



Psychology of Influencing

Excerpt from "Driving Your Destiny"

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What Drives Success?

Having studied highly effective influencers for the past few decades, there appears to be four key areas to personal success:

- Connection
- Credibility
- Flexibility
- Persistence

Of course, there may be more, and you will no doubt discover them on your journey; however, this is a useful set of descriptions to begin with.

Connection is... your likeability, your capacity to build rapport with other people so that they enjoy being in your company. When we like someone, we are more likely to want to work with them.

Credibility is... your ability to build trust. It is based on qualities like your authority (including your voice and demeanour), your experience, your qualifications and your confidence.

Flexibility is... your ability to adapt to whatever the environment throws at you. Rather than having only one way of doing things, you might have seven or eight!

Persistence is... your ability to get back in the driving seat after a rejection, a difficult problem or when the situation gets uncomfortable.

You can develop all of these success factors... and I encourage you to do so.

Remember though... just because you may have all four factors working for you does not mean you are 'right' or that you hold the moral high-ground. There are many top leaders out there in the world who have developed these qualities, but it would be hard to congratulate them for their ethical stance.

With the four qualities combined comes potential power and with that comes responsibility.

In essence, this whole book is designed to help you develop and enhance your connection, credibility, flexibility and persistence.

Connection

Some people are easy to get on with. They are friendly, often smiling and laughing, and they make you feel better for having met them. The second time you meet them, even if you don't remember their name, you get a warm, positive feeling!

How do you become one of these 'connectors'? Here are some key factors and behaviours:

- **Give Empathy:** Show empathy for others. If they are in a 'positive', constructive state (e.g. proud of something they have achieved), show that you are happy for them. If they are in a 'negative', destructive state (e.g. angry or upset), show that you are concerned for them. Where possible, reassure them that how they are feeling is understandable and 'normal'. In addition, acknowledge their position or perspective (even if you don't necessarily share it). For example, you might say; "That must be tough," but avoid: "I know how you feel"!
- **Get Empathy:** Sometimes, it can be helpful to 'pull' empathy from others. For example, you might say: "Put yourself in my shoes... how would you feel if... how would *you* handle the situation..."
- **Show you are on the same side:** Where possible, demonstrate that you have shared goals, values, aims and vision with the people you are talking to. If you are proposing an idea, make sure to show how it fits *their* plans, objectives and interests rather than just your own.
- **Involve others:** Involve others in your ideas, plans, solutions and decisions. Ask others for their advice and input. Appeal to their knowledge and expertise... ask questions *and* listen. Where possible, add their input into your plans and let them know! People don't tend to reject their own ideas. If they were involved, they are more likely to get on board with you.
- **Keep your humour:** When appropriate, find moments of humour, light-heartedness, laughter and smiles. Demonstrate enthusiasm for the ideas of others... and cheerfulness for simply being alive!

Of course, we could go over the top with any of the above... and that could become irritating to others. Read the situation and the folk that are there.

All in all, how do you want to be perceived? As someone who is unapproachable and self-centred... or as someone who is interested in and genuinely cares about others?

Credibility

Some people you meet will have an easy confidence about them, neither arrogant nor apologetic for their existence. They come across with a degree of authority in their subject and seem well worth listening too. We are glad to have them on board (e.g. a project). They make us feel safe... that we are in good hands. They are trustworthy, keeping promises and not letting us down. They usually admit to mistakes (with a view to learning from those mistakes and correcting them) and are comfortable enough to admit when they do not have an answer...

Here are some key qualities and behaviours that will enhance your credibility.

