



8 Things Influential People Do Differently



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Message From Michelle

"We stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. In its scale, scope, and complexity, the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before"

Klaus Schwab
Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum

Despite advances in technology and new ways of working, organisations today are more, not less complex.

Leaders are expected to deliver more results in a faster timeframe and with fewer resources. At the same time, organisations know they need to constantly evolve, so there is relentless churn and multiple changes underway.

The result is a more complex and bureaucratic work environment. There are endless meetings, countless stakeholders to consult, and shifting goalposts. This creates an inevitable sense of busyness, often with little to show for it.

Why? Because it's hard to get things done. It's hard to drive change. It's hard to navigate the complexity.

The antidote to this dilemma is being able to influence.

This is not self-serving influence, but rather influence focused on ensuring balanced outcomes that consider the needs of all stakeholders.

To do this, the leader needs the optimal mix of technical and behavioural skills. Being technically brilliant is one thing, but it's not the foundation on which to build a platform for influence.

Successful leaders - in business, society and politics - know how to influence. They know how to get things done through other people and are aware of the environment in which they are operating.

"The difference between a beginner and the master - is that the master practices a whole lot more"

Yehudi Menuhin
Famous Violinist

Influential leaders can cut through the noise, get traction, lead others and make change happen. They successfully collaborate, encourage and positively impact those around them. They use their personal power to secure sustainable outcomes.

"Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value"

Albert Einstein
Theoretical Physicist

In contrast, those who can't influence are exiled from the decision-makers within the organisation.

They become 'out of the loop' on issues that matter and uninvolved in critical decisions. Their voice goes unheard. All of which makes it harder for them to get things done. And leaders who can't deliver results don't progress. People want to feel they are making progress on work that matters, and that their manager 'has their back'. If their manager is powerless to influence outcomes, it impacts the team's morale. In fact, a 2010 Harvard study found that a lack of progress is one of the biggest demotivators in the workplace.

The challenge today is that leaders can't rely on traditional hierarchies to get things done. The organisational dynamics are different. It's important to understand who influences whom, how decisions are made and what avenues exist to make progress and influence outcomes. This is about understanding the influencing factors operating in the 'organisational system' and having the nous to find the 'back door' and leverage the informal networks through which decisions are often made.

If you want to know the secrets of what influential people do, read ahead...

Warm regards,



"I attribute my success to this: I never gave or took any excuse"

Florence Nightingale
Social Reformer



Influential People Know Themselves

What they do

Influential people examine the mindset they are applying to their work and relationships. They are curious about how they respond to what is happening around them and what drives their thoughts and behaviour. They consider how their behaviour is impacting outcomes for themselves and others.

They welcome feedback and new ideas and recognise that they have much more to learn. They embrace the learning that comes from the mistakes they make, and are always looking to learn more and step outside their comfort zone.

Why they do it

It's impossible to understand and influence others if you don't first understand yourself and what drives your behaviour. They recognise that letting assumptions and expectations drive their thoughts and behaviour can negatively impact their decision-making and interactions with colleagues and stakeholders. In time, this negatively impacts outcomes and their ability to make progress and deliver results.

They know that change is constant, and consequently, they need to continuously challenge and improve themselves. They accept that feedback and being open to new ideas will help drive them to new levels of performance.



Ask yourself

1. What triggers my thought processes and behaviours?

2. Do I let assumptions drive my expectations on what should be?

3. Am I applying a fixed or growth mindset to this situation?

4. Do I hold fixed views on colleagues and stakeholders, and are these views adversely impacting my relationships?

5. Am I keeping myself open to learning and being challenged?

6. Am I eager to push myself beyond my comfort zone?



Influential People Act With Integrity

What they do

They are aware that everyone can be biased because we all interpret the world through the lens of our own experience. They accept that those experiences shape how they (and others) see the world and how they interpret other people's behaviours.

Aware of this, influential people are conscious of what shapes their decision-making.

Consequently, they seek feedback and welcome diverse thoughts, ideas, and opinions; even those that are hard to hear and conflict with their ideas and beliefs.

Why they do it

Influential people guard their integrity because they know that once it's lost, it's almost impossible to regain.

