Prof. Vikas Singh

Prof. Vikas Singh is a management scholar, entrepreneur, institution-builder and public intellectual whose work spans corporate governance, public policy, leadership and social development. Drawing on experience across industry, academia and government, he brings an interdisciplinary perspective to economic growth, institutional performance and organisational leadership.

He is **Professor at IIM Nagpur, Visiting Faculty at the Indian School of Business (ISB), and Senior Fellow at MCRHRDI, Government of Telangana**. He has previously served as Professor at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). Prof Singh is a Trustee of the Helping Hand Foundation.

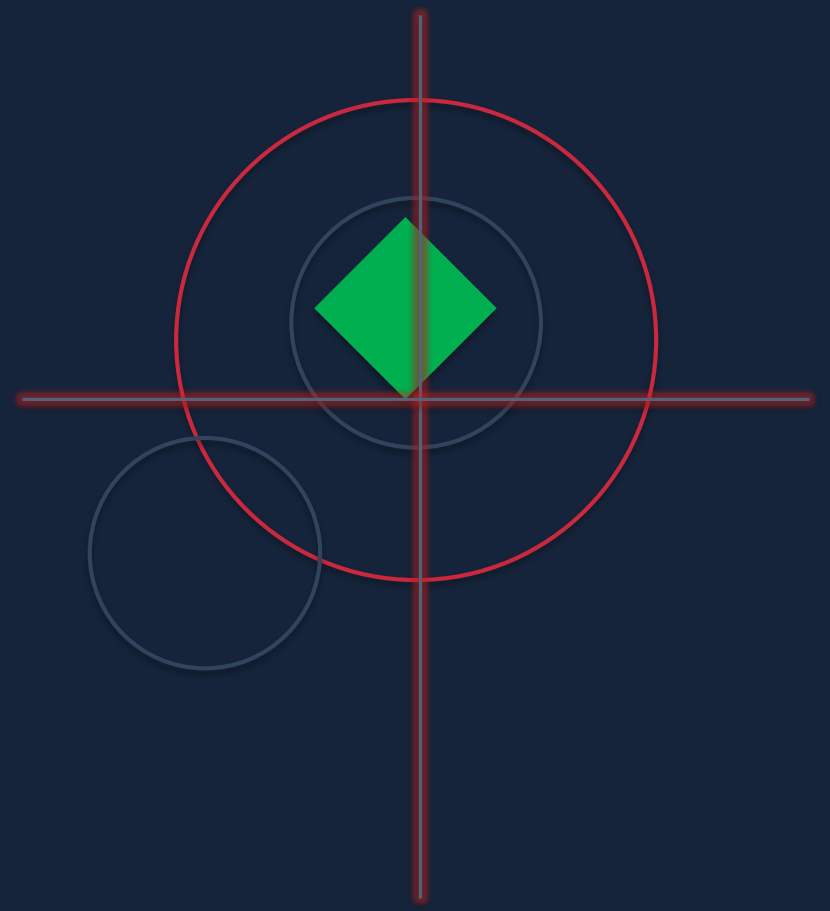
He is the creator of the '**Influencing' Framework**, an approach to understanding and strengthening how individuals influence people, decisions and outcomes. Over 10,000 leaders have benefited from the framework.

Prof Singh is a TED speaker and prolific commentator. He has authored more than **450 op-eds and columns** on economics, business, leadership, technology and public policy. He is published in Dainik Jagran, economic Times, Hindustan times, Business line, CNBC , Mint etc. He regularly appears as an expert on leading platforms, including CNBC, NDTV and WION etc.

He also serves on institutional committees, contributing to policy deliberations and initiatives focused on economic development, governance and institutional effectiveness.

THE BEHAVIOUR COMPASS

Find your true north



Expertise can establish credibility.
Authority gives a leader the power to act.

The ability to influence helps a leader secure cooperation, commitment and sustained results.

Start with self-observation

The questionnaire is a mirror for reflection, not a pass/fail test.

01 **Read the situation**

Each item begins with an incomplete statement and six possible endings.

