

## **Influence Redefined**

**By Stacey Hanke**

**(A book review by R. Max Wideman, FPMI, FCMI)**

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### ***Introduction***

For our regular readers, this book is not about project management per se, but it is about the very underpinning of project management – **INFLUENCE** through communication. After all, the book itself is an interesting project. Our Author Stacey Hanke introduces her book by asking this question: "How influential are you . . . *really?*"<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to say:

"If you aren't getting the results you want – as an individual, as a leader, as a professional – perhaps you're not as influential as you think you are. I realize that's a bold statement just a few sentences into a book. After all, I don't even know you.

***But what if I am right?***"

Stacey then provides a case in point and concludes that most people believe they are more influential than they actually are. Collectively, they have a misperception of what influence is and an outdated, inadequate understanding of what it means to be influential.<sup>2</sup> She suggests that as a consequence of modern technology,<sup>3</sup> the people you are trying to influence are typically not paying attention to you. If you don't have their attention, you can't influence them!

Stacey provides her interpretation of "Influence" as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- **"Monday to Monday** – consistent actions all the time, in all situations, that are congruent with your purpose and priorities
- Moving people to action ***long after the interaction is over***
- **Creating a stand out experience** that separates you from the crowd
- **Built on verbal and nonverbal communication**
- Measures not by how you felt but by **the results you consistently achieve**
- A **skill that can be developed** by anyone through feedback, practice and accountability."

Like so many others, this is the sort of soft skill that we all wish we had been exposed to early on in our professional careers. In this case, the objective of Stacey's book is to encourage the reader to climb the ladder of Self-awareness to Influence through a cycle of: Practice, Accountability and Feedback. What a difference this can make to aspiring project managers and their team players! As Stacey says: "My purpose with this book is to . . . share a proven, step by step method for how to get there."<sup>5</sup>

### ***About the author***

Stacey Hanke's passion is teaching others how to communicate with influence Monday to Monday.<sup>6</sup> As a keynote speaker and mentor to C-suite executives, she helps individuals see through the eyes and ears of their audiences. She claims the result is career-changing insights. Stacey has authored articles for BusinessWeek.com and is the co-author of *Yes You Can! Everything You Need from A to Z to Influence Others to Take Action*. Stacey attributes her drive and Monday to Monday work ethic to the lessons she learned from her parents, lifelong Midwestern dairy farmers. Stacey can be reached at:

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## Book Structure

The content of this book is set out in twelve chapters plus a prologue and epilogue as follows:

### (Prologue:) Are You Really as Influential as You Think You Are?

#### Part I: Influence Redefined

1. Is Your Influence Outdated?
2. Influence 2.0
3. Let Go of What You Believe to be True

#### Part II: The Drivers of Influence

4. Influence is a Choice
5. Feedback: Fake, Fluff or True?
6. Practice: Don't Wait for the "Big Gig"
7. Accountability: Eliminate Excuses and Take Action

#### Part III: The Elements of Influence

8. Self-Awareness: How You Unknowingly Sabotage Your Influence
9. Consistency: Does Your Message Sink or Swim?
10. Reputation: Who Are You, Monday to Monday?
11. Adaptability: Focus Outward Rather Than Inward
12. Impact: Influence Beyond the Interaction

### (Epilogue:) The Power of Influence

The book has a total of 234 pages. It is well laid out and content is evenly distributed across chapters at an average of fifteen pages per chapter. Each chapter ends with a brief summary. The book includes a limited number of diagrams and sidebars to emphasize the concepts being discussed. It does not include a Glossary of Terms.

## What we liked

This book is well written in a clear and understandable light and easy style. Of course, that's the way it should be considering that the foundation of influence is communication. Indeed, the author observes that: "To enhance your influence, you need to evaluate your communication based on facts, not feelings."<sup>7</sup> The key to the book is the following Influence Model diagram, Figure 1.



**Figure 1: The Influence Model**

Author Stacey Hanke first sets out to demolish three myths of Influence:

- Myth #1: "I feel influential, therefore I am. **Reality**: Influence is evidenced by results.
- Myth #2: Influence is situational. **Reality**: Influence is all the time, in every situation.
- Myth #3: Title = Influence. **Reality**: Anyone has the capacity to be influential if they are willing to do the work.

Each of these is described in some detail and then she goes on to focus specifically on Technology. As she says: "Technology has made it easier for us to communicate, yet much more difficult for us to influence others."<sup>8</sup> In short: "Business has stopped talking and started texting."<sup>9</sup> But do you have people's attention, because if you don't have people's attention, you cannot influence them.<sup>10</sup>

At this point we cannot help ourselves but to comment on the use of texting by the current President of the USA. The President early discovered that for getting his message out the use of texting is ideal for circumvent the otherwise need to rely on an antagonistic public media. Of course, the media is outraged by being bypassed and so the more he tweets the madder the media gets and responds in further outrage. This way he garners even more public attention. That is easy, cheap and effective for reaching large numbers of people. The only constraint is that with a limit of 140 characters, you must choose your words very carefully.

