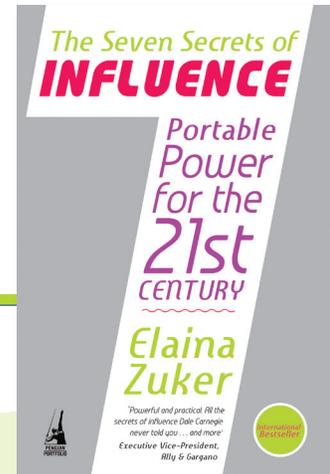


# DEFINITIONS OF INFLUENCE REPORT

# SPECIAL REPORT ON INFLUENCE

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After teaching and writing about Influence for many years, we have asked many of our clients and participants in our seminars how they define “Influence”. And we have also surveyed executives and professionals during the constant updates of the book *The Seven Secrets of Influence*. Of course we have received many insightful, thoughtful and sometimes creative twists and angles on the definition.

We finally took it to the members of many professional Training and Consulting Groups on LinkedIn. Following are the results from them, which I hope you’ll find interesting and thought-provoking.

We’ve also included our definition of Influence, and some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding the concept.

## **LinkedIn** Definitions of Influence from LinkedIn Group Members

A few weeks ago, my question “What is Your Definition of Influence?” received a total of 81 responses from LinkedIn groups.

### **My great thanks for the 81 responses:**

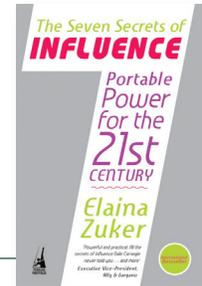
- 19:** from Cross Cultural Training
- 31:** from Learning, Education & Training
- 4:** ASTD
- 3:** Women 2.0
- 3:** Women of Vistage
- 5:** Marketing Consultants
- 16:** other assorted groups

### **They seemed to fall into three major categories:**

- 1:** Influence definitions and effects
- 2:** Discussion of difference between positive influence and negative influence/manipulation
- 3:** The importance of listening, empathy, “reading the other” as an important component of influence

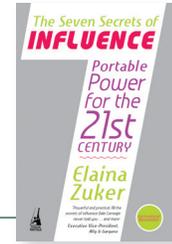
The following are the comments we received in each of the three categories ►

# 1: Influence – What It Is and What Effects It Can Have



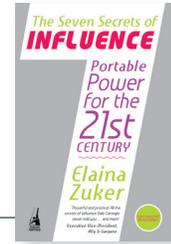
- Opening another's mind to different possibilities and expanding their potential.
- We could say influence is anything that brings about a change in our actions or thoughts. Influence is what drives one's senses to do what otherwise may not be possible...
- In a marketing sense: to affect someone else's or a group's thoughts, feelings, and behavior such that they conform to your end goal for better or worse. The act of influencing can be open and direct, or subtle and indirect or subconscious.
- Influence is the art of facilitating new personal, group, or universal meaning through persuasion, questioning, or perturbation.
- Influence is the ability to put a complex concept into simple words. This in turn, makes it easy for the masses to understand.
- If I have influence, I have created between myself and another 1) a commonality, 2) a sense of knowledge or expertise, 3) a vision or worth, 4) a change in perception, 5) a desire to make different choices, and perhaps 6) a change in behavior based on those different choices.
- Influence: Having an effect on the outcome.
- Life is influence. Everything we do (and don't do) leaves an impression. Sometimes it's a small one, sometimes it's a big one — make no mistake every action has a reaction: that's influence to me.
- I understand influence as the ability to persuade others (rather than force or coerce) to think and/or act in a certain way.
- Influence is the ability to cause desirable and measurable actions and outcomes.
- The first thing that came to my mind when I read the question was, influence is the ability of a person to indirectly help or cause another person to make a decision or take an action.
- It is making people WANT to do what YOU want them to do
- Influence involves the subtle persuasion of others to do, act or say what another wants them to do with little to no coercion. The ability to motivate others to do as you would based on their trust and belief in you.

# 1: Influence – What It Is and What Effects It Can Have, *continued*



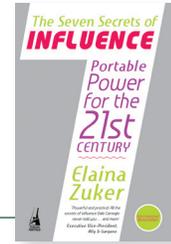
- Influence is the effect that an individual or object has over another individual, group or object. Example: in a group of individuals you have a variety of personalities positive, negative, leaders, followers, thinkers, and action drivers... All of them affect the way the group in one way or another some more than the others but everyone of them in fact influence the group based on their abilities and personalities
- The thought leaders, both formal and informal, in a particular group, wield influence. Those with influence are sought out, listened to, and create trust and intellectual intimacy among those they influence. The power of persuasion used to influence another's thoughts or actions
- It can be someone's presence, character, attitude, that can affect someone and cause a change in another person's way of thinking or action.
- The power or presence of a product, company or person that prompts others to gravitate towards it/him/her.
- Change without positional power
- How much impact you've created in the lives of others
- To influence is to make a person "see" the reasons to make a decision on the conscious and/or unconscious level.
- To make people do what you want them to do is one kind of influence. The influencer has a clear goal to narrow the range of options for the person being influenced
- My definition of influence is any thing that has the power to change the course of direction in any area of thought. Influence is the ability to get a person to do something willingly because you want it done
- Influence as I understand is different than traditional ways. When one person's opinion overrides the mind-set of the other individual and other individual or group's thinking moves in the desired direction.
- Influence for me is an ability of being able to direct the thoughts of people in the direction you want them to think. And secondly Influence is the ability of being able to get people to do what you want them to without coercion and use of authority
- Influence is what you are doing now. You have influenced so many people to answer your question, made us make a move, take an action, think about the subject.
- Causing cognitive and behavioral change from others that supports or reinforces your interests.

