Creating a Sense of Urgency and Influencing Senior Leaders

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I have no financial relationships with any commercial entity producing healthcare-related products and/or services that are relevant to this activity.
Overview

What I plan to cover this afternoon:

– Relationship between Influence and Leadership

– Critical first steps before trying to influence senior leaders

– Creating a sense of urgency & influencing senior leaders
Influence

• There can be no leadership without influence, because *influencing is how leaders lead*.

• In their classic leadership book, Bennis and Nanus state: *Leading is influencing, guiding in direction, course, action, opinion. An essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence.*

Influence Techniques

- Research shows that people try to influence others using one of ten positive influence techniques:
  - Logical persuading
  - Legitimizing
  - Exchanging
  - Stating
  - Socializing
  - Appealing to relationship
  - Consulting
  - Alliance building
  - Appealing to values
  - Modeling

TR Bacon, Elements of Influence: The Art of Getting Others to Follow Your Lead, 2011.
Influence Skills

• There are also *Influence Skills* which determine one’s effectiveness at using the *Influence Techniques*:

• Communication and Reasoning Skills
  – Logical reasoning, data analysis & display, finding creative solutions

• Assertiveness Skills
  – Asserting, behaving self-confidently, using a compelling tone of voice

• Interpersonal Skills
  – Being friendly/sociable, having insight into others’ values, building relationships and rapport, being sensitive to others’ feelings

• Interaction Skills
  – Building consensus, resolving conflicts, bargaining and negotiating

TR Bacon, Elements of Influence: The Art of Getting Others to Follow Your Lead, 2011
You can take an **Influence Self Assessment** to determine your effectiveness using these influence techniques and influence skills at: [www.theelementsofpower.com](http://www.theelementsofpower.com)
You want to influence a senior leader because there is a “problem” that you want their resources or assistance to fix.

Critical first steps:

- Clarify the nature and extent of the problem
  - Walk around talking with docs or others affected
  - Town Hall meetings
  - Survey those affected or track down quantitative measures
- Choose your battles strategically. Is this problem worth your effort?
- Consider alignment
  - How well does fixing this problem align with your vision / mission?
  - How well does this fixing this problem align with vision/mission of your leader?
- Communicate and create an awareness of the problem
  - Division or Department Newsletter
  - Staff / Practice Meetings
  - Leadership Meetings (e.g. Division or Department leadership)
An Incredible Paradigm of Influence

- **Influencer** explores how to achieve great results by changing human habits and thus optimizing our effectiveness at INFLUENCE.

- States that there are 3 keys to influence:
  - Focus and Measure
  - Find “Vital Behaviors”
  - Engage all 6 Sources of Influence

- These 6 sources of influence are:
  - Make the Undesirable Desirable
  - Harness Peer Pressure
  - Design Rewards and Demand Accountability
  - Surpass your Limits
  - Find Strength in Numbers
  - Change the Environment

• Although I have not mastered the approaches described in *Influencer*, it is clear that it is more about *managing down*, not about *managing up*.

• So what approach should we use when we are hoping to *influence senior leaders*?

• Searched for a paradigm that accurately described my approach and the effective approaches used by my Division Chiefs and Residency Program Director
• Found the best paradigm came from great leadership guru that so many of us love to quote: John Kotter.

• Kotter’s first principle of Leading Change is creating a Sense of Urgency.

• In one of his newest books, A Sense of Urgency he details the steps for doing this most effectively.
• Everyone is busy working-working-working

• Actions don’t result in helping the institution succeed in achieving their stated goals.

• Leads to unproductive results and burnout
People are clearly focused on making real progress every single day.

Driven by the belief that the environment contains great opportunities and great hazards.

Inspires a gut-level determination to accomplish something important – now!

"It’s a one-year timer. It gives an added sense of urgency to my research grant."
• Once you decide that addressing this problem is your goal:

• Aim for the heart, not just the head

• Connect to the deepest values of senior leadership

• Create a case for real change. Make it come alive using anecdotes about human experience – positive & negative.

• Imaginative, simple and clear
My Adaption of Paradigm from A Sense of Urgency
Steps for Creating a Sense of Urgency in Senior Leaders

- Behave with urgency every day

- Leadership attitude *not just* that an effort like a special project team must *meet today*, but rather that the meeting must *accomplish something important today*.

- Act and speak with passion and energy

- Believe that your energy & passion can / will make a difference

- Act visibly and be visible to senior leadership and to your team

- Communicate and disseminate your goal – verbally, in print and in presentations
Steps for Creating a Sense of Urgency in Senior Leaders

- Bring “the outside in” by sharing patient care experiences and/or the lived experiences of doctors affected by the issue.
• Kotter’s term “bring the outside in” refers to bringing the experience of customers into the Board Room and/or C-suite.

• One of our **key sources of influence** as physician leaders is the ability to share patient stories and/or “clinician on the ground” stories.

• Always weave a story into your “ask”

• My Epic Abstraction example
Steps for Creating a Sense of Urgency in Senior Leaders

- **Appeal to the heart as well as the mind**
  - Stories are key. Just enough data, no more.
  - Become familiar with your Chair / CMO / CEO and the amount of data that they are expecting to see.
All-Payer Readmission Rates by Age, July 2014 to June 2015

This graph shows readmission rates by age for Mount Auburn Hospital and for the state. Cells with < 11 cases are suppressed.
CHF 30 Day Readmissions by Year
Steps for Creating a Sense of Urgency in Senior Leaders

• **Have a plan for dealing with the initial “No”**
  – Never assume that senior leadership will say no, without actually asking

“I admire how you don’t take no for an answer, but I’m afraid I’m calling Security.”
Steps for Creating a Sense of Urgency in Senior Leaders

- Find opportunity in crisis

The Chinese word for crisis shares a character with the word for opportunity.
What is the most important thing that your Department and/or Mount Auburn Hospital could do to improve your worklife?

**Percentage of responses**

- Increased Staffing/Scribes: 40%
- EMR and Coding Improvements/Support: 40%
- Leadership should listen/respond to suggestions: 20%
- More vacation/sabbaticals: 10%
- Decreased productivity expectations: 10%
- More admin time: 10%
- Don't know/not sure they can: 10%
- Ergonomic improvements: 5%
- Clear guidelines about challenging patients: 5%
- Exercise/Tai chi/Music at work: 5%
- Increased Staffing/Scribes: 40%
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- Exercise/Tai chi/Music at work: 5%
Logistics of Influencing Senior Leaders

- What about timing? Be strategic!
- Meeting vs. e-mail? E-mail is only for setting up the meeting.
- Strategic value of having standing meetings.
- One on one with senior leader or with others?
- Written info all verbal? It depends. Visuals should be concise, compelling, clear.
• Essential to have a strategy for getting the attention of senior leaders, creating a sense of urgency in them and influencing them to approve & fund your priorities

• First define problem and communicate its importance

• An effective paradigm for influencing senior leaders is adapted from Kotter’s *A Sense of Urgency*:
  • Behave with urgency every day
  • Share stories of patients or doctors affected by the issue.
  • Appeal to the heart as well as the mind. Not too much data.
  • Have a plan for dealing with the initial “No”
  • Find opportunity in crisis
  • Be strategic about logistics of the discussion with leader
Thank you!

KEEP CALM
AND FEEL
A SENSE OF
URGENCY