

The IMPACT Framework for Influencing Senior Stakeholders

Overview

The IMPACT Framework is a practical model for professionals aiming to build credibility, gain trust, and influence senior decision-makers. It combines principles from executive presence, stakeholder engagement, persuasive communication, and behavioural psychology. Each element of the framework is grounded in research and designed to equip leaders with clear, effective tools to build alignment and drive action.

I – Intentional Presence

Intentional presence is about being deliberate in how you show up—in meetings, communication, and decision-making. It includes clarity of purpose, emotional self-awareness, and visible strategic alignment.

Supporting Literature:

- Goleman (1998) highlights emotional intelligence as essential for leadership effectiveness, particularly self-awareness and regulation.
- Sylvia Ann Hewlett's (2014) research on executive presence finds that gravitas, communication, and appearance significantly influence leadership perception.

Key Practices:

Enter interactions with a clear intention.

Signal strategic alignment with the organization's goals.

Demonstrate peer-level thinking in conversations with executives.

M – Map Their Priorities

Stakeholders are more likely to support ideas when they align with their goals and solve relevant problems. Mapping their priorities means understanding what matters to them—and presenting your ideas in that context.

Supporting Literature:

- Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory emphasizes aligning organizational actions with stakeholder values and interests.
- John Kotter's work on change management stresses the importance of understanding power dynamics and key players.

Key Practices:

Know the KPIs, objectives, and pain points of your stakeholders.
Frame your message as a solution to their strategic concerns.

P – Position with Data + Story

Persuasive communication requires both logic and emotion. Combining data (rational appeal) with story (emotional appeal) helps make your message more credible and memorable.

Supporting Literature:

- Heath & Heath (2007) in *Made to Stick* show that stories make messages more “sticky.”
- Kahneman (2011) in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* explains that people rely on intuitive (emotional) and deliberate (logical) thinking when making decisions.

Key Practices:

Support your ideas with evidence and metrics.
Use short stories or analogies to make abstract ideas tangible.

A – Ask for Input (and Listen Actively)

Influence increases when people feel heard and involved. Seeking input early shows openness, builds psychological safety, and encourages co-ownership of solutions.

Supporting Literature:

- Amy Edmondson (1999) introduced the concept of psychological safety as critical for open dialogue and innovation.
- Robert Cialdini (2001) notes in *Influence* that people support what they help create—driven by the principle of commitment and consistency.

Key Practices:

Create space for senior stakeholders to voice their concerns or ideas.
Listen without defensiveness and reflect back what you hear.

C – Communicate with Clarity and Confidence

Executives value brevity and clarity. Influence grows when ideas are delivered in a structured, focused, and confident way.

Supporting Literature:

- Barbara Minto's (2009) Pyramid Principle teaches top-down communication, leading with conclusions to save time and drive clarity.
- Nancy Duarte (2012) in HBR Guide to Persuasive Presentations emphasizes confident, concise, and audience-focused messaging.

Key Practices:

Use bullet-point logic: what, why, how, and ask.

Speak with confident tone and body language.

Do not string long sentences.

T – Track Trust + Follow Through

Credibility is earned through consistency and accountability. Tracking trust means managing expectations, delivering on promises, and demonstrating reliability.

Supporting Literature:

- Covey (2006) in The Speed of Trust shows how trust accelerates influence and organizational performance.
- Kouzes & Posner (2017) in The Leadership Challenge identify “model the way” and “enable others” as core practices of trusted leaders.

Conclusion

The IMPACT Framework equips professionals with a holistic yet simple approach to influence in high-stakes environments. It bridges the gap between insight and action by helping individuals present ideas with relevance, resonance, and reliability. Backed by behavioral and leadership research, IMPACT empowers emerging and experienced leaders to build the trust, alignment, and clarity needed to make meaningful change.