They push beyond self-interest and seek to play a higher game in discussions and interactions with colleagues and stakeholders. They aim to advocate for positions that are not self-serving but serve the greater good.

They take this approach knowing that it builds trust-based and enduring relationships, which lead to more sustainable outcomes. They understand the inherent bias in how each person thinks and therefore welcome diversity of ideas and opinions as a lever to mitigate their own bias.

Ask yourself

1. How am I making this decision? Is it being unduly influenced by others or by my fixed thought-processes?

2. Will this decision serve the greater good?

3. How will others interpret my actions?

4. Am I living up to my standards and the expectations I have of others?

5. Am I behaving consistently, thoughtfully and ethically?

6. Am I using an appropriate decision-making process given the nature of the decision I am making?

7. Am I letting default thinking patterns drive my decisions?



Influential People Are Always Agile

What they do

Managing their energy wisely, influential people are clear on their purpose and deliberate about how they use their time. They know what they need to get done to deliver outcomes.

They are productively agile, crafting and embedding habits and productive practices to ensure they are as effective as possible.

They don't waste their time on things outside their sphere of influence and control. They are decisive when they need to be; collaborative when they need to be; and reflective when they need to be.

Why they do it

Influential people get things done. They are always seeking to push the boundaries and to create value. They inspire and deliver change – driving long-term, sustainable value.

They know there are limited resources, energy, and time, so they seek to use them to the best effect.

Likewise, they are aware of their strengths and limitations, and leverage their strengths (and those of others) to make progress.

Ask yourself

1. On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being very unproductive and 10 being highly productive), how productive am I?

2. Am I conscious about how I use my energy and time?

3. Am I aware of the negative impacts that multi-tasking has on my productivity?

4. Do I understand the value of daydreaming, and do I know when I need to be focused?

5. Am I purpose-driven and able to prioritise?

6. Do I waste my time and the time of those around me?



Influential People Activate The System

What they do

Influential people take the time to learn the organisational system and rules of play.

This means they know the system in which the organisation operates, and how the players interrelate, make decisions, and secure outcomes.

They keep up to date with what drives change in the internal and external environment, ensuring they understand the organisation's strategy, business model, opportunities and challenges. They focus on delivering outcomes that add value.

Why they do it

Having insight into the system enables them to better navigate the organisation, identify opportunities, and secure support for their ideas and projects.

It also enables them to be realistic about the nature of the organisation in which they work and to better understand how decisions are made. This includes understanding who influences whom and the role of rank and power in the system.

This approach helps them focus their efforts where they will get the greatest return on investment and effort.

Ask yourself

1. Do I understand the culture of the organisation in which I work?

2. Am I aware of the cultural levers that can be activated?

3. Do I know what drives my organisation's strategic agenda?

4. Do I know who influences whom, and who holds positions of rank and power in the organisation?

5. Can I identify what drives change in the organisation?

6. Am I clear on what I can control or influence in the organisation?

7. Do I understand how decisions are made in the organisation?



Influential People Understand Others

What they do

Understanding the value of deep and broad relationships, influential people seek to secure long-term, constructive relationships which are mutually beneficial.

They are conscious about how they build their network. They identify relationship gaps and weaknesses, and put a plan in place to address. They treat their network as a valued asset. In doing this, they work to understand what intrinsically and extrinsically motivates those around them.

They also strive to treat everyone with respect, taking the time to understand the other person's perspective and to ensure they feel heard.

Why they do it

Having insight into other people better enables them to work collaboratively and to encourage and inspire the achievement of common goals. They understand that one-sided relationships where it's all about one person are not sustainable.

They recognise they cannot make progress in an organisation without the support of people around them, and that having poor stakeholder relationships will negatively impact their career progression. In contrast, relationships which are generous and supportive create sustainable, trust-based connections that accelerate progress.