- **Develop your confidence:** Confidence and strong self-esteem (*not* arrogance), demonstrates you are credible and comfortable in your own boots. Be prepared to introduce and present yourself when appropriate. Communicate your expertise through your job title, number of years, research, qualifications...
- **Be clear:** Whenever you communicate, be clear and concise. Where appropriate, set expectations and provide a structure or an agenda. Clarify agreements... who is doing what, by when etc. Keep others in the loop and request they keep you in the loop too.
- **Make decisions:** Be prepared to make a decision, even if you have to re-decide at a later date. Let people know why you have made the decision and, during uncertain times, the likelihood of having to remake the decision when new data presents itself.
- **Stay true to your core:** It is easier to be honest, congruent and consistent when you make decisions and take actions according your values and principles. Hence, *get clear* about your own values, mission, purpose and principles!
- **Prepare and Present:** Whenever you present information, in whatever form, give evidence and examples to demonstrate you have thought it through. Make sure any outcomes or objectives have a measurable and 'concrete' end result. If necessary, show your audience a printed version of what you are saying (for some folks this makes it more definite and believable!)
- **Dress to impress:** Remember that what you wear creates an impression. Think about other people you meet... are they professional or casual, smart or scruffy, memorable or non-descript? What does this tell you about them?
- **Act with certainty:** Develop a voice of certainty and strong body-language signals. The person who is the most certain in a specific situation is likely to be the most persuasive¹. Speak with authority... **and** be prepared to discuss alternatives. You don't have to be 'right', *you just need to be confident* in your own ideas. Those with credibility are prepared to admit they are wrong or that there is a better idea or they don't know or they are sorry for something... and they do it with grace and with confidence!

Connection and Credibility

Although it is possible to be successful via either connection or credibility, you will increase your odds dramatically as you develop *both*. Connection and credibility are in the mind of the audience, i.e. how likeably, trustworthy, ethical and authoritative they perceive you to be. You may believe you are all of these things... but you will only have an impact if others believe them too.

Some folks are very friendly and likable... the 'people' people! However, they can come across as non-assertive or as a joker... and hence not be taken seriously. Other folks may be very credible... a real expert in their field. You may trust them, but you wouldn't want to work with them. Perhaps they come across as arrogant, aggressive, distant, aloof or unapproachable.

How long do you think it takes to build *connection* with someone? The answer... it depends! It appears that there are 'layers' of rapport and hence likeability develops over time. However, studies on 'impressions' suggest that the first layer of connection happens immediately. And at that point we make a decision (probably primal): is this person friend or foe? Do I like them, yes or no? After our initial judgement, we then *seek to confirm our initial judgement*ⁱ. If we like the person straight away, we continue to look for what we like. If we are not so sure, we continue to look for what we do not like. Alas... we do indeed judge the book by its cover!

What about *credibility* and trust... surely that takes more time? Apparently not. It is that same as connection. There is an initial, immediate assessment and then layers of trust building after that. From research on first impressions, we also make a judgement about a person's confidence, competence and honesty... and all within two secondsⁱⁱ!

So, do whatever you can to make sure your first impressions are positively favourable ones.

Be purposeful at first contact... get on the right track... and then the rest will be easier.

Flexibility

The person within a system who has the greatest flexibility is the most likely to survive and thrive over a period of time¹.

To be flexible means to be adaptable, to have a range of approaches in a given situation and to be able to innovate when faced with new and different circumstances.

When someone has only one way of dealing with a situation, it will work... sometimes! But having three or more options gives you choice. It also means that if your first approach is not working, you have back-up plans.

Indeed, the more strategies you have for handling specific situations, the more confident you will feel. Consider some areas of life where you are really confident. If something isn't working quite right, you will have other ways of handling the situation.

As well as having a range of actions you could take, flexibility is also about your ability to think through and around situations... to be able to see things from a number of different perspectives.

When we can see something from only one perspective, our thinking becomes stuck and rigid. We are unable to empathise with others or 'put ourselves in their shoes'.

To be able to see things from multiple perspectives not only allows you to build rapport more easily with others, it helps you to manage your emotions and to be creative and innovative in your approach to solving problems.

It can help us to be more balanced, resilient and fair in our dealings with others when we understand that all we have is a perspective on (and not THE truth of) the situation.

How we frame and interpret things affects how we feel. I heard a story of two people having a conversation. One person was learning English as a second language and was trying to describe a turtle. Not knowing the word, he drew a turtle and the other person told him what it was. He wrote the word 'turtle' under the rough picture. They laughed together. A pleasant interaction. However, a third person overheard the end of the interaction and believed they were talking about him... drawing pictures of him, calling him a turtle and laughing at him. He immediately complained to the HR department. Who knows what went through the complainant's mind and what they had experienced in the past? However, if this was a regular 'interpretation filter' for them, life cannot have been much fun.

So, for your own success and wellbeing, practice interpreting or explaining events in a number of different ways!

Persistence

What do you do if your first approach does not work?