# 1: Influence – What It Is and What Effects It Can Have, *continued*



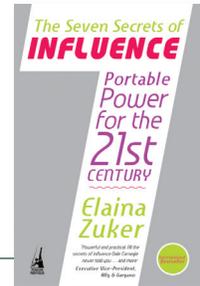
- Influence is wide and limitless. There are many levels of influence. We don't notice most forms of influence.
- Scott Berkun gave a good definition and explanation in "Making Things Happen". He wrote: Influence is..."the ability to persuade others, which may not be related to their knowledge of the issue in question. A combination of communication skill, confidence, awareness, and talents of observation contributes to be influential. Influence may be fueled by respect people have for your knowledge, or because they trust you, or even simply because they think you're attractive, smart, or interesting. Influence can also develop as a result of a debt: someone may owe you a favor, and influence on a decision is a way to help pay it back.
- Influence is the ability to alter the thinking patterns of others.
- The change in thinking pattern may lead to a change in actions/perceptions
- A form of persuasion to affect cognitive and behavioral shifts, which over time may impact others' attitudes, with a desired outcome that corresponds with your interests
- One interpretation of the origin of the word is from Latin 'influere' meaning 'to flow' – which I find a very apt analogy when thinking of the flow of social influence through a network
- Influence is an effect on any subject by other subject. It can be physical or meta-physical, tangent or non-tangent
- I'd say that a great definition of "influence" is the ability to generate unquestioned trust from others
- Influence is having an effect, intentional or unintentional on those around you. Asking a question can influence how someone thinks about something. Being present as a manager can influence what goes on with a team.
- To influence is to have impact in one way or another
- "affecting another's thoughts, decisions or actions through one's own conscious or unconscious behavior"
- Influence is the essence of Leadership
- invisible power

# 1: Influence – What It Is and What Effects It Can Have, *continued*



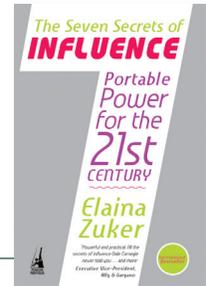
- Influence is the ability to empower and initiate change. We all have our circle of influence and the greater our ability to lead the wider the circle of influence
- Wonderful contributions, influencing me to think differently around an upcoming engagement (with someone who struggles with people from other cultures).
- I know you cannot train someone who does not want to be trained. However, I — and the client organization — hope to influence this person. It's an unusual assignment, and I have been thinking about it a lot.
- any way a person, group of people, a Nation change their point of view, behavior, target...
- the flow of something into something else ... for example the influence of Chinese in the development of modern Japanese ... Chinese flowed into Japanese. seems to fit with “in ... flow- ence”
- You are already influencing me by using such a powerful word. I could have chosen to read another discussion, but obviously I “wanted” to know how key words could dictate my behavior and choice. A definition would be including a positive “manipulation”... a subtle one of course!

## 2: Is Influence Positive or Negative? When is it Manipulation?



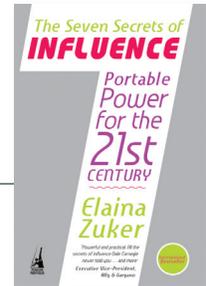
- When I'm teaching the use of influence, I characterize it as the opposite of control. When we attempt to control someone, we lose influence. When we let go of control, we gain influence.
- Control is a direct strategy to get a desired outcome. Influence is an indirect strategy toward the same ends. Control leaves a residue of negative after effects because we don't like to be controlled or appeared controlled in front of peers. Influence leaves lasting positive effects because we feel trusted, understood and valued by someone using their influence on us.
- Your very presence can influence another without any spoken word(s). Meaning what you bring to the table (behavior, attitude, etc) can influence another. From my perspective influence is positive in nature. I often teach that the skills you use for manipulation and influence are the same. The only difference is your intent. When you are manipulating someone, you are trying to get your way without concern for how it impacts the other person. When you are influencing someone, you are trying to arrive a positive conclusion that will be beneficial for everyone.
- Influence for me has two connotations; 1) positive, 2) slightly more passive than autocratic directive — which is usually more of a top-down 'decision' — whereas influence can be bottom-up! A definition statement may be: "encouragement to suggest or recommend a certain course of action/option or decision be taken". Re-influencing someone to perhaps make a decision, the more passive aspect of influence may mean that the 'encouragement' is simply to believe in your skills/experience and pick one of several options available.
- Influencing has the meaning of changing something — their minds, their actions, and their behavior. Influencing is very close to manipulation if you go with the definition of getting someone to do what you want them to do. I think it is not possible to influence someone to do something that they wouldn't do. So influencing is more like reminding.
- Influence is the ability to affect a course of action whether intended or otherwise with actor feeling satisfied. When you influence someone he/she is proud of the association with you but when you control them, even if they do your bid, they feel the 'victim' and would do other wise at the earliest opportunity
- It can be due to a conscious manipulation or unconscious. Depending on the culture and personality, the word "Influence" has a positive or negative connotation.
- Influence is not positive or negative but rather what you do with that influence. You can influence people through manipulation or by being nice to them. You can influence others by exerting your power or refraining from using it.

