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Influencing people

Situation

PSF is an international company operating worldwide. It has recently started a new project which will introduce a single standardised software package across its organisation, replacing the different softwares used by countries at the moment. Rachel is the project leader with Lucas and Gabriella in her team, supported by Eric, who is an external consultant.

Lucas and Gabriella are working closely together on the project. In the past each region has managed its own software and the introduction of a common package is a new step bringing a lot of change. In the project, Lucas and Gabriella both represent their own geographical region. A pilot scheme is already running in Lucas's region. He wants to move the project forward and tries to influence Gabriella to start a second pilot project in her region as soon as possible.



Rachel



Lucas



Gabriella



Eric

A Introduction

DISCUSS

1 Look at the list of influencing techniques. Match the expressions in the box to the correct strategy.

I have absolutely no doubt that ... You know me very well, so ...
 The figures show that ... I'd like to tell you a little story. This would enable you to ...
 The best-case scenario is that we can ... It would be crazy not to do this now.
 My motivation for saying this is ... Believe me, this worked very well in my last project.

Influencing techniques	
Technique	Example phrases
Stress the benefits.	<i>The main benefit for you would be ...</i>
Cultivate trust.	<i>In my experience we should ...</i>
Be transparent.	<i>I've divided my explanation into two sections.</i>
Use logical arguments.	<i>The main reason behind my argument is ...</i>
Focus on the relationship.	<i>I totally understand your feelings.</i>
Be strong.	<i>There is absolutely no other solution.</i>
Look to the future.	<i>My vision is...</i>
Be confident.	<i>I am totally confident that...</i>
Show optimism.	<i>I'm very optimistic about this, because ...</i>

(Taken from *Communicating Internationally in English* by Bob Dignen, York Associates 2011)

VIEW (0.40–2.02)

Watch Bob talking about influencing across cultures.

- 1 Why does Bob say that influencing across cultures may be ‘particularly challenging’?
- 2 What advice does he give to those wanting to influence successfully?

REFLECT

- 1 How can you know which influencing style to use in which situation?
- 2 What other challenges do you think there are when trying to influence across cultures? What advice would you give to deal with them?
- 3 Which of the techniques on page 1 do you use to try to influence or persuade others?

B Discussing the second pilot: 1

DISCUSS

You are going to watch Lucas trying to persuade Gabriella to start a second pilot in her region. Which influencing strategies do you think would work best?

VIEW (2.03–3.32)

Now watch the conversation between Lucas and Gabriella.

- 1 How does Lucas try to persuade Gabriella? What arguments does he use?
- 2 How does Gabriella respond?

REFLECT

Why do you think Gabriella responds in the way she does?

C What happened?

DISCUSS

How do you think Lucas and Gabriella feel about the conversation you have just seen? How successful do you think Lucas was?

VIEW (3.33–4.11)

Now watch Bob’s summary of the conversation.

- 1 Does he think it went well?
- 2 What does he suggest Lucas and Gabriella think about it?

REFLECT

Think about how you might give feedback to Lucas on how to handle such a conversation more effectively in the future. What would you say to him about *what* to say and *how* to say it?

D Rachel gives Lucas some advice

VIEW (4.12–6.07)

Now watch Lucas talking to Rachel about his conversation with Gabriella.

- 1 What does Lucas think the problem is?
- 2 What does Rachel think the problem is?

REFLECT

How does Rachel’s feedback and advice compare to yours?

E What happened?

DISCUSS

What do you think are the most important learning points for communicating across cultures from this conversation?

VIEW (6.08–7.29)

Now watch Bob commenting on Rachel's advice to Lucas and note down the two learning points he identifies.

REFLECT

- 1 Bob talks about using 'push' and 'pull' styles of influencing. What do you think he means by this?
- 2 Which style do you think is more effective? Why?

F Discussing the second pilot: 2

VIEW (7.30–9.14)

Watch Lucas trying to influence Gabriella using a 'pull' approach.

- 1 How does Lucas get Gabriella's attention for his second attempt?
- 2 Listen and complete the questions below which he asks.
 - a I just want things to be moving along because I really believe in this project. I hope you
 - b So do you think
 - c So what do you think we can do to
 - d You're right. So how can we? Do you

G What do you think so far?

VIEW (9.15–9.50)

How does Bob assess Lucas's approach this time?

H Discussing the second pilot: 3

VIEW (9.51–10.53)

- 1 What does Gabriella agree to do?
- 2 What does Lucas offer to do in return?

I What happened this time?

VIEW & REFLECT (10.54–11.19)

How successful does Bob think Lucas is? Do you agree? Why? / Why not?

J Reflections

DISCUSS

What do you think Lucas has learned about influencing from his experiences with Gabriella?

VIEW (11.20–12.33)

Watch Lucas reflecting on his experience of trying to influence Gabriella and compare your ideas to his own learning points.

- 1 What does he say about 'pressure'?
- 2 What does he conclude might be a 'better way' of influencing?

K Conclusions

VIEW (12.34–13.48)

Watch Bob's closing summary and make a note of the final points he makes about 'push' and 'pull' styles of influencing.

'Pull' influencing	'Push' influencing

REFLECT

Bob suggests that his ideas on influencing skills may be 'challenging' for many professionals. Why do you think he says this? How far do you agree?

PRACTICE

You are going to role play a telephone call between an international project leader and a team member located in a different country. The team member calls the international project leader to discuss their participation in the project. Prepare for the call, using your role card.



Project team member

You want to have a six-week holiday at the end of the year (four weeks in December and two in January) to go on a round-the-world trip. There are several reasons. It has been a lifetime dream and two of your best friends are available to go with you at the end of this year – this opportunity may never happen again. Also, you have been working very hard in your organisation over the last three years, taking very little holiday. So you really feel that for your health it is the right time to take a break. Additionally, your local manager has informed you that you should use up your existing holiday entitlement in December (four weeks) or else the company will be forced to pay you as compensation. This will have a negative impact on your local manager's budget targets so you have been asked (informally) to take the holiday instead. You realise that it is not the right time regarding the project – the end of the year is a very busy time for the project.

You are going to call your project leader to discuss the topic of end-of-year holiday. You will need to have creative arguments to influence them successfully.

- Before the call, prepare what you will say to your project leader about this topic.
- During the call, make a note of the arguments which the project leader used which influenced / failed to influence you.
- After the call, discuss your notes and any things you learned from the role play about influencing.

Project team leader

You are very much under pressure at the moment. Your project sponsor wants to see results by the end of the year but you are understaffed and struggling to meet targets. You have heard from a colleague that many team members are unhappy with the levels of pressure in the project. You are sympathetic but for you this is the reality of working in an international project. You are currently negotiating end-of-year holiday with team members and so need to speak to all team members about their holiday plans. Ideally, no single team member will take more than three weeks as a maximum. You would prefer to set this as a rule which everyone follows, in order to be fair to all. But you are aware that some staff members have been working very hard and may ask for more time – some are very close to burn-out. You need to argue sensitively because there is a risk that some may simply ask to leave the project, creating very significant problems for you.

You are expecting a call from a team member to discuss the topic of end-of-year holiday. You will need to have creative arguments to influence them successfully.

- Before the call, prepare what you will say to your team member about this topic.
- During the call, make a note of the arguments which the team member used which influenced / failed to influence you.
- After the call, discuss your notes and any things you learned from the role play about influencing.