Too many people take it as rejection and give up. They say things like: "I've tried everything..." when really, they have not!

Imagine a small child taking their first steps. They pull themselves up, focus on their destination and set off... usually to fall down on their backside! So, they crawl back to a stable start point, pull themselves up... focus... and off they go again... until finally they get there. They don't think: "That didn't work, I'm not doing that again. I've tried everything... you'll have to carry me round for the rest of my life!"

Now imagine having the self-same tenacity that the small child has when they are learning to walk. Sheer determination. Total commitment! Unstoppable motivation. Splendid oomph and va-va-voom!

There is an old Latin proverb that I rather like... "Fortune favours the brave". It is well known... almost a cliché now... but it *can* become a powerful motivator. And in this instance, being brave means facing the possibility of barriers or of rejection or of not getting it right first time.

Here, we could be talking about a form of resilience. Getting back up when we get knocked down... and having another go.

How do you light the fire within... and how do you reignite the flame when others try to douse it? What do you do when life throws a bucket of water at you? How do you fire up the furnace, build up a head of steam and power the engine of locomotion? (I will stop with the metaphor now!)

How are you motivated? Do you motivate yourself or get motivation from others... or a mix of both? In general terms, the most powerful form of motivation is self-motivation... even when we like to get praise and recognition from others. If you are more motivated by what you get from others, but others are not around, imagine their thanks and the look on their face... that you have made a positive difference for them in some way.

Think back on times when you were totally motivated, when you had that inner resolve and 'single-mindedness'... when you were in flow and nothing could stop you. What was it that moved you so?

The Persistence/Flexibility Combo

Persistence, combined with flexibility, is a force to be reckoned with. Imagine someone who has a drive to make things happen. What do they do whenever they encounter an obstacle? Most times, they change their *course* rather than their *cause*.

When I have time, I like to drive down country roads to see where they go and where they come out. It is amazing how often this proves useful at a later date when there is a traffic jam on the main road!

Nature (the most successful and long-lasting 'living' thing on planet Earth) is full of examples of flexible persistence. The Theory of Evolution is a perfect example. How do species survive and thrive? By adapting and persevering. Indeed, each obstacle or setback tends to make the species 'stronger'.

Your brain is another beautiful example. It is learning, updating and making new connections all the time. Even when the brain is damaged, in many cases it has the capacity to rewire itself. This ability is known as neural plasticityⁱ. If your brain is being flexible and persistent... there is no reason why the rest of you can't be!

We can develop our flexibility over time, particularly if we have the will to do so. The key to this is 'reflection'... and it really doesn't have to take long (i.e. we are not talking about long periods of 'naval gazing')!

If things don't go your way in any given situation, ask yourself:

