

'Push Me Pull You' Approaches to Influencing and Persuading

There are many different styles of influencing and it is important to recognise which styles will work for different situations.

Two different styles are:

1. Push

2. Pull

Push Styles

Push is more about moving or forcing someone to a change rather than motivating them to want to make the change. Push styles tend to involve logical reasoning, threatening punishment, or offering rewards or incentives. They seek to increase the 'forces' and rationale for change. They can often be referred to as the 'stick and carrot' approach. Push styles can be effective in achieving compliance but may not achieve commitment. They may bring about quick results.

Pull Styles

Pull is generally about motivating the individual to want to change. They tend to involve personal disclosure, involvement and showing the possibilities that will result from change. They tend to work on decreasing the forces or rationale **against** change. Insincere pull styles can however be seen as manipulative and dishonest. Pull styles can be effective in gaining commitment and high quality but they may be slower in achieving results.

There are pros and cons for both Push and Pull styles and it is important to understand the uses of each.

The following tables outline the different types of Push and Pull styles and how they may be useful.

Push Styles

	Descriptions	Uses	Comments
Force	'Do X or the consequences will be...' Threat of punishment, costs, damage. Power Source: Position, moral, expert, coercive.	Turnaround situations. Where there is no option. Where individuals are in danger or at risk.	Effective but short-lived. May produce resentment, lack of commitment. People can become dependent and unimaginative or they may fight back (sometimes covertly).
Rules and Standards	'It is a rule that you must do X'. Establishing and enforcing a regulatory framework e.g. rules, procedures, standards, principles, contracts, agreements. Power Source: Position, personal, expert.	Where there is a risk to staff, clients or the organisations business if things are not done in a certain way.	Efficient. Relies on a perceived right to institute and enforce rules. Can result in mindless rule following without real thought for consequences, alternatives or challenging change.

Exchange	'Do X and I'll give you Y'. Bargaining, negotiating, bribing. Use of sweets, money, promotion, friendship, favour, inclusion. Power Source: All sources.	Where there is opportunity to negotiate or 'trade'.	Effective short term, but rewards get progressively less desired and the price of agreement tends to increase.
Persuasion	'It is logical for you to do X'. Argument based on information, logic and reason. Power Source: Expert, Personal.	When in an advisory or specialist position.	Requires credibility. Fails if there is a conflict of interest. Requires low emotion. Potential for blame/creating a 'scapegoat' if it does not work out. One person's logic is often another person's prejudice.
Assertion	'I would like you to do X'. Statement of personal wishes in a non-aggressive manner acknowledging the other person's rights, wishes or viewpoint. Power Source: Personal, Position	When there is a clear course of action easily identifiable by both parties. When there is a good relationship or when there is obvious rank / hierarchy.	Effective in achieving compliance but not commitment. If influencer compromises then it can become negotiation or joint problem solving.

Pull Styles

	Descriptions	Uses	Comments
Personal Magnetism	Using charm, personality, personal attractiveness, enthusiasm, trust, love, respect. Power Source: Personal, moral, social.	Where there is scope for individuals to choose to follow you. In fluid or open situations.	Liable to produce dependency. Committed while personal needs are met. Can feel let down when influencer is not there.
Visioning	Using language and imagery to 'paint a picture others can see'. Identifying common purpose, areas of agreement, shared goals. Power Source: Personal, moral, position, expert.	Where there is a clear idea for the future e.g. Martin Luther King: 'I have a dream'.	Effective – adds meaning and purpose for others, draws people together, motivates and inspires. Picture must reflect shared values to be effective.
Bridging	Listening to, involving and supporting others. Finding connections with others where you can join your energy with theirs. Power Source: Personal	Where there is scope for exploration, time to achieve change. In consulting or counselling situations.	Usually used to support other styles e.g. Persuasion. Some people, who will not be pushed, will talk themselves into changing their position when Bridging is used.

Environmental	Adjusting the environment (physical and psychological) to encourage the desired behaviour e.g. target setting, praising, involving, consulting, facilitating, harmonising. Also seating patterns, temperature, use of noise and so on. Power Source: Any	Where there is a clear desired outcome and time and resources are available.	Effective in supporting the other influencing styles. Unlikely to succeed on its own.
Joint problem solving	Working together to define the problem, the goals and the best solution. Power Source: Personal, Expert	Where time and energy and motivation to change exists.	Highly effective. Requires high trust and skill. Can lead to best decision and high commitment. Can be more time consuming and uses more emotional and physical energy.

Summary

- We all may need to develop influencing skills whatever our role or position.
- Everyone has a source or sources of ‘power or authority’ and these will have an impact on our approach and ability to influence.
- There are a variety of influencing styles, however, Push and Pull are often viewed as the two main styles.
- Push styles are generally about ‘moving’ a person to another viewpoint or position.
- Pull styles are generally more about motivating a person to see the possibilities of changing to another viewpoint or position.
- Push and Pull styles have many different uses, and leaders will draw on aspects of both styles dependent on the situation and circumstances. There is no right or wrong but it is fair to say that Pull, when combined with the minimum amount of Push needed to achieve compliance, are most effective in developing commitment and attitude change.