02 **Allocate 10 points**

Distribute exactly 10 points across the six endings to reflect your usual behaviour at work.

03 **Use the full range**

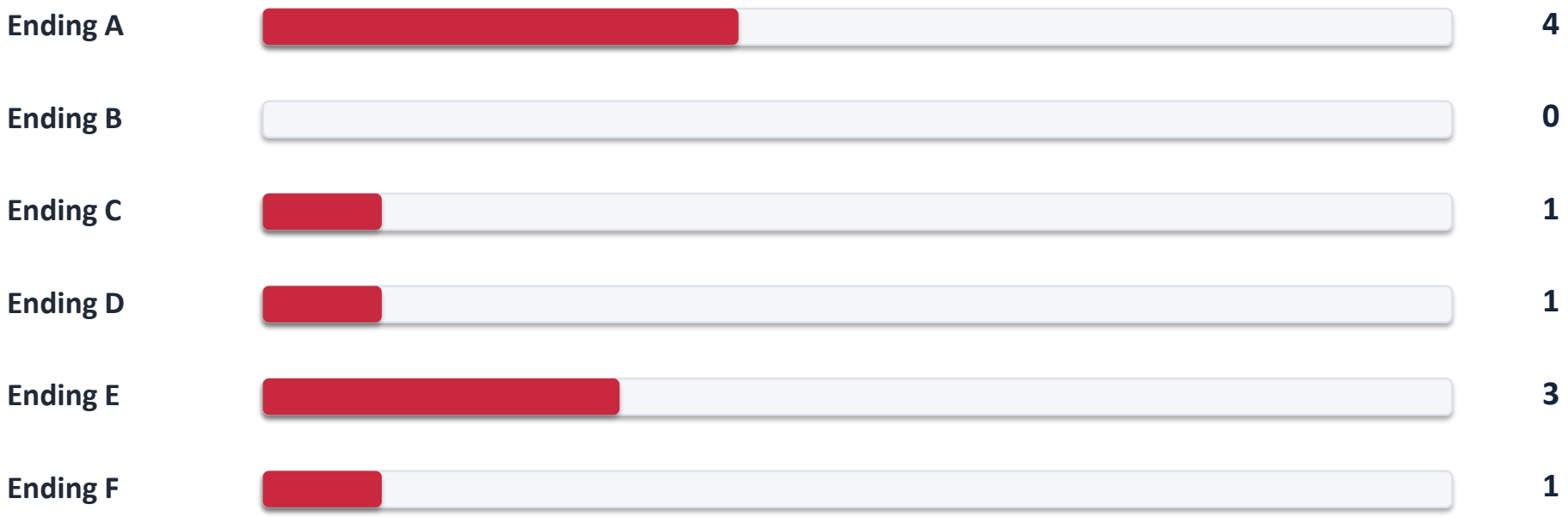
You may allocate all 10 to one ending or spread them across several.

04 **Transfer and reflect**

Move each score to the profile table, then look for patterns rather than a single “type”.

Example: allocating 10 points

There is no “correct” answer. The pattern should reflect what you actually do, not what sounds ideal.



10
POINTS

Before moving on, ask: “Is this my usual behaviour, especially when the stakes are high?”

YOU INFLUENCE PEOPLE EVERY DAY

Not only through your position. Often through the way you approach another person.

AT WORK

Win a colleague's support for a proposal.

ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

Negotiate resources or resolve competing priorities.

IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Help a citizen understand and comply with a regulation.

AS A LEADER

Encourage a team member to take ownership.

AT HOME

Resolve a disagreement or persuade family to support a decision.

The question is not whether you influence. It is whether your approach works.

A QUESTION TO BEGIN

You had the authority.
You had the evidence.
So why did nothing move?

Think of a time when you needed someone's cooperation, but your position or instructions were not enough.

What was missing: trust, incentives, clarity—or something else?

REFLECT • 30 SECONDS

Recall one real situation.

What did you want the other person to do?

What did you try?

What worked—or failed?

