

Influence through your attitude

The challenge

The impact of what you say depends on a great many factors other than the intrinsic relevance of the message. Depending on how you express yourself, people will listen to what you have to say more or less attentively. They will also be more or less inclined to see you as credible. Ideas suggested in a hesitant or apologetic tone have a greater chance of being ignored or brushed aside than those raised by more assertive colleagues. Conversely, a systematically combative attitude will sap your influence over the long run, as those around you develop the reflex to discount—without even listening—ideas they assume to be excessive or not sufficiently considerate of the views of others. How can you find the right balance?

Navigate between two extremes

Depending on our nature, we are all more or less inclined to actively defend our position or take the views of others into consideration. Adopting an attitude that demonstrates that you are trying to do both simultaneously is the best way to consolidate your influence.

Be seen as naturally focused on **your own position**

Risks if you overdo it:

- You give the feeling of taking up more than your fair share of space and of constantly drawing attention to yourself.
- You seem aggressive, by making intensive eye contact, pointing your finger at others, letting your face show frustration or anger, etc.
- You seem arrogant by expressing yourself in a condescending or judgmental tone, showing exasperated or annoyed expressions when someone else is speaking, etc.

Right balance

- Create a strong and confident image, by holding yourself erect and being relaxed, establishing visual contact when you speak, using measured, appropriate gestures to punctuate your message, using silence to transition between various points, etc.
- Be humble and open, by expressing real interest in what others have to say and retaining your composure when discussions become more intense.

Be seen as naturally focused on the viewpoint of others

Risks if you overdo it:

- You physically withdraw from your counterparts; take up less space than others in the room.
- You give the sense of being hesitant or apprehensive by avoiding visual contact, speaking in a soft voice, showing your nervousness with anxious gestures, etc.
- You give the sense that you want to be conciliatory above all, by apologizing needlessly, agreeing to what others say before they have even finished, etc.

How to progress?

- Preserve your ability to appear strong and confident. Use this ability to reassure others in times of crisis.
- Be careful to modulate your tone according to the situation to make it easier for others to express themselves; express yourself in less cut-and-dry terms and be less aggressive in the event of conflict.
- Pay more attention to the feelings of others by recognizing that they may not be as combative or resistant to pressure; energize them by underlining their strengths and successes.
- Show interest in everyone around you, not only the highest ranked or the most influential.

How to progress?

- Preserve your ability to seem friendly and approachable. Use this ability to fully develop your network.
- Use your ability to perceive the mood and feelings of others.
- Learn to make requests of your network and contacts.
- Work to control the signs that betray anxiety, e.g., nervous gestures, vocal tone, etc.
- Be careful not to appear agitated or overwhelmed by the workload or the situation.