

## **Influencing Skills – Case Study**

### **“I know I am right” - How to influence people**

#### **Trainer Guidelines**

Issue your delegates with copies of the case study and ask them to discuss. They may discuss in pairs, triplets or small groups. Allow sufficient time, probably around fifteen minutes.

When they have discussed fully ask someone from each group to give the group opinion and encourage discussion. There are no right or wrong answers.

After discussion write the three stage model (see answer to case study) on the flip chart and explain how to use the model.

Issue delegates with a copy of the sheet (Answer to case study)

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#### **Delegate’s discussion document**

You work for small manufacturing company and you are a member of a team of two, you and Chris. You need to make a decision about whether or not to acquire a property for your company expansion programme. You are presently renting a property but Chris has seen a great opportunity to purchase a property for which you will need to borrow money and repay over twenty years at an appropriate rate of interest. Chris says he has done his homework and calculated that the company can afford to purchase the property and that even if interest rates increase it will be better to purchase now than to continue renting.

You have done your homework and although you are open to persuasion you are convinced that Chris is wrong and it will be a disastrous decision to purchase in the present economic climate. You are sure that if interest rates rise the company will not be able to afford repayments.

Chris however, is very persuasive. Whatever you say to him he insists that he has done his homework and he knows he is right. He gets excited and agitated when you disagree with him and he is willing to take this to the boss and make a big issue out of the situation. However you know that is not in the best interest of either of you and is not your desired method of solving this problem. You need agreement between you and Chris. The decision has to be agreed by you both, but Chris will not listen.

What should you do?

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#### **Answer to case study**

**Do not argue.** It is never helpful to argue with a difficult person. Consider the following model for dealing with difficult people like Chris:

1. Listen and understand
2. Summarise
3. Influence

## **Do not argue**

Never argue with a difficult person. It is a waste of time and exactly what many of these people enjoy. They are often adept at winning arguments.

### **1. Listen and understand**

It can take a great deal of self discipline to listen to another person when you are keen to talk. But if you do listen, you will increase the likelihood that they will then listen to you – and that you will be able to make your proposal in terms that they might find attractive. Genuinely listen to his or her point of view with a serious intention of understanding what they are trying to convey. You may learn something. Whenever someone who is difficult tells you that you are not listening, they are usually right. You are not listening you are arguing. Of course, the person is also arguing, but no one is making progress. Listen and get all of the facts. Make sure you understand. When involved in debate you will most probably have had someone tell you that you don't understand. Once again this will most probably be true because you have not fully listened. When someone says 'You don't understand' then don't argue. Simple say 'What don't I understand?' and then genuinely listen and try to understand what the person is saying and to appreciate his or her point of view. You will now be a much more informed person.

### **2. Summarise**

It is not enough to understand. You need to demonstrate that you have understood. Summarise what you have heard. As you summarise, you can emphasise the points that you are about to make. Now that you are informed you can prove to the other person that you do understand his or her point of view. Repeat back what you have heard and you will demonstrate your understanding.

### **3. Influence**

When the other person is happy with your summary, you can refer to something that supports your proposal, such as a point that has already been agreed, one of their priorities or another aspect of company policy. Now you can suggest (don't insist) on a solution that flows naturally from the points made at the previous stage. Suggesting, rather than insisting improves the chances of the other person's agreement. Listening often earns you the right to be listened to.