

SUMMARY

INFLUENCER

JOSEPH GRENNY, KERRY PATTERSON,
DAVID MAXFIELD,
RON MCMILLAN, AL SWITZLER



Summary of “Influencer” by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Written by Alyssa Burnette

How people accomplish social change.

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Introduction

If you've ever spent time on Instagram, you know that the popular social media app is teeming with "influencers." But if you're not quite sure what that means, the marketing agency Influencer Hub is here to help with a handy definition! This organization defines influencers as "people on social media who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views. You can separate different types of influencers in multiple ways. Some of the most common methods are by follower numbers, by types of content, and by the level of influence. You can also group influencers by the niche in which they operate.

For example, mega influencers are the people with a vast number of followers on their social networks. Although there are no fixed rules on the boundaries between the different types of followers, a common view is that mega-influencers have more than 1 million followers on at least one social platform. Macro-influencers are one step down from the mega-influencers, and maybe more accessible as influencer marketers. You would consider people with followers in the range between 40,000 and 1 million followers on a social network to be macro-influencers. And last but not least, micro influencers are ordinary everyday people who have become known for their knowledge about some specialist niche. As such, they have usually gained a sizable social media following amongst devotees of that niche. Of course, it is not just the number of followers that indicates a level of influence; it is the relationship and interaction that a micro-influencer has with his or her followers."

This definition can help you to understand the types of influencers who dominate Instagram. It can also help you to understand why they are so effective. But because we so often hear the term "influencer" tossed about in regard to social media, it's easy to assume that a person's sphere of influence is limited to the digital realm. However, the authors argue that nothing could be farther from the truth! Instead, they believe that you have the power to

influence people in your workplace, at your school, and in your community. In order to do so, you simply need to understand the social psychology of influence. And over the course of this summary, we'll explore that concept and learn how you can apply it in your everyday life.



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What Does Being an Influencer Really Mean?

At its core, “influencing others” is about convincing people to change the way they think. And when you think about it that way, it sounds like a monumental task! But the truth is that it’s a lot easier than it sounds-- and we do it every day! In fact, you’ve influenced other people if you’ve ever said to your friend, “Let’s try that new Italian restaurant for lunch-- it looks really cool!” In this simple sentence, you’ve presented both a choice and an argument; your friend is now aware that there is something new they could try and that someone they trust thinks it would be a good idea. As a result, your opinion can motivate your friend to say, “Sure, let’s go there for lunch!” This is a simple example of the everyday power you wield as an influencer within your social circle.

And if you can think back to your experience in high school, you know that one person’s opinion can affect change on a significant scale. In every high school, there are teens who are considered to be “cooler” than others, who set the standard for how to dress, how to speak, and what not to do. And whether you thought about it that way or not, if you copied that person’s fashion choices, you were allowing them to influence you. But how does influence really work? What makes someone change their mind and follow another person’s example? Why should someone listen to your opinions instead of their own? The authors assert that every influential person must start with a goal. For example, in the hypothetical scenarios we just described, we can define two clear goals. In the example about your friend and the restaurant, your suggestion had one concrete goal: you wanted to motivate your friend to go for lunch with you at the new Italian restaurant. Similarly, in the high school example, another clear goal can be identified: the person who is being held up as a role model might have started out with the intention of looking cool and convincing others that their fashion choices were superior.

So, if these are examples of common, everyday influential goals, what happens when we expand these goals and consider them on a larger scale?

What if you hope to influence people to live an eco-friendly life? Or maybe your goal is to convince people that everyone should be a feminist? Both of these are noble goals that could make the world a better place. But how do you get people to listen to you? How can you influence people to embrace your ideology? In the next chapter, we'll explore the practical function of influence and how you can make this psychology work for you.



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How to Influence People

In the previous chapter, we explored the function of influence and how it can work in certain situations. But now it's time to dig a little deeper and explore why some people are successful at influencing others and why some people aren't. After all, if we return to the example about your friend and the Italian restaurant, we should consider what makes your suggestion so attractive to your friend. Why should he do what you think when he might have had another idea? What makes him say, "Sure, let's try the Italian place!" instead of, "Actually, I wanted to go to McDonald's?" The authors submit that the difference lies in how your narrative is presented. And, in many cases, that means employing a literal narrative to get your point across. Put simply, the best way to influence others is to tell a story.