When People Resist a Policy, Diagnose Before You Influence

Match the response to the source of resistance

DIAGNOSIS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSE	RELEVANT STYLES
The policy has a substantive flaw	Reconsider assumptions and redesign	**REASONING**
People do not understand the policy	Explain the evidence and build a shared purpose	**REASONING + VISIONARY**
Stakeholders have legitimate competing interests	Explore trade-offs and negotiate	**BARGAINING + FRIENDLY PERSUASION**
Implementation is failing	Remove barriers and establish accountability	**ASSERTIVENESS + REASONING**
Trust is low	Listen, acknowledge concerns and demonstrate reliability	**FRIENDLY PERSUASION + REASONING**

Diagnose the cause first. Then choose the influencing style.

Gandhi: Influence Without Formal Authority

The Salt March combined different influencing styles to turn a simple act into collective action.

- Connected salt to the larger goal of self-rule.
- Made an abstract issue tangible in everyday life.
- Challenged an unjust law through disciplined non-cooperation.
- Built credibility through personal example and shared sacrifice.
- Mobilised networks, volunteers and collective participation.
- Negotiated with the colonial government without abandoning the larger objective.

LEADERSHIP LESSON | Influence is not one style used well; it is the right combination of styles for the situation.

THE REAL SKILL IS CHOOSING THE RIGHT APPROACH

The same message can succeed or fail depending on how it is delivered.

DIAGNOSE

What is stopping progress?

Lack of trust? Unclear facts?

Conflicting interests?

CHOOSE

Which approach fits?

Be direct? Build rapport?

Use evidence? Negotiate?

ADAPT

Did it work?

If not, change the approach.

Do not simply turn up the pressure.

Today's objective: learn to combine six influencing styles to fit the person, the situation and the outcome.

Influence is a choice, not a personality label

Effective leaders adapt their method without compromising their purpose.

THE OUTCOME

What needs to change, be decided or be delivered?

THE AUDIENCE

What matters to the people whose support you need?

THE APPROACH

Which style is most likely to move this conversation forward?

The goal is not to use every style equally. It is to use the right style, in the right dose, for the situation.

We often describe people as persuasive, analytical, assertive or visionary.
But effective influence is not about being one kind of person.
It is about recognising what a situation requires and adapting your approach without compromising your purpose.”

Six ways to move people

Each style offers a different route to commitment. None works best in every situation.

1 **ASSERTIVENESS**

State your position clearly

2 **BARGAINING**

Trade to reach agreement

3 **FRIENDLY PERSUASION**

Build trust and receptivity

4 **LEVERAGE**

Mobilise support & alternatives

5 **REASONING**

Make the evidence compelling

6 **VISIONARY**

Connect action to a future

Reflect before interpreting

Compare how you see yourself with what trusted colleagues may experience.

SIMILAR

Whose influencing style resembles yours?

EASIER

With which style is it easiest for you to work, and why?

DIFFERENT

Who approaches influence in the opposite way?

CONVINCING

Think of someone who can change your mind. What do they do? Who are they

Read your profile as a pattern, not a verdict

The original scoring bands are broad indicators. They do not establish competence or character.

LOWER

Interpretation: Less used

You may underuse this approach or avoid it when pressure rises.

MIDDLE

Interpretation: Available

You may be able to use the style with reasonable flexibility.

HIGHER

Interpretation: Strong preference

You may reach for this style often; check whether it fits the situation.

The critical question is not “What am I?” but “What does this situation need from me?”

ASSERTIVENESS

Clear communication and collaborative problem-solving

Score Range	Communication Style	Potential During Stress	Influencing Approach/behavior	Preparation
< 10	Needs Encouragement	May become withdrawn	Indirect, hesitant	Minimal
11-20	Direct and Clear	Can become insistent	States ideas clearly, seeks to understand others' perspectives. but firm in their stance.	Moderate research, outlines ideas
21-30	Confident and Assertive	May become persistent	Presents data and clear arguments to support their ideas. Direct and persuasive, uses data to back claims while respecting others' views.	Thorough research, anticipates objections
31-40	Strong and Persuasive Needs Refinement	May become impatient	Presents data and arguments, respects others' views. Dictates solutions	Limited preparation, relies on authority encourage further research and open discussion
41+	Overly Commanding Needs Adjustment	May become angry or hostile	Imposes solutions	No preparation encourage preparation and open discussion

01

01 Assertiveness

State your position clearly while leaving the room for other people's perspectives.

