



A few tactics for **getting the commitment of others** without resorting to authority

The challenge

Whatever your level of responsibility, you will rarely be the sole actor in a decision. For instance, you need to get your team moving, yet you often cannot be too directive so as not to hinder motivation. You also have to deal with colleagues who do not necessarily share your viewpoint, but whose commitment is essential. So how can you persuade someone to commit to your project without needing to use your authority?

Techniques for getting others on board

The methods presented below are based on natural reflexes, anchored in most individuals. Used with respect for others, they can help initiate collaboration – which will nevertheless only be sustainable if it leads them to discover motives for involvement they had not spontaneously perceived.

Reflex	Method	Example
The need for consistency We all have a tendency to act consistently with previous behaviors.	Take small steps Obtain initial agreement to an easily fulfilled request, then move on to more demanding ones. Once the other person has accepted a first request, she will often be more inclined to accept subsequent ones.	Ask a colleague to proof a report. Then, call on him to present it at a meeting. Finally, ask him to put forward solutions to the problems identified. He will be most likely to accept to monitor the project.
	Make successive revelations First, present the most attractive aspects of your project to the other person. Get her agreement. Then, present the project more fully, without neglecting negative points. Already committed, she will probably accept this new situation.	Invite those whose commitment you are seeking to attend an information meeting. Take the opportunity of their presence at this meeting to form a working group. It is most unlikely that they will refuse.
The reciprocity reflex When someone makes a concession, we tend to do the same in return.	Use contrast Start by expressing an impossible request, before formulating a second, less demanding one. The other person will be inclined to accept this second request, perceived as a concession, although she would have rejected it were it presented directly.	<i>"You have to reorganize the production for next week."</i> Your colleague will probably say that it's impossible. Offer a longer deadline: he will probably accept what he would have refused had it been presented in the first place.
The need for freedom We are more prepared to accept something if we know we can refuse it.	Allow freedom to choose Explicitly allow your colleague the possibility of refusing your request. She is more likely to accept than if there were no choice.	<i>"I really need you to contribute to the installation project in Asia. Of course, you are under no obligation to accept."</i>
Social pressure People are willing to make concessions to make a good impression on others.	Work on self-esteem Identify the qualities valued by the other person which may be useful in the context of your project. Recognize her talents: she will then be more willing to accept the task you entrust her.	<i>"You have a head for figures, could you help us with this statistics study?"</i>
	Make the most of outside eyes Avail of the presence of a third-party to ask for commitment: it will be all the stronger, especially if the third-party is an authority figure.	Take the opportunity of a meeting in the presence of his superior to ask your colleague to tell you about a marketing study he is jealously keeping to himself.