

# Influencing Without AUTHORITY

By Lee E. Miller



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**DURING THE SIEGE OF TOULON**, a young French officer needed to man an artillery position that was so vulnerable that the soldiers handling the guns had little chance of surviving. So dangerous was the assignment that the officer's superiors feared his men would refuse to follow an order to take up that position. Instead of invoking his authority to order his men to staff the battery, he chose to place a sign at the fortification that read: "The Battery of the Men without Fear." Rather than seeking to avoid this dangerous duty, the men in his platoon fought for the honor of manning that post. The young officer who instinctively knew that a leader could better motivate people by appealing to what they care about than through the exercise of authority was Napoleon, who went on to become Emperor of France and conquered most of Europe.

It is relatively easy to get people to do what you want when you are their boss. Because of your position, your authority, your ability to reward them through salary increases, bonuses and promotions, the people who work for you will usually do what you ask them to do, although they may not do so enthusiastically. What if you are not the boss though? Say you need information from a peer in another department in order to complete an analysis that is due next week or you are seeking to get a client to pay an outstanding bill that he is upset about? How do you influence people when you have no authority over them? This is where what we refer to as the "U Perspective" comes into play.

The U Perspective allows you to use what other people care about to motivate them. Most people simply assume that everyone sees the world the way they do. Even when we recognise that someone else may see a situation differently than we do, our first instinct usually is to try to persuade them to see things our way. The U Perspective takes the opposite approach. Its effectiveness is not rooted in the ability to convince others to change their views or adopt different values. Instead, its power comes from recognising what others already believe and want. The U Perspective allows you to get what you want by working with another person's

belief system, not challenging it. To influence someone without authority, you need to discover what is important to person you are trying to influence. You need to learn to see things through their eyes. Once you understand how they see a situation, you have the ability to construct and present options in a way that more effectively influences what they do.

Understanding someone's U Perspective means being able to predict what they will do because they are who they are - given how they have behaved in the past and how they see the situation facing them. Of course, money can be used to get people to do things. Sometimes however, you don't have enough money or the exchange of money would not be appropriate. At other times, money simply is not the best way to motivate someone.

People are motivated by many things other than money. Recognition, friendship, a shared purpose, status, time, ease, helping others, fairness, teamwork, family and challenges are all



values that you can appeal to when you seek to gain someone's help or support. Even a desire for fame can be a motivator for some people. What motivates each of us is different depending on the situation and the other people involved. Showing how what you want helps further what the people whose help you need care about makes it easy to gain their support.

The following story illustrates how understanding someone's U Perspective can get them to willingly do what you want. A fast food restaurant chain wanted a well-known entertainer to do a promotion for them. The entertainer was already well-established and did not need the publicity. To entice him to work for them the chain offered him a large sum of money. He declined. The chain then offered him an even larger sum of money. Once again he turned them down. Finally someone did a little research to find out what else might entice the entertainer since money didn't seem to be doing the trick. What they discovered was that the singer, who had grown up poor, felt that being identified with a fast food chain would damage the image he had worked so hard to cultivate for himself. They also found out that this entertainer was very involved with a certain charity.

So rather than just offering him more money they restructured their offer to appeal to his U Perspective. For every one of his CDs they gave away as part of the promotion, the company agreed to donate a certain amount of money to the entertainer's favourite charity. By treating the promotion as an opportunity for the entertainer to benefit a worthwhile cause, the company was able to remove any issue he otherwise might have about working for a fast food chain. By allowing his efforts to be viewed as on behalf of a charitable cause he supported, the

offer was consistent with how he saw himself and the image he wanted to portray to the world. He readily accepted it.

Generally, we assume that people who view a situation differently than we do simply do not have as much, or as accurate, information as we have. We believe, therefore, that if only we provide more information or explain our position more clearly, we can change their mind. More often than not they see the situation differently because they have had different life experiences and different training. No amount of additional information will negate how those experiences impact upon how someone evaluates a situation. Training also has a bearing on how we see the world. Engineers tend to look at things differently than do salespeople. Both tend to see things differently than accountants. Taking advantage of the U Perspective also requires getting past our assumption that we know what motivates others - i.e. the same things that motivate us.

Understanding someone's U Perspective will instruct you as to what you need to do to gain their support. Perhaps you can appeal to friendship in the case of someone with whom you have a good working relationship. Alternatively, the offer of future assistance may suffice with a person that you have helped in the past and who may need your help in the future. A suggestion that you will recognise, by way of an e-mail to their boss, the importance of their contribution to a project or the fear of a similar e-mail from your boss to theirs detailing a lack of support might be enough to carry the day. Influencing without authority starts with understanding all the possible ways you might invoke the things the person you are seeking to influence cares about.

When Lisa Caputo, now an executive at Citigroup, was Press Secretary for then First Lady Hillary Clinton, she appealed to the values of the journalists covering the White House to convince them to respect Chelsea Clinton's privacy. In early 1993, Mike Myers did a skit on Saturday Night Live making fun of Chelsea who was only thirteen years old at the time. Lisa contacted NBC, but rather than trying to threaten or bully them, she appealed to their U Perspective as parents, "Chelsea is just a kid," she said. "She did not run for office. She deserves as normal a childhood as possible under the circumstances. That is what you would want for your children, wouldn't you?" Although this issue arose periodically throughout the Clinton Presidency, by and large, this appeal to their values as parents and as decent human beings worked with the members of the press. As for Mike Myers, he sent a letter apology and the network basically left Chelsea alone throughout the remainder of the Clintons' years in the White House.

Once you discover someone's U Perspective, influencing that person's behaviour is a fairly straightforward matter. Unleashing the power of the U Perspective does not require that you share someone else's values, only that you recognize them and take them into account. Fortunately, you don't need to do so in order to affect their behaviour. What you may need to vary is your approach, depending on what is important to each person under the circumstance; that is the only part of the influencing equation that you have total control over.

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Lee E. Miller will be giving a two day seminar in Singapore on Influencing and Negotiating in March 28-29 2008. For more information please contact Flame Communications by calling 6259 3193 or by e-mailing info@flamecomms.com.

