

# How to Win Friends and Influence People in the Digital Age ~ Dale Carnegie Associates

## Part 1 Essentials of Engagement

### 1 Bury Your Boomerangs

Carnegie was succinct in his advice: don't criticize, condemn, or complain. But how much more difficult this seems today. To say we must be more mindful of our words is an understatement. With an immense digital canvas on which to communicate our thoughts comes an equally immense canvas of accountability called public access. "Digital communications have made it possible to reach more people in faster and cheaper ways," explained bestselling Enchantment author Guy Kawasaki in a recent interview, "but a loser is still a loser. You could make the case that technology has made it possible to blow one's reputation faster and easier than ever."

Many are accustomed to holding a sword called the First Amendment in one hand and a shield called the Fifth in the other— all the while forgetting that to do so is to deem human relations a battlefield. In many ways this culture of criticism and complaint is the unfortunate reality.

Yet the influential person understands that such indiscretions quicken the path to relational breakdown no matter how right you are or how wrong the other remains.

It is no wonder we have more talking heads than true leaders today. Influence is always at stake, but many want nothing more than to state their case. Not only does it

set a poor precedent, it does nothing but fuel the tension and increase the gap between a message and meaningful collaboration.

Consider the last time a colleague came down on you for something you said or did. Are we to suppose his words made you want to give the guy a hug and buy him lunch? Or did you want to hide an open can of sardines in his desk?

Neither you nor I enjoy being the subject of disapproval, whether or not it is deserved.

The moment you use a medium to criticize, the subject of your criticism is compelled to defend. And when another is defensive, there is little you can say to break through the barriers he has raised. Everything you say is then filtered through skepticism, or worse, complete incredulity. In this way critical comments act like invisible boomerangs. They return on the thrower's head.

Despite a global trend toward loose talk, it is neither wise nor necessary to criticize others to make your messages more effective, more important, or more newsworthy. The degree to which you can be heard today is best thought of not as a burden or blessing but as a responsibility. Those who accept this responsibility with humility, compassion, and a trustworthy zeal are much quicker to rise because others remain willing to listen.

The people most widely respected within industries, companies, families, and groups of friends are those who are clear in their own

viewpoints while remaining compassionate with those whose minds or behavior they would like to influence.

Change by force of words is called coercion in some scenarios. There is a reason it is a crime. And while it might not be illegal between two coworkers, colleagues, or friends, we'd do just as well to avoid any sentiment of it.

Shift your use of media from a spirit of exposé and objection to a spirit of encouragement and exhortation.

Are you sharing information because you have an ax to grind? This sort of communication is better reserved for the safety of a trusted colleague's couch. Even if people are already on your side, bragging and whining don't bring them closer. If anything, such behavior makes them question whether they can trust you with their own mistakes and musings.

Resist badmouthing as a differentiation strategy. Its long-term effect is far more harmful than helpful. In a global economy, you never know when your greatest competitor will become your greatest collaborator. What will you do when the best road to business growth goes through someone with whom you have already burned the relational bridge? Competition is healthy and should be respected. Collaboration is critical and should be protected.

Make your messages meaningful by removing your agenda. It's wise to remember that no one wants a barrage of what's important to you.

Above all, the recipients of every bit and byte of your communication want value. If all you do is fill their ears, inboxes, and iPhones with descriptions of your latest problem or biggest gripe, they won't listen for long. There is enough positive communication available to let another's downbeat dogma fill our minds.

Calm yourself before communicating to another. When you are put off, the first five minutes are usually the most volatile. If you can train yourself to stuff the knee-jerk response, you will save yourself hours of backpedaling, back-scratching, and brownnosing down the road. While we all have our moments of indiscretion, there is little worse than a private indiscretion gone public. Save yourself the small trouble—and potentially extensive dilemma—by taking a step back before spouting something you might come to regret.

While there is always something to say in appraisal of another, it is good to remember that there is always something to be said in appraisal of you, too. The ancient Jewish proverb provides appropriate wisdom here: "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."

While it is difficult at times to downplay our right to speak freely, a quick scan through history will remind you that the greatest influencers are those who held their tongue and swallowed their pride when the tide of negative emotion was arising, and instead let brevity, humility, and wisdom say far more than a critical tirade ever could.

Perhaps there is no more memorable example than the

prolific British writer G. K. Chesterton's reply to an invitation by the Times to write an essay on the subject "What's Wrong with the World?"

Chesterton's response:

Dear Sirs,  
I am.  
Sincerely,  
G. K. Chesterton

To win friends and influence others in today's world takes less than clever rhetoric. It takes the understated eloquence of grace and self-deprecation. If I am the problem with the world, and you are too, then we can stop worrying about who is right and get on with the work of making our world better. Bury your boomerangs and your words will forge a much quicker path to progress.

