



Maximise Your Influence

I have always been fascinated with how successful leaders lead – how they exert their influence and power. How they create the strong emotional connection so that people willingly follow them and accept their advice.

Whilst at a senior manager with CPS I discovered NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), which in essence is the study of excellence. Key is the belief that if you can find someone excellent in their field if you can analyse what is the “difference that makes the difference” you can replicate their success.

As lawyers we are required to use our leadership skills on a daily basis when dealing with clients, colleagues etc.

Do you think of yourself as a leader?

The old fashioned command and control approach to leadership (adopted by many law firms) is not effective long term especially with a younger generation. That approach does little to empower or motivate staff and can make lawyers frightened of making key decisions with a negative impact on client care.

Not long ago I undertook a NLP study of a range of people including lawyers in an attempt to define their strategies when influencing others. It provided a useful insight surprising to me at the time was their use of “battle” language.

Below is a summary of what they had to say:

1. Have a clear vision and outcome in mind. Look to the long term rather than to short-term gain. Plan your campaign.
2. Step into the other person’s shoes - find out what the other person’s needs are and look to satisfy them. Fight only those battles that are necessary and essential. Keep your powder dry. Never die in a ditch over anything however much you desire it
3. Gain commitment and inspire others so they will fight any future battles by your side. Know your facts, consult and ask questions of your allies and even of your enemies. Never take an enemy by surprise allow him time to prepare.
4. Build rapport. Be aware of your energy and the effect you have on others.

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5. Talk in stories and metaphors paint a compelling picture of the future. Behave "As if". Expect others to be influenced by you.
6. Be flexible allow yourself to change your mind. When you have persuaded someone think not that I have won but common sense and logic have prevailed. Value the differences in people do not attempt to make everybody in your mould walking and talking as you do.

So how can you adopt the success strategies of effective influencers and leaders?

How do you ensure that your client understands and remembers your advice?

Lawyers can tend to concentrate purely on the facts. To enable clients to truly understand your advice you need to include examples or case studies (metaphors) so that the alternative options come alive.

Put simply we are meaning making machines. If we don't understand something our mind searches for something we have encountered previously to make sense of the new information. Ever tried explaining a legal concept to a client only to be met with a blank stare? Give an example and see their face change!!

If I wanted to explain electricity to you I could give you masses of technical detail or I could ask you to think of a river. To stop the current flowing I dam the river – to enable it to flow again I unblock the dam. Did you see the river in your minds eye?

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