

Influencing Others using Strengths

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There is something fundamental in leadership behaviours, and that is the ability to influence others. Whether you have strengths in the 'Influencing' domain or not, it is essential to consider how you exercise your influence and just as important how not to influence people. You may have had an experience when someone is trying to be 'influential' by being charming, but their natural tendency is far from charming. The result was annoyance rather than influence because the person was not authentic or genuine; they were being insincere and not playing to their natural talents.

We recognise that our strengths are unique to each of us and it is important to remember that just because a talent is in a particular domain does not mean that it cannot be applied and developed in another context. If you find that your Clifton StrengthsFinder profile is in a particular domain, for example, 'Relationship Building', this does not mean you lack the ability to think strategically. It simply means you will think in a different way to someone who has high Strategic Thinking themes.

You will influence people from your dominant position. Consider this example; someone with 'Individualisation' (**Relationship Building**), instinctively notices and appreciates the unique characteristics of each person. Because you treat each person you meet differently, depending on their unique perspectives and needs, others feel you understand and care about them. This is very different from the more charismatic approach of the person whose profile includes 'Woo' (**Influencing**). The Woo will influence, by a naturally friendly approach that quickly puts people at ease. This makes others want to work with you. These strengths are influencing the person but done so in a way natural to them.

The more introverted person with perhaps 'Intellection' or 'Ideation' (**Strategic Thinking**) as their strength(s) will through intellectual exploration build credibility, trust, and respect. This person will use their Strategic Thinking to build relationships by discussing ideas and sharing the bigger picture with their audience. This influences people by articulating the 'why' which is quite different to the selling of ideas through the lens of the Influencing domain. The Strategic Thinker brings a logical, evidence base to an argument, which portrays knowledge and understanding which is influential in presenting information, which will be quite different from the 'Competition' (**Influencing**) strength with a drive to win and the need for clear metrics that define success, who will seek to sell an idea or concept.

Those with strengths in the **Executing** domain are driven by results, highly driven and committed. These strengths are seen to influence others by their strong work ethic and commitment; they make things happen and stay focussed, impacting positively on the team and organisation. An example might be the person with an 'Arranger' Strength, who will influence others by clearly seeing what others can do well, who would work together and how teams can best achieve their outcomes. This task, output focussed approach engenders increased productivity and high performance, with little time or effort procrastinating. This approach will be different from the people centred **Relationship Building and Influencing** domains of cultivating and developing people to maximise quality improvement and sustainability, with an emphasis on wellbeing and resilience of the team, yet both with the intent and purpose of achieving results and influencing behaviour.

In summary, being influential can be achieved in many ways and that the best way for you to be influential will be different for someone else. One of the best ways to improve your ability to influence other people is to better understand your strengths and how you can positively apply them to the act of influencing.

So, when it comes to influencing others, instead of imitating that person and trying to be someone you are not, it is much more effective to be who you naturally are.

How are you using your strengths to influence others?