Meantime, our author Stacey goes on to provide her advice on reaching a state of **Influence** by working her way up the ladder of her Influence Model. To this end, she provides a brief explanation of each lower level as follows.<sup>11</sup>

- **Self-awareness**. How we perceive ourselves is usually quite different from how others perceive us. When it comes to our communication, we don't know what we don't know. We are often unaware of what our listeners and readers actually hear, see and interpret. Self-awareness is the first step to influence because without it, we can't make improvements.
- **Consistency**. To be influential at the highest level, we must be consistent in two key areas. First, our message and our delivery must be in sync. Second, our communication must be consistent Monday to Monday®, meaning that we communicate with influence every day, in every interactions.
- **Reputation**. We can't have influence without a consistently honorable reputation. Reputation represents not only how we define ourselves, but also what others can expect from us. Our reputation precedes us, affecting our influence (either positively or negatively) before we utter or write a single word.
- **Adaptability**. A key element of influence is being able to adapt our message and communication style on the fly not meet our listeners' and readers' expectations, needs and objectives.
- **Impact**. When we connect with our listeners and readers on an emotional level, we give our message momentum. Momentum allows us to make an impact even when we are not physically present.

Each element, starting with self-awareness, builds on the ones before it. Leave one out, and it will be difficult to develop influence. When we embrace all elements of influence, we are no longer merely good communicators, we become influential leaders, able to inspire people

to action long after the interaction is over."

By the way, Stacey offers some useful complimentary "Feedback" download material and check lists on her web site [www.InfluenceRedefined.com](http://www.InfluenceRedefined.com).<sup>12</sup>

## Downside

This book is full of anecdotes derived from her work with upper and/or senior management. But a lot of names are mentioned in connection with specific instances. Perhaps this is necessary for purposes of credibility, or perhaps for recognition and promotion, or whatever. Personally, we have not been a part of this level and type of American business management, and consequently we are not familiar with most of the names mentioned. Hence, we found this aspect rather self-serving and tantamount to deliberate "name dropping".<sup>13</sup>

Part III: *The Elements of Influence* describes several different aspects of influence. In particular, Chapter 8 *Self-Awareness* is one of the longer chapters and deals with how easy it is to "Unknowingly Sabotage Your (own) Influence".<sup>14</sup> For example, Stacey includes a table of *Top 10 Distracting Behaviors . . . And what They Communicate* that more than likely are sabotaging your own influence without you even knowing it. Some items that resonated with us are:

- Looking away from your listener while you're talking = Untrustworthy
- Pacing back and forth = Nervous, searching for content
- Voice trailing off at the end of sentences = Unsure, uncomfortable, insecure

However, we have a strong feeling that in the hands of an experienced presenter, each of these can be put to good use to re-attract an audience's attention.

One thing we rather thought was missing from the book<sup>15</sup> is any mention of feedback from an audience regarding what *they* are expected to do as a result of a presentation from senior staff. This is particularly important in a corporate environment. Are *they* going in the direction we, the corporation, want them to go? If the answer is "NO", or at best "only partly", then this is one of the best tests of the success of the original presentation.

It tells you whether serious attention needs to be given to the style of the presenter, the content and logic of the presentation, or to the need for encouraging instant feedback from the audience for clarification of outstanding issues. Sometimes, this proves to be the most energetic, informative and highest level of attention of the whole meeting. Indeed, probably the best indicator and measure of a meeting's success is when the audience leaves the meeting full of enthusiasm.

## Summary

This is a chatty sort of book, full of stories drawn from author Stacey Hanke's experiences, and the contacts in her work of encouraging her clients to become more influential. We believe it provides sound advice and will satisfy those willing to follow her counseling. Of course, how realistic it is depends on your point of view and your will to endure.

Perhaps the best way to conclude this review is to quote from her summary at the end of Chapter 4 in which she states:

- "The sooner you commit to being all-in to improve your communication skills and enhance your influence, the sooner you will see results.
- Communicating with influence is a lifelong process based on daily choices.

- One of the biggest obstacle to growing your influence is resistance to change
- Influence is a choice. You have to take action in order to achieve greater influence.

Project managers and their followers know all about implementing change because that is what project management is all about. However, change calling for self-improvement seems to be quite a different type of challenge.

R. Max Wideman  
Fellow, PMI

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<sup>1</sup> Hanke, Stacey, *Be the Leader you were meant to be, Monday to Monday*<sup>®</sup> INFLUENCE REDEFINED, Green Leaf Book Group Press, published by Smith Publicity Inc., Cherry Hill, NJ, USA, p1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p4

<sup>3</sup> iPhones, iPads and the like

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p5. The bold text is the author's emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p7

<sup>6</sup> "Monday to Monday" is a registered trademark.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p120

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p16

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p17

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p20

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp55-56

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p120

<sup>13</sup> Refers to the practice of casually mentioning the names of famous people one knows or claims to know in order to impress others.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 115

<sup>15</sup> Although we may have overlooked it!