

NAAFA feels the following article by Al Lucia might be valuable to District Managers as they continue on this rocky road of "managing" agents. What would you rather have? Compliance or commitment? If you said "compliance" your road will probably continue to be rocky. Read the article, please, as this idea might be what will pave your road with gold! Good luck!

INFLUENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

But do we hear much about the power of **influence** in business? No. Instead, it appears to be more in vogue to complain about a lack of authority. I often hear from managers and employees at all levels that they're frustrated because they don't have the authority to make certain decisions or to demand certain behaviors or performance. Once you allow people to say, "I'm helpless because I don't have the authority," it's a slippery downward slope. If people don't have authority, they won't take responsibility for results. And if they don't take responsibility for results, they don't think they should be held accountable.

It seems to me that these complaints completely ignore the **power of influence**. In fact, when you think about it, influence is far more powerful than authority. Why? Because authority leads to compliance, whereas influence leads to *commitment*. You can't force employees to be committed or engaged, but you can constantly *influence* them to be both. Influence also has a further reach than authority. For instance, you may not have the clout to fire someone, but you can probably strongly influence that decision.

In today's multigenerational workforce, influence will win over authority every time. While older generations grew up in an authoritative time and environment, and therefore are accustomed to that type of management, the younger generations push back against authority...and they push back hard. *But influence works with everyone!* It doesn't discriminate based on age, gender or ethnicity. I'll take influence over authority any day!

The bottom line is this: Influence will generate more consistently positive results than authority. Period. So, when it comes to influence, ***how ya doin'?***

1. Do you, first of all, realize the power of your influence? Or are you waiting to be given the authority before you take action?
2. When using your influence, do you maximize its power by thinking through the situation? One of the best ways to ensure your influence has impact is to identify and then describe to the other person what's in it for him/her or for the organization to do what you would like to have done.
3. Do you enhance your influence by being knowledgeable, empathetic and respectful? Think about the people who have influence with you and mimic their positive traits and characteristics.

If you want to influence people and your organization to move in a particular direction, consider these **Streetwise Strategies**:

1. Decide how you'd like others to change or improve, and work to develop their trust and confidence so they'll be open to your suggestions and advice. Perhaps one of your salespeople doesn't dress appropriately. This can be a touchy area for some people. When you see this person wearing something nice, compliment him or her to recognize and reinforce what is appropriate. If you do this consistently, the person will eventually accept your constructive criticism.
2. Adopt a belief today that you do have influence and then see how far your influence can go without the exercise of authority (even if it's with someone you do have authority over). For example, you may have the authority to send one of your direct reports on a business trip. Instead, sit down and discuss the challenges going on in that particular situation and ask the direct report how she thinks those issues might be resolved. Chances are, she will come to the conclusion on her own that she needs to get on a plane and go there to work out the problem in person.
3. Spread the word about the power of influence, because there are many people who

- need to be reminded! Ask people this simple question: "What affects the decisions and choices you make in life, and how many of those influencers have authority over you?" They will discover that very few, if any, of the influencers in their lives have authority as well.
4. Let others know that you genuinely have their best interests at heart. Help others see, through candid feedback, how changing their attire, attitude, behaviors, performance, etc. will benefit their career and/or personal lives.

Like most people, when I was in my teens, I was resistant to authority. On the other hand, I don't ever remember resenting being influenced. I did the right thing most of the time anyway, but I was so much more engaged when ***I chose*** to do what I felt was right for me. You might think that's just part of being a teenager – that teenagers will always prefer to make their own decisions rather than being dictated to. *I believe that's true of humans at any age!*

Have I influenced your thinking on this subject without reaching out from the Internet and grabbing you by the neck? I hope so. You know, when the "neck grabbing" happened in my old neighborhood, it was usually followed by, "You talkin' to me?!" Those were the unpleasant, unwelcome authority figures in my life! Many influencers were talking to me too, in much more subtle ways, and I'm still "listening to 'dem" to this day.

To learn how to bring [Al Lucia](#) into your company, contact ADL Associates at (972) 899-3411 or email info@adlassociates.com.