CORE MOVE

Be clear. Be firm. Stay respectful.

USE IT WHEN

- A decision needs clarity
- A boundary must be stated
- A difficult issue is being avoided

MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

- State the issue and desired outcome
- Support your position with evidence
- Invite challenge before closing

WATCH THE OVERUSE

- Impatience can become pressure
- Confidence can become control
- Others may comply but stop contributing

A strong assertive message is direct about the issue, not dismissive of the person.

BARGAINING

From cautious to coercive :Transactional influencing and the art of the deal

Score Range	Behaviour Compass	Under Stress	Influencing Approach/behavior	Preparation
< 10	Developing Negotiator	Withdrawn, Few Options	Suggests tentative trades, unclear about concessions. easily concedes.	Minimal research, limited bargaining chips.
11-20	Clear Communicator	Frustrated, Uses Pressure Tactics	Clearly outlines offers and concessions. Focuses on logic and fairness, seeks win-win.	Moderate research, identifies potential trades.
21-30	Skilled Negotiator, Flexible, Creative Problem Solver	Anxious, Makes Quick Concessions	Proposes creative solutions, adept at reading others. Builds rapport, emphasizes mutual benefit.	Thorough research, anticipates counteroffers.
31-40	Aggressive Negotiator, Pushes Limits, Tenacious Advocate	Impatient, Uses Ultimatums	Can be forceful, emphasizes own priorities. willing to walk away	Extensive research, Develops Backup Plans
41+	Domineering, Focuses on Winning	Angry, Resorts to Threats	Dictates terms, expects compliance. prioritizes own gain at all costs	Limited research, relies on power imbalance. Seeks Power Advantage

Bargaining

Trade intelligently to reach an agreement that protects what matters most.

CORE MOVE

Find the exchange that makes agreement possible.

USE IT WHEN

Interests overlap but differ

Resources or timing are constrained

A durable agreement matters

MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

Know your priorities and walk-away point

Explore interests before trading positions

Offer concessions that matter to the other side

WATCH THE OVERUSE

A deal can become a contest

Ultimatums narrow options

Short-term wins can damage trust

Good bargaining creates value before deciding how to divide it.

FRIENDLY PERSUASION

Collaborative influencing and the power of positivity

Score Range	Normal Behavior	Under Stress	Influencing Approach/behavior	Preparation
< 10	Timid, Seeks Agreement	Withdraws, Avoids Conflict	Indirect suggestions, hesitant to lead discussion, defers easily	Minimal research, relies on others' ideas.
11-20	Approachable, Collaborative	Becomes More Persuasive	Facilitates discussion, encourages participation. builds consensus, emphasizes collaboration	Moderate research, seeks input and feedback.
21-30	Enthusiastic, Builds Rapport	Anxious, Overly Conciliatory	Uses positive language and humor, focuses on "we." Energetically champions the cause, seeks win-win solutions	Thorough research, incorporates others' ideas.
31-40	Highly Adaptable, People-Oriented	Can Be Manipulative	Tailors approach to individuals, avoids negativity. Charms and persuades, uses emotional appeals skilfully	Extensive research, anticipates concerns.
41+	Overly Social, Flattering	Appears Frantic, Avoids Tough Decisions	Showering with compliments, avoids conflict at all costs. focuses on social aspects	Limited research, prioritizes positive reception.

Friendly persuasion

Build rapport so that people are more willing to listen, engage and act.

CORE MOVE

Make it easier for people to say yes.

