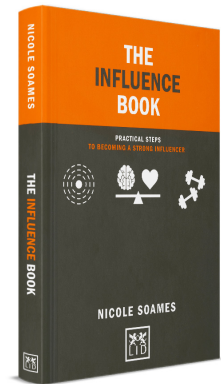


# The Influence Book

Practical Steps to Becoming a Strong Influencer

by **Nicole Soames**



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## The Summary In Brief

The power of influence plays an important role in all aspects of our lives. Whether it is pitching a business idea or getting the kids to do their homework, we try to influence others on a daily basis. By viewing influencing as a life skill that can be strengthened, we can learn how to inspire others to make a change, create deeper relationships, improve our performance, and build powerful, personal brands.

Nicole Soames, the author of *The Influence Book*, helps you achieve influencing success by explaining how to harness emotional intelligence to establish trust and rapport. Putting yourself in the other person's shoes and identifying how to motivate them on an emotional level makes it easy for you to convince the other person to say yes.

You'll receive practical ideas and techniques to unlock your inner confidence, prepare for any influencing situation, and deliver compelling storytelling to win hearts and minds. The more frequently you put your new skills into practice, the better outcomes you will achieve, and the more assured you will be.

## In This Summary, You Will Learn:

- How developing your emotional intelligence can help you become a strong influencer.
- How to identify different communication styles to quickly find common ground.
- How to use the storyboard technique to create influential stories.
- How to network successfully so you can become even more influential.

## Why Influencing Matters

Whatever your walk of life, you draw on influencing skills every day to get others to agree to your point of view. Imagine a teacher who is an expert in their subject but fails to inspire, or a developer who creates brilliant designs but can't persuade their client to implement them. It is time to understand the immense value influencing can bring to your life and to see it as a life skill that can be developed and strengthened.

Influencing is the ability to leverage your emotional intelligence to communicate effectively so that you make it easy for the other person to say yes. Creating a balanced relationship is at the heart of influencing and developing your emotional intelligence—the ability to focus on the other person's needs—is central to becoming a strong influencer. By combining emotional intelligence with business skills training, you can make a seismic difference in your performance and across all the relationships in your life.

### Develop A Confident Mindset

Self-knowledge is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence, so your first task is to give yourself an honest appraisal. Write down your key strengths, like deep empathy or creativity, and how they help you influence others. Next, identify weaknesses and areas for development, such as a fear of public speaking. Ask others to help you identify blind spots.

As another exercise, make a list of different influencing situations, such as meeting with a customer to sell a new product. Write down your motivation for each and how it makes you feel. Understanding your underlying motivations and emotional needs will help you be more prepared and confident.

In the 3 Circles of Influence described by Stephen Covey, the inner “control” circle represents things that are totally in our control, such as where we live and what we do. The middle circle, our area of influence, includes things that we can do something about, such as the quality of our work, the relationships we form, and results we can achieve. Focus your attention on the things within your influence circle. Identify areas you'd like to influence and set three goals for the year ahead, such as improving your relationship with a customer, mentoring a new employee, or becoming a thought leader in your field. Challenge yourself. Adopt a positive mindset as it will take time and perseverance to achieve your goals.

### Be Authentically You

It can be tempting to conceal weaknesses with bravado, but “fake it until you make it” rarely works and others can find it insincere. Strong influencers understand that the best

communicators are able to connect with others in a genuine way. Be prepared to show your vulnerability. This makes you approachable and helps you build rapport with others. “People buy people” so being genuine and communicating in a way that is consistent and confident, without being arrogant, will help you develop an authentic voice and increase your credibility.

## Set Yourself Up For Success

Before an influencing conversation, work out exactly what you are going to ask for. By preparing thoroughly and seeing things from the other person's point of view, you will be able to answer questions and head off concerns, saving time in the long run.

### Recognize Communication Styles

Learning to identify different communication preferences will help you reach common ground quickly. One of the easiest tools is the DISC method, which breaks down four communication styles: Dominant & Driven; Influencing & Persuading; Secure & Steady; and Compliant & Considered. **D** types are fueled by results. They communicate in a direct manner and won't engage in chitchat. **I** types are people-oriented and enthusiastic. They want to be liked and crave recognition. **S** types are diplomatic. They tend to avoid confrontation and dislike being put under pressure. **C** types are motivated by processes. They are perfectionists, worry about being criticized, and prefer to communicate in writing so they can take their time. By recognizing the other person's style—people are usually a blend of types, you can better understand how they make decisions.

Note your own style, and how it is on a good day and a bad day. You can have a different style when you are stressed. For instance, on a good day an I type might be sociable, but on a bad day, frantic. Whatever the scenario, you'll influence others better if you respect their communications traits and align them to yours. When dealing with D types, communicate in a concise way, backing up statements with evidence. Expect I types to make a spontaneous decision. A S type is more likely to say yes to a simple concept that will be valued by others. C types are more methodical so supply details and pros/cons. Plot out the other person's DISC profile and what you can do to influence them more effectively.

## The Importance Of Relationships

Seeing another person's point of view and understanding their needs will help build a relationship and ensure that they

do not feel manipulated. Use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for insight into motivations. He identifies five stages of needs: physiological; safety and security; love and belonging; esteem; and self-actualization. This pyramid can be adapted for a business setting, with the primary need to make a profit and secondary needs to satisfy corporate strategies and fix pain points. Try filling out a pyramid for each of your customers and consider how you can help solve their needs.

Influencers can also create needs in the minds of others. Henry Ford said, "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." The key to creating a need is to make a comparison that resonates by considering the other person's mindset. If they believe they are performing worse than expected, they will be more likely to be open to new ideas than if they are performing well. When you identified the need, outline the benefit you can deliver, and provide data that shows how you can help them improve. Even if they don't completely agree with your numbers, your aim is to demonstrate that you genuinely care about their needs.

