multiple feedback tools to assure the training is being effectively evaluated across the global participant group.

Set an example

Some countries still view cultural differences as a problem rather than an opportunity. Others are beginning to embrace diversity, and still others are taking it to the next level of inclusion. Regardless of the region in which we as trainers work, we are going to be viewed as role models, good or bad. If we can expertly demonstrate a spirit of inclusion as we design, develop, and implement programs for international audiences, our trainees will follow our example and become more effective, inclusive global businesspeople. Further, if we as trainers demonstrate

superb influence skills, our participants will emulate those behaviors and become better at setting direction for others on their team based on enhanced levels of influence and inclusion. It is up to us in the training profession to set the standard high for positive influence in an international business environment.

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