USE IT WHEN

- Trust is low or fragile
- Co-operation matters beyond today
- People need to feel heard

MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

- Listen before advocating
- Find shared goals and language
- Use encouragement sincerely

WATCH THE OVERUSE

- Harmony can displace candour
- Charm can feel manipulative
- Difficult decisions may be delayed

Warmth is most powerful when paired with honesty and clear expectations.

LEVERAGE

Mobilising networks, support and momentum

Score Range	Normal Behaviour	Under Stress	Influencing Approach/behavior	Preparation Normal
< 10	Quiet, Reserved, Seeks Guidance	Anxious, Clingy	Indirectly seeks a powerful ally to champion their ideas. May hesitate to speak up. hesitates to take initiative, waits for approval from authority figures. May come across as insecure or lacking confidence	Minimal research or preparation, relies on others' guidance.
11-20	Cautious, Observant, Strategic Collaborator	Tense, Seeks Consensus	Strategically uses connections to build support for ideas. Prioritizes finding common ground. avoid taking risks. May struggle to assert themselves if their ideas differ from those in power..	Moderate research, focuses on understanding the power dynamics and building relationships with key players.
21-30	Networked, Politically Savvy	Assertive, Leverages Network	Builds coalitions and emphasizes shared benefits to gain buy-in. Confidently frames their proposal within the context of power dynamics. Uses their network to advocate for their ideas and build support.	Invests time in building strong relationships and understanding the needs of others. Thorough research to identify potential allies and craft persuasive arguments.
31-40	Charismatic, Influential,Compelling Influencer	Forceful, Uses Pressure Tactics	Directly appeals to authority figures, highlighting potential consequences of inaction. Frames their arguments strategically, emphasizing potential benefits and aligning with organizational goals.	Extensive research, focuses on building a compelling case with data and evidence. Actively lobbies key decision-makers.
41+	Domineering, Intimidating,Overly Assertive Influencer	Aggressive, Uses Threats	Demands compliance through authoritarian pronouncements. Dictates their ideas and expects immediate acceptance. May dismiss or ignore dissenting opinions	Minimal preparation, assumes their authority guarantees support.

Leverage

Mobilise relationships, alternatives and institutional support to create momentum.

CORE MOVE

Build a coalition around a credible case.

USE IT WHEN

- Many stakeholders shape the outcome
- Authority is distributed
- An idea needs sponsorship or scale

MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

- Map interests and decision rights
- Build support before the formal meeting
- Be transparent about alternatives and asks

WATCH THE OVERUSE

- Coalitions can become politics
- Pressure can undermine legitimacy
- Relationships should not replace evidence

Leverage is strongest when it mobilises support, not when it corners people.

REASONING: Logic and the art of persuasion

SCORE	TYPICAL STYLE	UNDER PRESSURE	INFLUENCING APPROACH	PREPARATION
Below 10	**Quiet, analytical**	Overly critical or dismissive	Relies on facts and data; may struggle to connect evidence with others' emotions or priorities.	Build an evidence base and a clear logical case.
11–20	**Skeptical, investigative**	Impatient; seeks certainty	Challenges assumptions and tests risks; may delay decisions while seeking more information.	Check risks, test assumptions and seek diverse perspectives.
21–30	**Objective, data-driven**	Focused on solutions	Presents balanced, evidence-based arguments and looks for solutions that address different concerns.	Analyse the issue from multiple perspectives; identify key evidence.
31–40	**Strategic, persuasive**	Detached or inflexible	Anticipates counterarguments and uses logic to persuade; may focus too much on being right.	Structure the argument and prepare for likely objections.
41+	**Cold, calculating**	Argumentative; dismisses emotion	Relies on logic to control the discussion and win the argument, potentially alienating others.	Challenge assumptions, listen actively and consider opposing views.

REASONING: Logic and the art of persuasion

Use evidence, logic and a clear chain of reasoning to make the case credible.

CORE MOVE

Show why the conclusion follows from the evidence.

USE IT WHEN

- Decisions carry material risk
- Assumptions need testing
- Credibility and consistency matter

MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

- Separate facts, assumptions and inference
- Select evidence that answers the real question
- Address objections fairly

WATCH THE OVERUSE

- Analysis can become paralysis
- Being right can outrank being understood
- Data alone rarely creates commitment

Evidence earns attention. Meaning and relevance help turn attention into action.