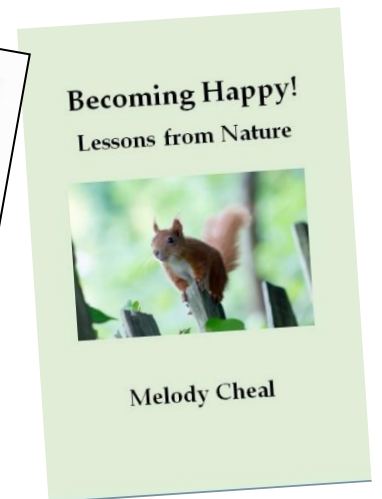
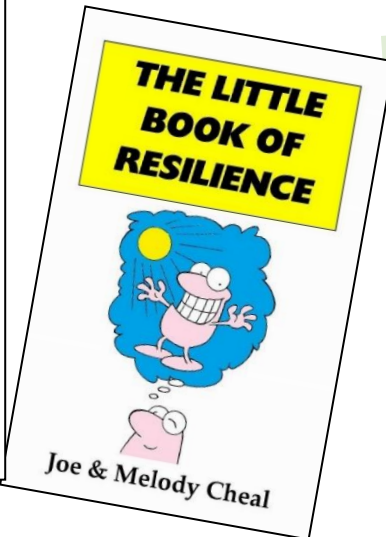
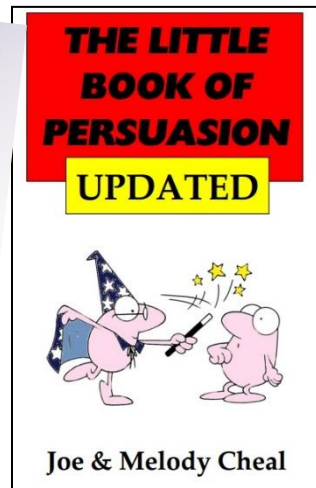
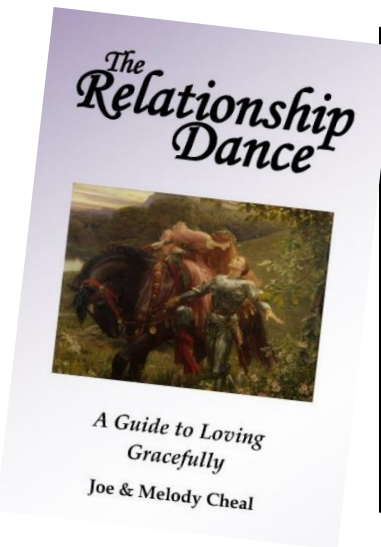
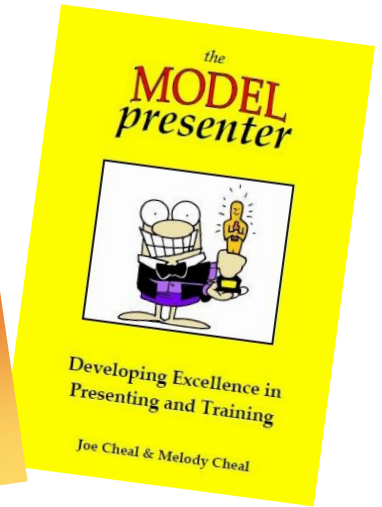
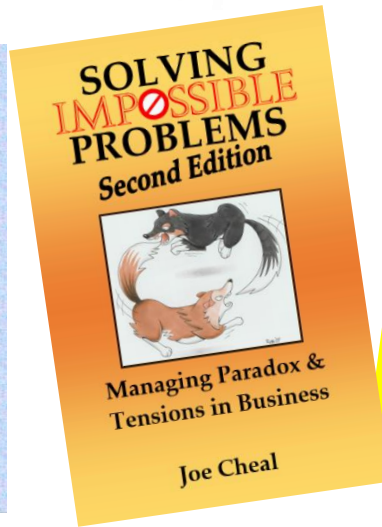
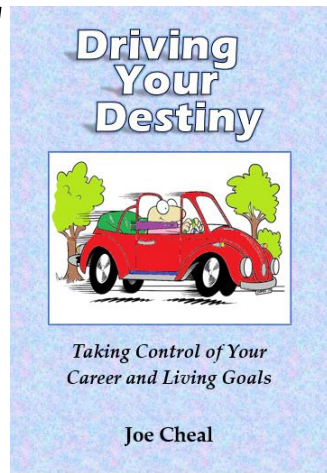
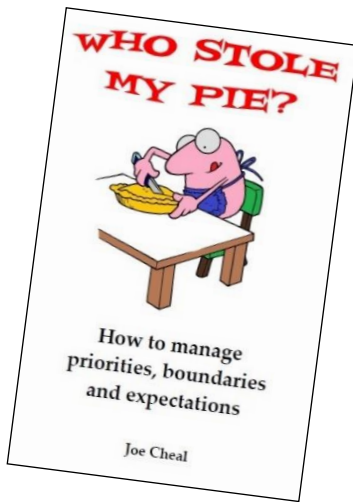
- What could I do differently next time?
- And what else?

Remember, success is often a numbers game... of probabilities. Increase your odds by adapting to the situation, learning new ways not to do it and getting curious!

