



Increase Your Influence

Make leading from anywhere your goal for this year

What can make a big difference for you in 2015 and beyond? I'm sure you've looked at all of the major deliverables for you and your operation. Certainly your recruiting goals, risk premium targets, and wealth deposits as well as the overall profitability of your operation all made the cut. But what about your leadership capabilities?

When I speak of "leadership capabilities," I'm referring specifically to something I call *leading from anywhere*. This doesn't mean jetting south and running your business from your mobile phone, although you may wish to try that every once in a while. What I'm really talking about is leading regardless of your title, position, authority or tenure. To my mind, leadership is the art of influencing human behaviour.

Whether you are the head of your agency or the newest manager on your team, you have a duty to lead, and that leadership doesn't just apply to the people who report to you. You need to know how to frame and position ideas for maximum effect for multiple audiences. Your team, peers, boss and other stakeholders all need to be "led" from time to time. Understanding what makes these individuals tick and how you can solve their problems — as well as your own — can increase your influence. You also stand a greater chance of achieving your objectives.

Take a broad view of your organization and how you fit inside of it. *The Art of Possibility* by Ben Zander provides a number of excellent examples of what I mean. In one section, he describes an orchestra and tells us about the third violin part. Often there are many violins, so why

would someone playing only a few notes in any one piece of music need to practice or care?

Zander notes that true leaders, even those who only play a small part, work to make the biggest possible impact. Leaders lead from their respective chairs. In the case of the third violinist, the piece of music may be an opportunity for the individual to shine; or it might be just another performance. True leaders approach every opportunity with passion and dedication en route to an extraordinary outcome. When you have an entire orchestra leading themselves and leading others in this way, the outcome is usually incredible.

What about your ability to influence? Are you able to influence? This skill plays a key role in determining the success of your team. You may have the best idea, the right strategy, a great tactic, but it may not be your call. Your opportunity is to ensure you are setting the stage for your team to win.

Ask yourself, are you booking time with the decision makers and sharing your ideas with them so that it will be easier to get the whole team aligned? Are you worried about someone "stealing" your ideas or getting all of the glory? Your ability to put your ego aside for the betterment of the entire team, agency and office will be the secret to your success. If this was easy, everyone would do it. It isn't. It takes this next element to really execute on this idea.

To lead from anywhere, you need to have courage. This is often written about from the courageous "hero" perspective. While that is important, courage requires a consistent, never-give-up mentality. Courage is about a willingness to act boldly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal or disagreement, knowing

that the consequences could be significant. Courage is a mindset you can develop. I suspect many of you are already well on your way.

Courage is an area where you can really change your level of influence with your audience. Please note this is not about blindly railing against the rules, or tackling every single issue with reckless abandon; it's about taking 30 seconds to reflect before weighing in on something. You think it through, assess, and run it through your filter, at which point you might decide to act. Remember: doing *nothing* is also a decision, and even that can take courage. If a top advisor or another manager is asking you to do something that runs against your values, or against the company's guidelines, you'll need just as much courage as you will in any other scenario.

Leading from anywhere also requires credibility. Credibility is directly impacted by a well thought out and clearly articulated set of values that you live by. It's difficult to influence others without a definite sense of what you stand for.

Try this exercise. Book a 30-minute meeting with yourself. On a blank sheet of paper (or in a new document on your tablet or PC), write down all the words that come to mind as you think about what you stand for. If money is a driver, write it down. If your kids are the reason you go to work every day, write *that* down. Words like *challenge*, *freedom* and *competition* may emerge, as may words like *love*, *respect* and *service*.

Once you have your list, pare it down to five words. The words in your "short-list" are your core values — the elements, if you will, that get to the very heart of who you are and what you stand for. Now ask yourself this question: If someone on your team found a sheet of paper containing these "core words," without your name anywhere on the page, would they be able to recognize the words as *your* core values? If you can answer "yes" to this question, then you are well on your way. As Roy E. Disney (nephew of Walt) once said, "When your values are clear to you, making decisions is easier." 

ROB POPAZZI, CLU, CHS, is the president of GAMA International Canada, a conference of Advocis that provides professional development and networking opportunities for leaders in the financial services industry. He can be reached at Rob.Popazzi@sunlife.com or on LinkedIn.