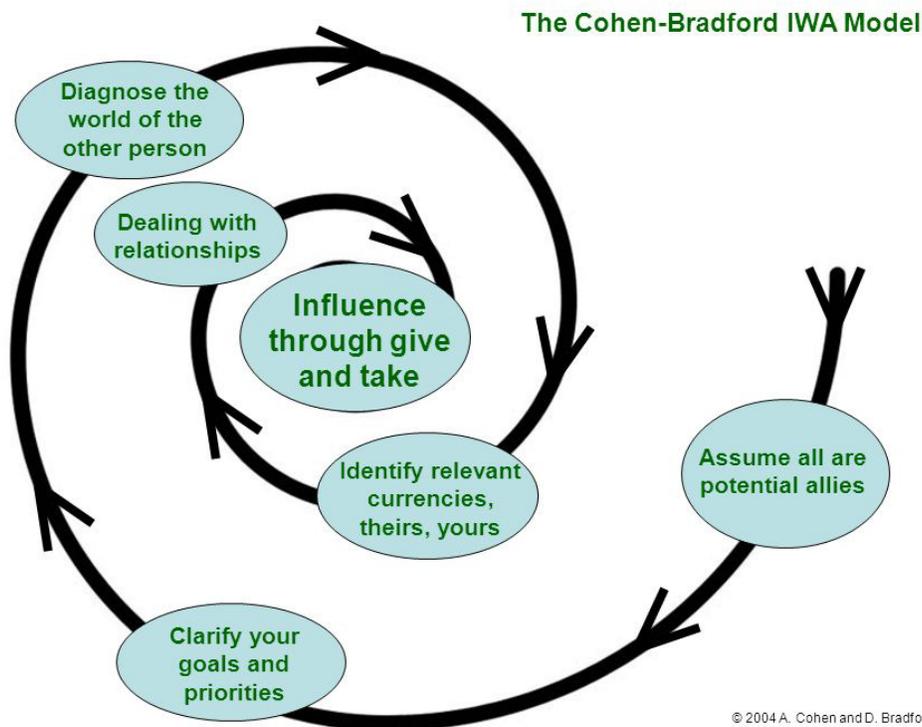


Influence without authority

Many project professionals find themselves in a position where they need to influence the decisions or actions of others but lack the authority to impose an outcome. The ability to influence others is particularly important when managing teams in a matrix organisation or if you are working as a consultant or expert advising line management or project management.

The *PMBOK® Guide* includes the skill of influencing in its list of key interpersonal skills, this post is aimed at suggesting some practical options to build and use influence to benefit the project.

One of the 'standard' references defining the problem and offering practical solutions is ***Influence without Authority*** (2nd Edition) by Allan Cohen and David Bradford¹. This book introduces the Cohen-Bradford IWA Model that describes how to influence others through a "give and take" exchange. The model consists of six steps pictured as an inward spiral, starting at the outside with 'Assume all are potential allies'. Then moves inward with 'Clarify your goals and priorities', 'Diagnose the world of the other person', 'Identify relevant currencies, theirs and yours', 'Dealing with relationships', and finally at the centre 'Influence through give and take'.



This model is trading paradigm based on creating something of value to 'trade' and then obtaining the best return from your investment. It is a subtly different approach to WIFM.

¹ For more on the book see:

<https://www.wiley.com/en-au/Influence+Without+Authority%2C+2nd+Edition-p-9780471463306>

WIFM (What's in it For Me) focuses on finding a value proposition that provides a direct benefit to the stakeholder you want help from - if they help you achieve your project outcomes, they benefit from the success. WIFM is effective in situations where a senior stakeholder (eg, the sponsor) can directly benefit from helping you succeed, or where you and several peers or colleagues can benefit from a decision and combine resources to persuade the decision maker.

IWA (Influencing Without Authority) is more effective when there is no direct benefit for the stakeholder you need the help from and is based on 'trading favours' within your network of influence and as a consequence increasing the power of this network². We all intuitively understand the give and take in a transaction for small things, such as sharing the effort to pick up the morning coffee. However, for larger, more complex transactions we need to be more methodical and think through our process, goals and interests, those of our allies and those of the stakeholders we need to influence.

Effective project managers know they get work done by working well within their peer network. If someone does something for the project manager, there's a good chance the project manager will do something for them in return. It's a two way trade that benefits everyone. But even so, influencing without authority isn't an easy task.

The key to IWA is creating and banking various forms of 'organisational currency' in advance of the time you need to use them.

Organizational Currencies	Sample Questions
Position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement • Recognition • Visibility • Networking 	<p>How can you acknowledge and recognize a team member's efforts to senior management?</p> <p>Are there opportunities to help them to network with others in the organization?</p> <p>How can you improve their position or perception within the organization?</p>
Task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources • Assistance • Cooperation • Information 	<p>How can you provide personal assistance or support to help the team member meet her own needs?</p> <p>How can your own knowledge or expertise to help solve their problem?</p>
Inspiration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Excellence • Ethics 	<p>How can you appeal to the team member's interest in furthering the company's vision and demonstrate excellence?</p>
Relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Personal Support • Understanding 	<p>What is the relationship you have with the person?</p> <p>Do you have a genuine friendship and provide support and understanding outside of work meetings?</p>
Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge • Ownership • Gratitude 	<p>How can you appeal to the team member's personal goals to improve their skill set?</p> <p>How will the task provide them the opportunity to own, lead or influence the end result?</p>

² For more on **power and authority** see: https://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1095_Understanding_Power_Authority.pdf



As demonstrated in the table above, organisational currency comes in many formats; a few more options include:

- The ability to highlight and 'publicise' good performance, maybe in a newsletter;
- The ability to make useful connections for the person within your network;
- Providing useful or valuable information to the stakeholder (the power of information is increased by sharing);
- Simply developing a good relationship which both people value;
- Providing help or assistance needed by the other person;
- Supporting people's aspirations by listening carefully to hear what's expressed then supporting or allow the person to achieve their aspiration,
- use agreed upon nicknames
- provide 'time out' for other interests or commitments
- recognise achievements
- Offering other forms of personal support such as coaching or mentoring; when needed.

You need to invest your time and effort to earn organizational currency with your stakeholders before you can 'spend the currency'. Time isn't a luxury many project managers can afford, but investing in relationship-building will ultimately help you be more productive and generate quicker consensus with project team members, peers in the organisation and senior managers.

The two keys to success in this process are first recognising give comes before take in 'give-and-take', and second, making sure what you 'give' is of value to the person you are engaging with in 'their world'. To trade successfully you need to understand what is important or useful to them. Once you have your 'currency', you then need to be able to influence others in person, for more on this see: *How to influence others*³.

IWA is a proactive process; remember the best time to influence a decision is before it's made!!!!!!.

³ *How to influence others*, see:

https://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Mag_Articles/SA1052_How_to_influence_others.pdf



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