

It's easy when you're the boss. You tell people what to do and they do it. Ok, maybe it's not always that easy.

Authority does increase the odds that people will do what you want. But it doesn't necessarily increase the likelihood that those doing the tasks will grow while getting the tasks done. Authority is a great *management* tool for driving for results. And it does have its place in the *leadership* toolbox. But authority can be a crutch that interferes with good leadership.



Leaders invest in developing people. That often requires being willing to make short-term sacrifices in efficiency to get the long-term payoff from more capable people. Authority robs people of choice, leaders help people learn to make good, but difficult choices.

Here are a few ideas on influencing without authority:

- *Be an example.* Want others to be willing to take more risks? Let them see you take risks, being transparent and learning from your decisions that fail. Want them to learn to apply your values? Demonstrate (and talk about) how those values play out in day-to-day life.
- *Ask good questions.* The goal of a good question isn't necessarily for you to gain information from the answer. The goal is to get the person answering to think. Our brains process differently when asked a question than when given an answer, and responding to questions expands our followers' thinking and reasoning abilities.
- *Take the long-term view.* You may walk away from a conversation where the other person resisted and didn't seem to buy into anything you said. In the short term, your influence seems to have failed. But when someone disagrees, they'll probably spend more time thinking about what you said than they would if they agreed with you. They may need time to process your ideas. So you may lose the battle on the issue at hand, but still influence their thinking on similar issues in the future. **Important note:** *This works best if you don't let the disagreement interfere with the relationship. Learning to demonstrate respect for a person who disagrees with you is a dying art in our culture today.*
- *Accept partial victories.* Related to taking the long-term view, don't take an all-or-nothing approach to assessing your influence. Shifting someone's thinking by an inch may not be as satisfying as bringing them the full yard to your way of thinking, but it is still growth. And if you did it in a healthy way that increased your credibility, the next time you may be able to move them three or even six inches.
- *Relate to their values.* Be a student of those you wish to lead. What's important to them? If you can get them to see how your ideas align with their goals and values, you increase your ability to influence.

Good managers must learn to integrate leadership skills with management skills. Non-managers can focus on developing pure leadership skills like influence.

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