

# Influencing



A resource for researcher representatives

Resource 4 of 4

## Overview

Throughout your research career and especially when you are in a leadership role, you will often be required to tap in to your influencing skills. These are useful in variety of professional situations, from convincing your manager to take a project in a direction that you specify, to winning funding for your research. This resource will cover myths about influencing, how to influence, why it is useful and identifying influencers around you.

This document is the fourth of four resources that aims to cover planning and strategy for researcher representatives. The other three resources focus on *How to make the most of your position, Negotiation and Communication*. Each resource will provide information, exercises, links and an opportunity to reflect on your own aims and experience. The *Influencing* resource is particularly complementary to the *Stakeholders & negotiation* section (resource 2) that you have already worked through so you may wish to review that prior to proceeding.



## What is influencing?

Influencing is about providing the opportunity for others to develop, change or behave in a positive way with regard to their course of action, behaviour or attitude. It involves bringing other people round to your way of thinking because they believe in what you say; inspiring them, not commanding them to agree with you or do what you tell them. The list below aims to do some myth busting around influencing skills:

### Myths:

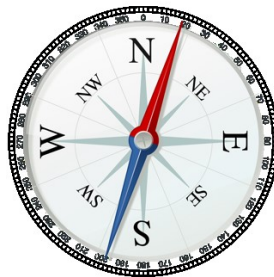
Myth 1: Influencing requires you to command people and demand results.

Myth 2: There is only one way to influence people.

Myth 3: Only people in positions of seniority can influence others.

## Why is influencing useful?

Influencing skills are used frequently in both our professional and personal lives and they are frequently listed by employers as one of the key skills they would like to see in a job candidate. Being a researcher representative is a leadership role and this may require you to have a positive “influence” on certain outcomes. How do you persuade others to go in a particular direction? For example, you may be representing student interests at a committee meeting with a group of senior staff: you would like to persuade them to allocate some funding for a researcher event or project but there is only a finite amount of money in the budget and you are not the only one asking. How do you convince them that your project is the one worth funding?



## How to influence

There is no one way to influence people, it depends on the situation, your relationship with them and the support you have from others. Watch the two minute video below by Professor Robert Cialdini on the six principles of influence and complete the exercise below.



**Video:** Robert Cialdini’s Six principles of influence  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCNeOga965U>

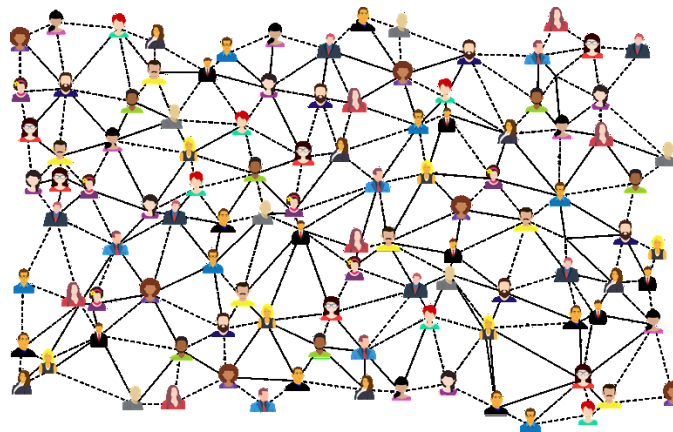
### Exercise:

*Which of the six principles of influence have you used in the past when trying to convince people of something at work?*

## How do you influence others?

As mentioned above, there is no one way to influence others and you will develop your own style over time and do what you are comfortable with. There are several techniques listed below that effective influencers employ that have been shown to be effective and you may wish to consider these.

- **Establish trust** & build a relationship.
- **Provide evidence** to back up your case (has this been done before, who else agrees with you).
- **Present your reasoning** clearly, avoiding jargon and unnecessary detail.
- **Listen** make sure you hear everything the others have to say.
- **Offer** something in return.
- Emphasise **what's in it for them**.



## Identifying influencers

The nodes, or individuals, in a network are not always equal: for example, your head of department may be a key influencer during your researcher representative role. This principle can also be applied to your professional connections: some individuals will have more influence over certain projects and aspects of your research than others and this may vary depending on the project. Key influencers will also change over time as you advance through your career; individuals who are the most influential in your network now, may not be in ten years' time and this may change if you opt to take a different career path.

“Influence” is not only the preserve of individuals higher up in a hierarchy than yourself, it can apply in several different contexts. An influential person may have a connection to someone you want to meet, they may have specialist knowledge that you need to know in order to move forward, access to a venue that you would like to use or they might manage the budget for your project. The identity of the particular influencers will vary depending on the type of project and some will have more power to affect the outcome than others.

## Exercise

*Consider the nature of the relationships in your network: how do you identify people with “influence” and what influence do you have yourself? Who are the key influencers involved in your researcher representative role and why? List them below & state what aspects they can influence.*

People with influence:

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## Further reading

- Carnegie, D. (2010) How to win friends and influence people. Ebury Digital; New Ed edition.
- Laker B & Patel C (2020) Strengthen Your Ability to Influence People. <https://hbr.org/2020/08/strengthen-your-ability-to-influence-people>