VISIONARY: Inspire a compelling future. Connect the vision to a credible path forward

Score	Typical pattern	Under stress	Influencing approach	Preparation
< 10	**Idealistic; ideas may remain abstract**	Discouraged or unfocused	Shares an inspiring picture of the future but may not translate it into concrete steps.	Clarify the goal; identify first steps and practical constraints.
11–20	**Creative and independent**	Frustrated or impatient	Paints a picture of what could be; invites ideas, but may not secure commitment or address feasibility.	Test assumptions; seek input and define achievable milestones.
21–30	**Strategic and collaborative**	Tenacious; seeks feedback	Presents a clear vision and roadmap. Inspires others while involving them in shaping the way forward.	Anticipate barriers; gather perspectives and set measurable milestones.
31–40	**Compelling and future-focused**	May become overconfident or dismissive of constraints	Communicates an ambitious, coherent future and builds momentum; risk is overselling the vision or underplaying implementation.	Stress-test the plan; align stakeholders, resources, risks and accountability.
41+	**Overly grandiose or dominating**	Impatient; rejects challenge	Pushes a preferred future as inevitable, expects others to follow and may discount dissent or practical limits.	Invite challenge; distinguish aspiration from evidence and agree on realistic next steps.

Mix styles with intent, not by instinct

Choose one style to open the conversation. Add a second to address what is missing.

1 DIAGNOSE

What is blocking progress? No clarity, weak evidence, low trust, competing interests, missing sponsors or no shared purpose?

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2 LEAD

Choose the first move Use the style that addresses the main barrier. Do not start with your favourite style by default.

›

3 SUPPORT

Add A complementary style. Strengthen the lead: evidence behind a firm ask, trust before challenge, or a shared future before negotiation.

›

4 ADAPT

Read the response If people remain unconvinced, change the missing ingredient. Do not simply turn up the volume.

QUICK EXAMPLES

Need a clear decision	Assertiveness + Reasoning	Need agreement	Visionary + Bargaining
Need a hard message	Friendly persuasion + Assertiveness	Need wider support	Leverage + Reasoning

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness works best when directness is strengthened by a complementary style.

01

Assertiveness + Bargaining

State your needs and bottom line clearly, then negotiate the terms.

Be firm about what matters while remaining open to trade-offs that create a fair agreement.

02

Assertiveness + Leverage

Use clear, confident communication alongside a credible understanding of decision-makers, allies and alternatives.

Leverage strengthens your position; it should not become intimidation.

03

Assertiveness + Reasoning

Back a firm position with facts, examples and expert judgement.

Evidence makes the request more credible and helps address objections without relying on forcefulness.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

BARGAINING

Bargaining improves when interests, evidence, relationships and alternatives work together.

01

Bargaining + Assertiveness

Communicate your interests and limits clearly. Assertiveness ensures your priorities are considered while leaving room for a workable compromise.

02

Bargaining + Reasoning

Use data, costs, risks and market evidence to support offers. Anticipate concerns and explain the logic behind proposed terms.

03

Bargaining + Visionary

Describe the long-term benefits of agreement for both sides. Shift the discussion from dividing value to creating shared value.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

FRIENDLY PERSUASION

Friendly persuasion builds receptiveness; other styles help turn goodwill into a decision.

01

Friendly Persuasion + Reasoning

Support a collaborative proposal with relevant facts and data. Evidence adds credibility and helps answer concerns without losing a respectful tone.

02

Friendly Persuasion + Visionary

Build rapport while painting a compelling picture of a shared future. People can see not only why the idea matters, but how they can contribute.

03

Friendly Persuasion + Assertiveness

Be warm and respectful, but state the decision, boundary or request directly when needed. Collaboration should not become conflict avoidance.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

LEVERAGE

Leverage becomes more effective when backed by a clear case, trusted relationships and credible choices.