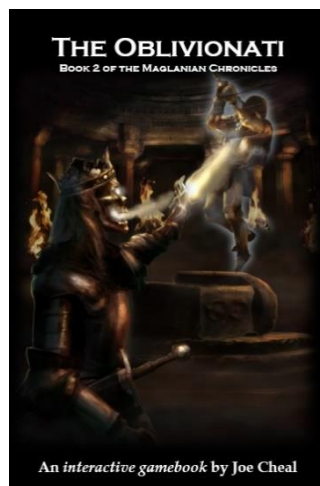
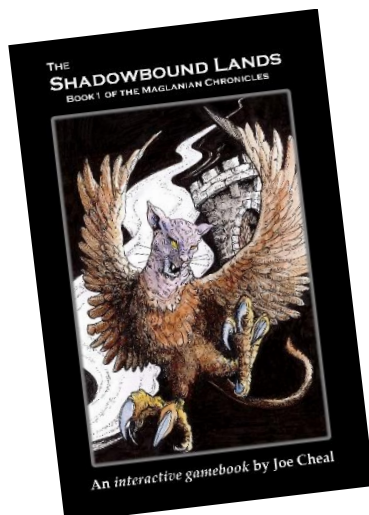
Develop a set of strategies for dealing with this situation in the future. And especially, strategies that you feel happy with, excited about and motivated by! A solution without enthusiasm is a chore, a sinking feeling... and we are less likely to implement it. And, for the same reason, make sure your strategies fit with your values!

Persistence and flexibility are especially essential if we are 'between jobs', i.e. unemployed and looking for work. Finding work can be a job in and of itselfⁱⁱ.

Are you ready to be formidably formable, relentless in your ability to adjust, develop and evolve? And are you ready to think literally, laterally and round corners in your pursuit of resilience and determination?



Imaginarium Gamebooks



Imaginarium?

An imaginarium is a place of wonder... a safe place to learn...
to test out and develop practical ideas for application 'back in the real world'.

Imaginarium Learning & Development is a consultancy that specialises in inspiring the imagination and potential of organisations, leadership, management and individuals through OD, L&D and Executive Coaching.

Since 1993, we have worked with a wonderful collection of companies, always seeking to work in partnership... enhancing the profile of leadership, learning, training and development in our client's organisation. As well as leading the market in our specialist fields, we are serious about continuous improvement and ongoing learning, keeping up to date with leadership, management and HR issues. Each key trainer has over 20 years training experience and has worked with over 10,000 people from a range of industries and cultures.

Our aim is to provide flexible, high quality training and learning solutions to all of our clients. Our mission is to oil the wheels of development... making life easier for people in a time of ever-increasing complexity... engaging and empowering people to be the best they can be...

Courses

Imaginarium Learning & Development offers a range of L&D consultancy services including needs assessment, design and provision of training courses. Courses can be adapted from a half-day to two-days in length and some topics can be presented as short 'spotlight' sessions.

WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

- Coping with Change
- Dealing with Pressure
- Positive Mental Health Toolkit
- Resilience: Developing the 'Bounce Back' Factor
- Staying Positively Happy
- Stress Management
- Wellbeing: Staying Psychologically Healthy

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Change Leadership
- The Complete Leader: Inspirational & Practical
- Delegate!
- Feedback for Effectiveness
- Developing People: Leader as Coach
- Having tough conversations
- Leadership in Action
- Managing People Successfully
- Making Meetings Work
- Motivate!
- Project Leadership
- The Supportive Manager
- Team Building and Development

PERSONAL IMPACT

- Career & Profile Development
- Innovation: Getting Creative
- Making Your Life Work 4U: Confidence
- Networking Skills
- Personal Power
- Time Management
- Understanding/Managing Unconscious Bias

IN FRONT OF THE AUDIENCE

- Advanced Presentation Skills
- The Essential Presenter
- Persuasive Presentations
- Train the Trainer

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Advanced Negotiation Skills
- Becoming a Mentor
- Strategic Change Management
- Making NLP Work
- Organisational Development
- Organisational Politics
- Troubleshooting: Problem Resolution
- Working with Transactional Analysis

RESULTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Assertiveness: Clarity and Focus
- Building Partnerships
- Conflict Resolution
- Customer Care
- Dealing with Difficult People
- Delivering the Message: Communication
- Handling Conflict in Meetings
- Influence and Persuasion
- Magic of Mediation
- Negotiation Skills
- Understanding Personalities

HR SKILLS FOR MANAGERS

- Appraisal
- Capability & Disciplinary
- Controlling Absence
- Dealing with Poor Performance
- Dealing with Bullying and Harassment
- Introduction to Counselling
- Interviewing Skills

CERTIFICATIONS

- Coaching Diploma
- NLP Business Diploma
- NLP Practitioner
- NLP Master Practitioner
- NLP Trainer's Training



Imaginarium

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