## 2 Affirm What's Good

Emerson was right when he remarked, "The ancestor of every action is a thought."

One ancient and powerful Jewish parable involves a shepherd guarding one hundred sheep. They are under his care and he will not let them down. However, at roundup one evening he notices one is gone. Just one. Ninety-nine are safe and secure. What does the shepherd do? Does he say a prayer and hope the sheep shows up before a wolf nabs him? No, he pens the ninety-nine and goes looking. That one sheep is of such magnificent importance the shepherd cannot bear to see him left alone.

Consider the message this sends to the sheep, not just the one but also the other ninety-nine who look to the shepherd for provision and protection. Now consider sending that same message to those you'd like to influence. Have you let them know just how valuable you think

they are? There is great power in this simple principle, embodied regularly.

We all have an innate, unquenchable desire to know we are valued, to know we matter. Yet affirming this in each other is among the most challenging things to do in our day and age.

How obsessed we can be with the least important, most superficial things around. Weeks of life spent bantering about some celebrity's latest style or some athlete's latest sin. Hours observing the sociology of a household of clamoring college students. Even if we aren't caught up in the often maniacal musings of pop culture, the demands on our time can still be so intense it seems difficult to dig down deep on anything. When we have a torrent of text messages, email bins that are overflowing, and networks offering ceaseless socializing, even that spouse we courted so passionately can become an inconvenience. Then there are the kids and grandparents and neighbors and so on. Who has time to affirm the good about anything save perhaps a neighbor's new car or kitchen? That's quick and painless.

The problem is that quick and painless can also be mundane and meaningless. It is for these reasons that employing this principle matters so much today.

Affirming the good in others should not however be confused with flattery.

The difference? Genuine concern.

Affirmation, in contrast to flattery, requires seeing someone well enough to sense what to affirm, knowing someone well enough to be aware of what really matters. Flattery is usually an admittance of insensibility, a betrayal of trust. We say things we think we should say, but in reality we aren't thinking at all. What message does flattery

send? “You don’t matter enough for me to pay you much mind.” We have to overcome the temptation to live on autopilot. Bestselling author Rick Warren writes:

We rush out the door and say, “Hey, how are you doing? Nice to see you.” We don’t even look people in the eye. We’re not really talking to them. If you do that, you’re going to miss a lot of potential in other people. . . . People aren’t things to be molded, like clay. That’s not your job. That’s manipulation— not leadership. People aren’t things to be molded; they’re lives to be unfolded. And that’s what true leaders do. They unfold the lives of others and help them reach their God-given potential.

Do the messages you send with your written words, your spoken words, your presence, tip the scales toward affirmation or aloofness? The more they lean toward affirmation, the more influence you will gain with others.

Emerson wrote, “Every man is entitled to be valued for his best moments.” 6 Think about that for a moment. Which relationship is most strained in your life right now? What would it look like if you began focusing on that person’s best moments and sought to affirm them? This doesn’t presuppose the person doesn’t have his faults. It doesn’t even presume he has fewer faults than fine qualities. He might be a broken man with years of waste and wrongdoing in his wake. But one thing you can be sure of: if you aim to influence him to change, repeatedly pointing out his rap sheet will do you little good. If instead you begin to remind him of what he could be— not with hypothetical hype, but with his own history of goodness, of success, of insight,

even if only a brief history— something inside him would have cause to awaken.

“When we treat man as he is, we make him worse than he is; when we treat him as if he already were what he potentially could be, we make him what he should be.”

Consider the last time a coworker betrayed you, a client lied to you, or a vendor failed to deliver on a promise. Was your first reaction to remember what he had done that was still good and true?

Being disappointed, let down, or betrayed are among our most frustrating, maddening moments. Yet they also afford us rare moments to make a supreme impression.

Do you recall a time someone surprised you with undeserved grace or unconditional forgiveness? The occurrence might have taken place many years ago, even during your childhood. Yet the person is likely a permanent part of your memory, with the emotion you felt still tangible.

Ultimately, gaining influence is about setting yourself apart, stepping to a higher plane in the mind and heart of another . If all you do is act and react like anyone would, you will never be set apart.

It is challenging enough to become influential in today’s express-lane rat race. You need moments to show yourself altruistic and trustworthy, and seconds are all you are typically afforded. Were we all perfect individuals without a shortcoming in our lives, gaining influence through differentiation would fall solely on your ability to display a greater measure of trustworthiness than the others in a

person’s sphere of influence. That’s a hard line to follow if your competition were all mistake-free individuals like yourself. In this scenario, competing for influence would look more like a beauty pageant (and some still treat it as such).

That’s not the case. We are all imperfect beings full of shortcomings, and this affords us perhaps as many opportunities to affirm others after disagreement or disappointment as in the midst of affability. The key is to allow yourself no claim on circumstantial exemptions— use a spirit of affirmation to convey your thoughts about others whenever you can.