01
Leverage + Assertiveness

State the decision required and the support you need. Clear communication converts stakeholder access and influence into action.

02
Leverage + Reasoning

Use evidence to show benefits, risks and the consequences of action or delay. A well-supported case makes influence more legitimate and credible.

03
Leverage + Visionary

Connect the proposal to a future outcome that matters to stakeholders. A shared purpose gives allies a reason to mobilise support.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

REASONING: Logic and the art of persuasion

Reasoning is stronger when evidence is clear, relevant, human and connected to action.

01

Reasoning + Visionary

Connect analysis to a compelling future state. The vision gives data a purpose and helps people understand what the evidence makes possible.

02

Reasoning + Assertiveness

Present conclusions confidently and address objections directly. Assertiveness ensures sound analysis is heard without turning disagreement into a contest.

03

Reasoning + Bargaining

Use evidence to establish a credible case, then identify concessions that protect core objectives. Analysis helps distinguish essential terms from negotiable ones.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

VISIONARY

Vision creates direction; complementary styles make it credible, inclusive & achievable.

01

Visionary + Reasoning

Support the future vision with evidence, milestones and a credible roadmap. This reassures people that the ambition is achievable, not merely inspirational.

02

Visionary + Assertiveness

Communicate the direction and immediate priorities clearly. Assertiveness helps maintain momentum when uncertainty or resistance threatens progress.

03

Visionary + Bargaining

Use the value of the future outcome to negotiate resources, commitments and trade-offs required to make the vision real.

Choose a complementary style to strengthen the message, not to dilute the purpose.

Practice: influence without formal authority

Use the six styles to prepare for a realistic cross-functional conversation.

THE SITUATION

You need another function to adopt a new process.

The team agrees the current process is slow, but it is worried about workload, implementation risk and losing control over its own priorities.

YOUR PREPARATION

What outcome do you need, and what matters to the other team?

YOUR STYLE MIX

Which style will lead? Which second style will strengthen it?

YOUR FIRST SENTENCE

Write an opening that is clear, credible and respectful.

Then switch roles: what would make you genuinely willing to support the proposal?

A style mix in action

Scenario: another function must adopt a new process, but fears extra workload and implementation risk.

OBJECTIVE: secure agreement to a 6-week pilot, with clear safeguards and a review point.

FRIENDLY PERSUASION | OPEN

"I understand the team is already stretched. Let's identify what would make this workable."

REASONING | MAKE THE CASE

Show the delay data, the cost of the current process and what the pilot will test.

ASSERTIVENESS | STATE THE ASK

"I propose a six-week pilot in one team, with named owners and a review on [date]."

BARGAINING | SHAPE THE ROUTE

Agree workload limits, support & success measures. Use leverage only if sponsorship is needed.

THE PRINCIPLE

Start with the barrier, sequence the styles, and make the next step specific. Visionary can frame the longer-term benefit; it need not lead every conversation.

Choose the style that the situation needs

Use this as a starting point, then adapt to the people and context.

Need a clear decision or boundary	Assertiveness
Need agreement across competing interests	Bargaining
Need trust, participation or receptivity	Friendly persuasion
Need sponsors, allies or wider reach	Leverage
Need to test assumptions or prove a case	Reasoning
Need direction, meaning or change momentum	Visionary

If the conversation is stuck, ask what is missing: clarity, evidence, trust, options, sponsorship or purpose?

A simple architecture for an influential conversation

Prepare the conversation before choosing your technique.

OUTCOME
What do I need the other person to understand, decide or do?

›

AUDIENCE
What do they care about, fear or need to protect?

›

EVIDENCE
What facts, examples or logic will make the case credible?

›

RELATIONSHIP
What level of trust, warmth or directness is appropriate?

›

ASK
What specific next step am I asking for?

Close with a check: “What concerns remain, and what would help us move forward?”

Influence is not about winning every conversation

It is about choosing the approach that helps people move towards a sound outcome.

Be clear about the purpose. Flexible about the method.
Honest about the trade-offs.