### 3: Reading the “Other” — importance of Empathy and Listening



- We’re using influence when we listen and respond — after asking insightful questions. We’re influential when we use tactics to de-escalate adversarial contexts, make collaboration more likely or set others up to succeed.
- Because every interaction is so important, the first aim should be empathy — understanding the other at an emotional, personal, cultural level. Without that, we are looking for organizational or hierarchical influence factors like obliging people to do things through power and authority. But in the end that sort of power can only achieve compliance, not real commitment.
- Influence — the ability to read a room, people and/or a situation and affect a shift in perception. Getting someone to see a situation through a different lens and understand how that new lens can be a personal or professional value added
- The post about empathy really spoke to me. I will try to remain unattached to the outcome, i.e. influencing this person.

# Our Working Definition of Influence



Finally, here is the definition we use — derived from Webster's, with a little embellishment of our own.

## Influence Defined

**The power to affect others, seen only in its effect, without exertion of force or formal authority.**

Archaic definition: the supposed flowing of an ethereal power or fluid from the stars, thought to have a magical effect on the actions and character of people.

While Influence may seem to be magical, like all good magic it requires a lot of skill and practice. When done artfully, it looks effortless.

## Some Myths About Influence

Many people believe that the ability to influence others is simply a matter of good communications skills. Not so. Communications skills are only one part of the equation in getting other people to do what you want them to do. To achieve enthusiastic cooperation and consistent high performance, successful influencers use a carefully orchestrated, strategic approach.

Some people think that “real” managers do not need influence skills.” After all, the manager can demand that the staff carry out instructions. Wrong again. Today’s employees are less likely to mindlessly obey the old style, “top-down” kind of management.

Finally, the word “influence” is often maligned, especially in government, and thought to connote manipulation. Is there a difference, or is the use of “influence” just another way of saying “manipulation”?

A way to distinguish between the two is that while “manipulation”, strictly speaking, means “skillful handling” an interaction can be said to be a positive influence when the influencer has the intention to provide value, ad benefit or enhance the experience of the other person. It can be called “manipulation” if there is an intention to exploit or mislead the other, or to misrepresent the product or service. Positive influence has as its result a “win-win” outcome. Both parties in the transaction reach their goals and sometimes even exceed them.

**And now, we’d like to hear from YOU. What is your definition of Influence; its pros and cons, and when and how have you used it? When have you experienced Influence being used on you?**

Please write to us at [ez4u@ezinfluence.com](mailto:ez4u@ezinfluence.com) or visit our website at [www.ezinfluence.com](http://www.ezinfluence.com) to learn more about our many products and services.

## About the Author

### Elaina Zuker

A seasoned business woman, educator, writer, and consultant, Ms. Zuker has held management positions in publishing, higher education, manufacturing and communications.

Ms. Zuker has developed curricula and educational/training materials and conducts seminars in the U.S. and internationally. Programs she has designed and implemented include: Management, Leadership, Productivity, Quality Circles, Interpersonal Communication, Assertiveness, Influence Skills, Negotiation Skills, Selling Skills, Staff Consulting Skills, Business Writing, Time Management, Career Development, Women in Management, and Values and Ethics.

Her original, flagship program, *Secrets of Influence*®, has been conducted via licensed trainers and representatives all over the U.S. and Canada.

Her bestselling book, *The Seven Secrets of Influence* (McGraw-Hill), a Main Selection for the Business Week Book Club, has been translated into four languages and has just been published by Penguin India. This is her 6th book; other titles are on the subjects of Management, Personal Development and Rapport.

Ms. Zuker's consulting clients include: Avon Products, American Express, American Management Association, Chase Manhattan Bank, Chiron Corporation, Citibank, IBM, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, MCI, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, Sheraton Corporation, Syntex Pharmaceuticals and many other Fortune 500 Companies.

She holds a B.S. in Psychology (Empire State College, NY), B. Commerce (Sir George Williams University, Montreal) and an M.S. in Organizational Behavior/Management (NY Polytechnic Institute). She has served on the Faculties of Montclair State College (Division of Business), Mercy College, Pace University and Marymount College. She recently was honored by her alma mater, New York Polytechnic University, with the Alumni Achievement Award, for her outstanding accomplishments in business, education, and entrepreneurship.