To understand why that strategy works, let's consider an example. Imagine that your goal is to raise awareness about climate change and encourage people to make eco-friendly choices. If you wanted to convince people to change their habits, you might start by telling them a story about what would happen if they don't. The animated children's film *The Lorax* is a great example of this! *The Lorax* tells the story of a world with no trees and paints a vivid and unflattering picture of unbridled corporate greed. As we watch the young, ambitious anti-hero cheerfully chop down forests, robbing birds and woodland creatures of their homes, we come to hate him. This portrayal encourages us to see his actions as selfish and unfeeling. As a general rule, no one wants to be viewed as a selfish and unfeeling person, so his actions serve as a bad example and show us what **not** to do. Similarly, when we are invited to imagine a world without trees, a world in which you have to pay for air to breathe, we are aghast at the horror. *The Lorax* may be fictional but it reminds viewers that climate change is real. Even children can understand that a world without trees would be terrible, so this story motivates us to do our part to save the planet.

And although this is only one childish example, the message is true and universal: stories are an excellent way to connect people and achieve change!

That's because stories allow us to engage our imaginations, to view things objectively, and to become emotionally invested in the choices of fictional characters. In doing so, we can apply a story's lesson to our own lives and improve our choices. So, no matter what your cause is, you can use stories to influence people. Just paint a picture of the world you want to see-- or the world you're afraid of!-- and share that picture with others. When you do so, you can remind them that they have the power to change the world for the better. You just have to find a story that captures another person's heart and imagination.



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Use Space to Forge a Connection

For the purposes of this chapter, we're not talking about outer space, but rather about the space that exists between human beings. Although we may not think about it very often, space has a powerful impact on human connection and on our relationships to one another. For example, if you're falling asleep in bed with your partner, you might snuggle up very close to them, leaving very little space between your bodies. In this case, the lack of space denotes intimacy; you're close together because you love each other and you want to be as close to one another as possible. Similarly, if you've had an argument with someone you love and they make a show of putting physical distance between themselves and you, you might find it hurtful. In this case, space is also used to make a powerful point; by putting space between yourself and another person, you're indicating that you feel uncomfortable or unsafe around them and therefore, you don't want to be close to them. Both of these examples of space also show how space can be used to influence another person's feelings or decisions.

So, if you want to influence people, how can you use space to your advantage? Well, if you're in a position of power-- like being a movie star, singer, or a famous Instagrammer-- you can increase the power of your influence by getting physically close to your fans. 'Backstage meet and greets' are a great way to let your fans get up close and personal with you and see that you're a real person. Developing that personal connection with someone-- even if only for a moment-- can increase their willingness to listen to what you have to say. Similarly, if you're in another position of power-- such as a manager or a CEO-- it's important to consider the message you send to others with your use of physical space. After all, if you're a manager, you have a significant amount of influence in your workplace! But do people feel comfortable coming to you? Are you aloof and remote, tucked away in a penthouse office? Do you often visit the people and locations you manage?

If you have a larger sphere of influence-- like being the district manager for a chain of stores-- it might be harder to make personal visits to each store.

But you should still make time to do it because that personal connection determines the effectiveness of your influence! If you only visit once a year, people won't feel comfortable coming to you with their problems because they don't know or trust you. If your influence is on a smaller scale, such as being the regional manager for one particular company or store, then the good news is that you have a host of opportunities for connecting with your employees in a real and personal way! For starters, you could make a habit of visiting each department or each employee's desk on a regular basis. You could ask questions about their families and their personal lives and make an effort to remember little details. You can also make yourself seem more approachable by restructuring the layout of your workplace. Rather than keeping yourself apart from everybody else, you might restructure a little so that your office is near those of your workers. That way, if anyone wants to talk to you or get your advice, they don't feel intimidated about approaching you! These little details might not sound like a big deal, but they show that you can significantly increase your influence if you make an effort to forge a personal connection with other people.



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Final Summary

Although we typically associate the term “influencer” with social media personalities on Instagram, the truth is that every human being has the power to influence the people around them! You just have to know how to make the best use of your power. To that end, the authors recommend that you start by spending a little time learning about the psychology of influence. In doing so, you’ll see that stories are a powerful tool for influencing others, so that’s your next step: find the story that can help you change the world! And lastly, utilize physical space to maximize your influence and connect with others.



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