Ask yourself

1. How much time am I investing in developing my stakeholder network?

2. Do I seek to give in a relationship before I ask for anything?

3. How healthy is my stakeholder network? Is it a liability, asset or competitive advantage?

4. Do I take the time to understand what motivates colleagues, team members and stakeholders?

5. Do I take a long-term view with stakeholders and seek to build healthy, trust-based relationships?



Influential People Lead Consciously

What they do

Influential people are mindful of their actions and how they are perceived by others. They know their leadership is constantly on display, and so they:

- Know what they stand for and are prepared to take a stand.
- Take accountability for their mistakes and learn from them.
- Are happy to hire people smarter than them.
- Are acutely aware that inconsistencies between what they say and what they do are easily seen by others.

They build collaborative, empowered teams where everyone is clear on their role and how it contributes to the team's success and outcomes.

Why they do it

They know their leadership matters and that inconsistencies in their behaviour will erode relationships and their leadership brand. When a person is authentic, stands behind their values and behaves consistently, it is far easier for people to connect with them and build long-lasting relationships.

They recognise they won't be successful if they can't work effectively with people at all hierarchical levels of the organisation.

Ask yourself

1. Do I know what I stand for and what my underlying values are?

2. Do I know what drives my behaviour?

3. Are my words and actions aligned?

4. Are people comfortable to bring forward issues to me?

5. Am I consistent in how I operate – regardless of a person's background, experience, position in the hierarchy?

6. Are there unresolved issues or high levels of conflict in the team, to which I am turning a blind eye?



Influential People Craft Impact

What they do

Influential people have a meaningful, effective impact.

They are consistent in how they show up, tailor their approach to the circumstances, and are attuned to what is going on around them.

Consequently, they know how to position an idea so that others hear it and support it. They pay attention to detail while being aware of the context in which they operate. They don't take situations or people for granted.

They can navigate a complex political environment without playing politics.

Why they do it

They know that having impact isn't about being charismatic, bombastic or the loudest person in the room.

Instead, it's about making each person they meet feel heard and valued. They know this means they need to be fully present every time they engage with someone and to recognise the value of taking a long-term view of relationships.

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Ask yourself

1. Do I listen with intent and compassion?

2. Do I seek to understand the other person when talking to them?

3. Do I tailor my communication to suit the needs of the people I am talking to?

4. Do I create space to hear the ideas of others?

5. Am I fully present and focused on what other people need, or am I solely focused on my needs?

6. Am I willing to step into the hard conversations, knowing it is a vital component of being an influential leader?



Influential People Negotiate Wisely

What they do

Influential people take the time to know what they want from a negotiation and are deliberate about what they ask for and when. They understand the available options and how their proposal could meet the other person's needs.

They think about the negotiation process in advance and the steps required to secure an agreement. Importantly, they seek to understand the other people involved - their operating style, agenda, needs and what they care about.

They come prepared to discuss and compromise, understand their trade-offs, and ensure they are in the best mindset before, during, and after a negotiation.

Why they do it

Valuing relationships, they won't sacrifice a relationship for a short-term win. They always seek to take the long-term view.

That said, they understand how power works in an organisation, and they are not afraid to back themselves and what they stand for.

They know the value of their personal power – that is, power that is consciously derived from a person's understanding of and comfort with themselves.

Ask yourself

1. Do I understand the difference between my wants and needs?

2. Am I prepared to ask for what I need?

3. Do I have a clear set of negotiation principles, and know my trade-offs?

4. Am I willing to compromise, and do I know what my non-negotiables are?

5. Am I comfortable negotiating with people from all walks of life?

6. Do I recognise and accept that negotiation isn't about winner-take-all?

7. Am I comfortable with power and willing to use it wisely?

About Dr Michelle Gibbings

Dr Michelle Gibbings is an award-winning author and globally recognised workplace expert who helps leaders, teams and organisations elevate their strategic influence and impact. With over 30 years of experience - including in senior executive roles - she understands how organisations operate from the inside out.

As a sought-after keynote speaker, executive coach and trusted facilitator, she works with forward-thinking organisations seeking to unlock potential, lead with impact and accelerate progress.

Michelle's approach is pragmatic, inspiring and anchored in insight and action. She helps people stay cool, calm and collected amidst complexity - and bold, brave and balanced in the face of disruption.

She gets organisations, leaders and teams ready for tomorrow, today!



Contact Details

Want to know more?

If you're interested in working with Michelle, individually or in a team setting, we'd love to hear from you.

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