COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION   GUIDANCE NOTE No 7

INFLUENCING

"The key to successful leadership is influence, not authority."

Kenneth Blanchard

Successful leaders exert influence over others. In part, this is about gaining the interest and attention of others but the key to long-term leadership success is the "others'" experience of being influenced. Dictators, for example, can be highly influential but their influence is experienced as largely negative and is usually only effective in the short term.

Albert Schweitzer said; "*Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.*" Leaders in public service lead by consent, and power is often rooted in expertise, evident experience and the ability to connect personally with those they lead. In an organizational culture, such as the fire and rescue service, where there are traditions of compliance, it is possible to enforce a change of direction through the use of "position power" (i.e. rank). But compliance is the best that can be hoped for under such an approach.

Where a leader is trying to bring about a fundamental shift in purpose and values as well as organizational direction, compliance is not enough. To re-orient the Department's sense of purpose from response to risk reduction, and for it to be successful and sustainable, something more is needed. Further, where a leader needs to gain support and funding for an initiative, the skills of influence will include persuasion, advocacy and, frequently, passion.

Part of the human brain is extremely well-tuned to detect the false note in words and actions, but over time we learn to rationalize the emotional response and moderate our reaction. Nevertheless, even at the sub-conscious level, we tend to know when someone is insincere in what they say. Human communication consists of three basic elements, each of which has a different amount of influence on the listener (see Box 1 below)

WORDS	what is said	**7%**
MUSIC	pace, pitch, tone	**38%**
DANCE	body/facial language	**55%**

All 3 in harmony	=	Conviction
Out of harmony	=	Doubt, Disbelief

Box 1   The Relative Influence in Communications

STYLES OF INFLUENCE

One helpful model is "Push-Pull" and it is a useful guide to choosing the most appropriate influencing style in any given situation;

Energy	Influence Mode	Influence Technique
Push	Persuading	Proposing, reasoning, logical argument
Push	Asserting	Stating expectations, giving feedback, outlining positive and negative consequences
Pull	Empathising	Asking questions, listening actively, disclosure
Pull	Collaborating	Finding common ground, sharing aspirations

In one-on-one interactions, research shows that "pull" style influence is much more effective and likely to lead to sustainable change in behaviour. However, when seeking public or political support for a position you may find yourself operating more in the "push" style. The next time you see or hear a public figure taking a position, think about what style they are using and the effect it is having on you. Consider also how the different domains in the Acuity model might affect the influence mode you adopt.

ADVOCACY

As leaders in the fire and rescue service seeking to make fundamental change to your Departments, you need to be an advocate for the change you want to see. Everything you say and do – even the way you walk in to a room – will be minutely observed and scrutinised. Here are some simple tips for persuading;

1. Know Your Audience	what is important to them, their main concerns about your issue, how your issue benefit them; do some research into where their thinking might be.
2. Prepare	know the three key points you want to make, work out what people might ask and have answers ready, practice and get fluent.
3. Clarity	make it clear what you're doing at the outset ("I'm here to tell you about an exciting way of making our people safer") and make it clear too that you're there to listen as well as speak.
4. Pay Attention	watch carefully for reactions to your points. How are people reacting, are they engaged and asking questions?

Language is critical. Using grand concepts and high-flown language alienates the listener. They stop paying attention to the substance of what you're saying and focus instead on why you're trying so hard to prove how smart you are. Use language and concepts that are familiar to the audience, but not in such a way as to sound patronising. Culture change and behavioural change happens by degrees and can be a fragile thing. Rooting the language of change in the language of the existing culture helps. For example, one Chief in the UK discovered in conversation that firefighters felt the word "professional" best described how they felt about their work. "Professional" now became the word used to describe the new role of the firefighter as an advocate of community risk as well as an operational responder.

Whatever style you use, above all it has to sound like you; authentic, believable and consistent. And remember the power of the human brain to detect the false note!