

AUTHORITY OR INFLUENCE: WHICH TRULY MAKES YOUR VOICE HEARD?



“

If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then you are an excellent leader.

~ Dolly Parton

”

INFLUENCING WITHOUT AUTHORITY



01.

How do I get busy executives to help remove blockers when departments won't cooperate?"

We all make thousands of decisions a day, and those who have the carriage of a mid to large organisation have more than most.

Getting the attention of the senior people in a business who have the authority to make decisions in a timely fashion is **not** easy.

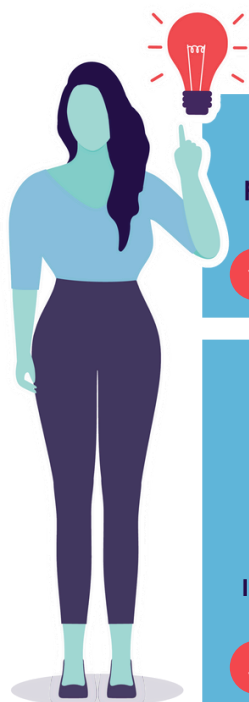
Executives, like everyone else, have lots to process. Think about presenting to them like you're watching a TikTok. Give them "**the headlines**" and have the detail to hand so that you can call on it if needed.

WHY IT MATTERS ?

Making decisions in a timely way prevents project gridlock and saves you wasted time revisiting a blocker/ decision. Blockers that are dealt with in a timely fashion, decrease the risk of snowballing and blocking other activities.

Keeps implementation momentum; the project team feel supported when decisions are given focus and attention from senior leaders.

Build leadership endorsement of the project and encourage team members.



1 Use the [Stakeholder Influence Map](#) to pinpoint which executives may have sway over resistant teams; build relationships here.

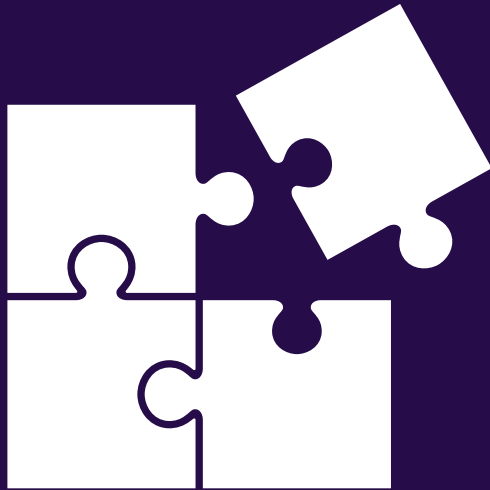
3 Use existing meeting forums and put "Decisions-First" on your agenda, making sure that the decision makers are in the room and have understood the decision needing to be made. Share the "Business Impact Snapshot" with the decision maker ahead of time.

TRY THIS INSTEAD

2 Prepare a "Business Impact Snapshot": convert blockers into financial/operational impacts (e.g., Merchandising delays = 15% lost sales impact in key trade event).

4 Create a simple "Unless Directed Otherwise" email template for time-sensitive approvals. Schedule a 20 minute "Unblock" Session to take leaders through your approach. e.g. "Unless advised otherwise, I propose moving the IT integration forward by X date. This avoids a 3-week delay in our rollout. Can we align on this by Friday?"

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02.

How can I translate technical challenges into language executives care about?

No matter who you're communicating with, you are always trying to find an analogy or metaphor that they can relate to. When talking to a builder about a challenge my lawyer friend had (being paid last), I said to him, "It's just like your subcontractors; you pay them first."

Try to find a way to make something that is relevant to the experience of your recipient. What are executives measuring? What are they focused on? If you can find an in where it's 'just like' something that they already understand it's easier to comprehend.

WHY IT MATTERS ?

Taking the time to translate your challenges and concerns into impact that makes sense to the recipient helps others to make the 'understanding leap' faster.

It builds cross-functional trust when people hear that you 'get' their part of the process (and so many processes are cross functional and in need of trust building)

We are all prone to slipping into the shorthand of jargon that we already understand. Taking the time to translate prevents people from feeling like they're being bamboozled with technical terms.

The more we can translate into relatable examples for each area the more likely we are to get informed and timely decisions.



1 Use the Department Impact Matrix to think through and show how technical decisions affect each area

1

3 Prepare "Impact Snapshots" that translate technical issues into business impact.
Use Analogies: Compare integration delays to "missing deliveries of goods to store during peak trade."

3

TRY THIS INSTEAD

2 Create a simple "Technical-to-Business Dictionary" for your specific project/ process area. Map to Retail KPIs: Tie technical issues to metrics that executives monitor (sales, margin, stock turnover, customer retention, AOV, etc.).

2

4 Leverage retail (or your industry) expertise and benchmarks to create relatable analogies for complex concepts.

Use competitor benchmarks: "Our competitor's omnichannel rollout reduced missed sales by 40% – we're at risk of falling behind."

4

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03.