Sometimes affirming the good in others will mean reminding ourselves of that very good that exists in another.

Affirming what’s good, as with every principle in this book, is not just for grandly titled people at massive moments in human history. It is for this time and this age, where the spirit of communication is often less than dignifying. From the political podium to the digital medium to the boardroom table, the one who speaks in a spirit of respectful, unhyperbolic affirmation will always win more friends and influence more people to positive progress than the one who communicates in criticism , condemnation, and condescension.

At any moment of our day we can spread messages that affirm our friends, fans, and followers in numerous ways over email, Twitter, text, and blogs. Don’t, however, make the mistake of separating the scalability of a message from the individual significance of the message. They are inextricably linked. As big as a business gets, as large a following as one

accumulates, messages are still given and received on an individual level.

### 3 Connect with Core Desires

Steve Jobs recognized something Dale Carnegie championed repeatedly: to influence others to act, you must first connect to a core desire within them.

1. Influence requires more intuition than intellect.

Influence is no respecter of education or experience; it goes only with the one who will set aside his status— be it high and mighty or low and lowly —and put himself in the place of another.

Influencing others is not a matter of outsmarting them. It is a matter of discerning what they truly want and offering it to them in a mutually beneficial package.

2. Influence requires a gentle hand.

The interpersonal efforts that inevitably succeed are those in which the messenger stops dictating and starts discovering what the recipient wants.

In his book *Killing the Sale* bestselling author Todd Duncan describes the ten fatal mistakes salespeople make. One of them he calls “arguing,” and when we fail to connect with another’s core needs we are just as guilty of it, whether or not we call selling our profession.

The mistake of arguing . . . is staking your sales success on your ability to state your case in convincing fashion. It’s mastering a monologue and then expecting the jury of your prospects to be convinced to take your side. But . . .

establishing an initial level of trust takes more than flowery monologue. It takes dialogue. It takes actual conversation. There is no other way for you to know your product or service will meet [a person’s] needs.

It is mind-boggling that despite the millions of branding and marketing dollars spent every year, much is still spent on the messengers’ wants or whimsies rather than the recipients’ core desires.

Most individuals and organizations invest more resources in campaigning than in connecting. It should be the other way around.

Consider the comparison chart Duncan offers juxtaposing what the two forms of interpersonal communication say about you:

Dialogue	Monologue
Considerate	Conceited
Authentic	Fake
Transparent	Manipulative
Secure	Needy
Interested in meeting needs	Interested in making money
Builds trust	Builds tension

Of course, connecting to people’s core desires does not mean the world will be your oyster. Suffice it to say that without this approach, others will remain largely unapproachable. Their ears will close and their eyes will look elsewhere for something or someone more engaging.

Fortunately, most corporate emails, company tweets, brand blog entries, and commercial ad campaigns are monologues meant to broadcast

opinions, distinguish brands, launch products, and construct personas . It is precisely because this is so that the person who speaks in a spirit of dialogue and altruistic discovery nabs a significant advantage.

In *The Seven Arts of Change*, author David Shaner clarifies the difference between those who truly connect with core desires and those who are merely playing influence the way kids play doctor. He writes,

Nearly every study of organizational change over the past two decades indicates that companies fail to make the change they intend approximately seventy percent of the time. . . . Before organizational change can succeed, it must first occur at the subtle spiritual level in the individuals of the organization. . . . All lasting transformation must begin there because, ultimately, your spirit and mine is the primary driver of all our behavior.

True change is born of an interpersonal reach that takes hold of the deepest part of an individual.

No companywide campaign or individual communication strategy garners influence until it connects with people at their core. It is an essential principle in all your efforts to influence others, whether your audience is a five -year-old child or five thousand employees.

So much of our digital communication is one-way that we come to believe we have limited opportunity to uncover another’s perspective. While we communicate with more and more people every day, we also become more insular in our approach. We are far more inclined to focus on how we can best broadcast our points from our own perspective, quickly, broadly, or both. Isn’t this what we witness all

around us?

It is easy to get so caught up in the fray that we forget what we are aiming for: connection, influence, agreement, collaboration. We can start to believe the battle is won by mere frequency and occasional originality—useful strategies in the right context, but greatly insufficient as your only influence strategies.

There is a good side, however, to this constant barrage of one-sided broadcasting, which spans the spectrum from corporate posturing to celebrity positioning. Today, with a few keystrokes, we can better educate ourselves about other people's perspectives and goals.

Earlier we discussed the dangers of using your digital space to spout off your complaints. Most of us are more discerning about what we divulge. We reveal what matters to us, what we think about often, what we love and like and hope to see happen soon. These tidbytes of information add up to a body of knowledge that offers clues or even clear windows to our core desires. This knowledge is invaluable where influence is concerned because we only move toward what moves us.