Ask clever open and closed questions to connect and clarify. Prepare ahead, write down the needs your ideas can meet and questions you can ask. Keep DISC styles in mind. For example, lots of open questions might encourage an I type to go off on a tangent. Listen carefully to responses, paying attention to body language and tone, as well as words.

### Building Rapport

Uncovering or creating needs, listening with empathy, showing genuine interest and using commonalities to connect can fast-track building rapport. But you can inadvertently break it by making assumptions, getting too personal too soon, being inflexible, adding opinions inappropriately, and not preparing the next steps. Trust is built by delivering on your promises (reliability), having credibility and empathy, while minimizing your personal agenda. If you're too focused on yourself, the level of trust will automatically go down and you'll be less likely to influence.

## Influence Through Storytelling

Stories engage us on an emotional level. We are 22 times more likely to remember a story than facts alone. Using the insights gathered about the other person, you can create a story tailored to them. Build your story with analogies, rhetorical questions that prompt thought, reiteration to secure a key point, compelling numbers (a

90-day warranty sounds like a better deal than a 3-month one), mock-ups or visuals, and third parties to introduce a different perspective and establish credibility.

People buy the "why," not the "what." Lead with why the other party should say yes and demonstrate how you can help them. Focus on the benefits to them. Ask yourself: what's in it for them; how can I prove it; and why should they say yes. By building the story this way, relating it to their needs and backing it up with facts, you are likely to motivate on an emotional and commercial level.

Use the **STRONG** storyboard framework to ensure your story makes an impact.

1. **S**et the scene by creating context with the needs of the other person.
2. **T**ailor the story, going through each of the benefits of your proposal
3. Summarize your **R**ecommendations
4. Explain the **O**pportunity or the net benefits
5. **N**egotiate
6. **G**et to the next steps

Write out your key messages for each of these steps, starting with the big-picture recommendation, what's in it for them, and then work backwards. Detail the needs you are addressing and quantify the size of the opportunity. Prepare for negotiating curveballs by listing different variables and solutions. Outline next steps. Make sure your points are clear and concise. Keep asking yourself "so what?" from the other person's point of view.

### Deliver An Influential Story

If you don't deliver your story in an inspiring way, you'll struggle to convince the other party. Draw on your emotional intelligence and be present in the moment. Take steps to minimize anything that might distract you. Put effort into how you appear, what you say, and how you sound. Stand tall and make strong eye contact. Don't lose your personality when you start a presentation. Avoid vague weak speak, such as "hopefully we can agree," or "in all honesty," which can undermine your credibility. Because people speak faster under pressure, slow yourself down. If you want to land a key message, pause to emphasize it, and give the other person time to process. If you notice the other party's attention begin to wander, re-establish eye contact before continuing, and then dial up your energy.

## Control The Conversation

Despite all your preparation, you can't know exactly how people will impact a conversation. There are four interaction types: questions or statements; tactics; issues; and negotiation points. Each needs to be managed differently. Respond to questions and statements as they come up, but note if they embody a tactic, issue, or negotiation point. Recognize unfair tactics, like someone checking their phone as an attempt to shift the balance of power. If you spot a tactic, respond with humor, move the conversation, and get back to business. Take control by saying something about the need to work together or re-summarize to help the other party focus.

For a real issue, ask clarifying questions and show that you value the opinion. Ask if there are other issues. By helping them put everything on the table, you'll facilitate a smoother path to closure. Ask which issues are the most important so you can focus on addressing them. If you can't find a solution, start negotiating to find an overlapping position. Don't worry if you can't provide a solution on the spot, you may need to say that you'll get back to them.

Finally, close with confidence. A strong influencer will always put the next steps on the table as a way of checking if the other party is on board. Be specific with simple, definitive next steps.

## Influencing Via Phone And Email

When it comes to influencing, meeting in person makes a difference. It is better for building a relationship and you're more likely to close. You can't read body language on a call. If a face-to-face isn't possible, use Skype or pick up the phone. Email is a last resort. Be resilient: It takes persever-

ance to influence others, so always follow up with the other party, and maintain control throughout all your interactions. Make sure you keep nudging, without bombarding.

## Keep Fit For Influencing

Honing your skills takes practice. Adopt the principle of Plan, Do, and Review to help focus on areas you find challenging. Set a specific goal, use your skills, then review the conversation and how it went. Compare the actual to what you prepared for. Don't just focus on whether you achieved the outcome, note how you changed the other person's behavior. Rehearse. Film yourself as you practice your story to see how confidently you come across in your body language, tone, and overall presentation.

## Network For Success

Networking provides the opportunity to put your influencing skills to the test. Strong influencers tend to be givers; aim to be generous to others more often than not. Always respond promptly to requests; building credibility and trust will pay big dividends. Seek out every opportunity to grow your network. List people you know who can help you achieve your goals. Prioritize building relationships with them by following five principles: be interested—ask questions and listen carefully; be interesting—have something to say; be generous—invest your time; make connections; and keep in touch. Don't just take their card, follow up. By nurturing your relationships and behaving in an authentic, generous manner, you are on your way to winning other people's hearts and minds.



Nicole Soames is a highly qualified coach and emotional intelligence practitioner. She gained extensive commercial experience during 12 years of managing large sales teams at Unilever and United Biscuits, followed by 15 years developing and delivering training programs around the globe. In 2009, Nicole founded Diadem, a leading commercial skills training and coaching company. With 85 clients in 12 countries, Diadem has helped thousands of people become commercial athletes in influencing and selling, negotiation, account management, marketing, presenting, strategy, coaching, leadership, and management. Nicole is also the best-selling author of *The Negotiation Book*, part of the Concise Advise Series from LID Publishing.

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