What if line managers resist my project even with executive support?

Not getting support through the organisation can put you on the outer with the managers or team of those who are working on your project.

Building relationships and understanding the concerns of this cohort will help you solve problems without needing to escalate.

WHY IT MATTERS



Taking time out of the day to day to complete project efforts can put pressure on those who are picking up the slack whether they are colleagues or managers, getting closer to these challenges will help you develop plans to bridge the gap.

Developing relationships and listening to concerns where operational support is needed allows you to balance the plans, agree on trade offs, and reduce resistance and friction.

Always ALWAYS share credit by highlighting managers' contributions in executive/ status updates

Use your understanding project benefits to address specific departmental concerns



1 Look for motivations: understanding the motivations of others can help you discover what your managers value (e.g., autonomy, recognition).

Work to address their concerns and keep them abreast of the project's progress.

1

2 Co-create solutions: Invite them to problem-solving working sessions or as guests to project meetings using the "we need your expertise" framing. Don't just invite them; make sure you use their expertise once they get there.

2

3 Credit your sources: Highlight their contributions in executive updates and in conversations. Make sure that they know you value their contributions. Reference the source of ideas, work and effort. It's a decent thing to do and the right thing to do. Taking credit (even accidentally) for other people's work does not build trust, and without trust, you have no influence.

3

TRY THIS INSTEAD

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04.

How do I prove my project's value when execs only care about deadlines?

When executives focus solely on deadlines, it can be challenging to communicate the broader value your project delivers. This view often stems from the pressure executives face to deliver quick results and show progress to their stakeholders. However, deadlines alone don't tell the full story of a project's impact on the organisation's strategic goals and long-term success.

WHY IT MATTERS ?

Pro actively sharing progress and showing the momentum you are building in the project maintains project energy for the team and support from management and execs. Weekly project progress updates are essential for this.

Articulating the long term value of the project and alignment to the strategic goals of the organisation keep the project relevant to the objectives of the business.

Consistent updates build implementation confidence that this is under control and that someone has eyes on it



Track lead indicators: Focus on progress metrics that predict success
Create a Dashboard tracking key milestones and progress against them.

1

Link to Strategic/ Executive Goals:
Align to organisational focus tactic e.g.
"This integration supports the business' supply chain resilience strategy".

3

TRY THIS INSTEAD

Be mindful of your Industry specific dates & events:
Show timelines including key retail trading periods.
Use your retail calendar to align project milestones to compliment business cycles where possible.

2

Include quick/ small wins section in your regular project meetings and celebrate to keep team morale and remind everyone of the progress made.

4

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05.

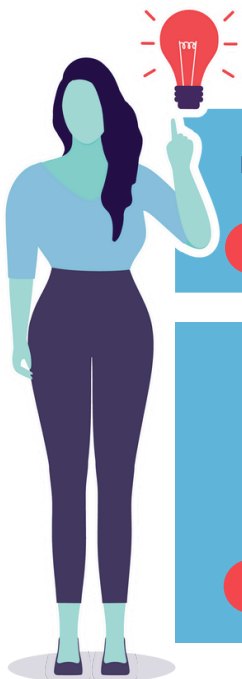
How do I influence different teams without formal authority?

As Brené Brown says, "If you want to influence others, you have to understand what's influencing them."

WHY IT MATTERS ?

Putting time and energy into understanding their challenges and difficulties builds empathy. Try to find a way to build in small early wins that help the teams you're working with and alongside.

Getting into the details of their process really helps - if you understand their challenges and difficulties, then you have a better appreciation of how to connect and how your project deliverables might help the teams you're working with.



1 DO pre-meeting research: Study their workflows e.g., IT's sprint cycles, Merchandising's buying calendar, finance payment cycles.

TRY THIS INSTEAD

2 Co-develop solutions: Consider the negotiation tactic: "If we adjust the timeline by X, can your team commit to Y?"

3 Ask Strategic and Open Questions: Use the open questions method (open questions start with What or How):

"What would make this integration easier for your team's workflow?"

"How might we reduce duplication in this process?"

"What can you do without making any system changes?"

"How can we achieve the best training outcome with so many people on leave?"

BONUS

30-MINUTE ACTION PLAN

1

Update the Stakeholder Map:

Add Influence Anchors for the current project.

2

Draft one Blocker Removal Email:

Use the "unless directed otherwise" approach.

3

Schedule one Peer Alignment Chat:

Focus on co-creating a solution.

SO THIS IS THE 'GOLDBLOCKS' ZONE THAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR 🕒

**THE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE
WITHOUT IRRITATING THEM IS THE MOST
PROFITABLE SKILL YOU CAN LEARN.**

~ Lisa Nichols

REFERENCES:

Adapted from HBR (2022, 2018), LinkedIn (2023), and MasterClass (2024) strategies, tailored for retail project leaders.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-influence-without-authority>

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<https://hbr.org/2022/03/5-ways-to-influence-up-in-the-workplace>