GCG

Global Coach Group
Lead for Good

Here's How to Master Influencing

A Comprehensive Guide to the Art and Science of Influence



www.globalcoachgroup.com

Why Influence Matters

Influence isn't a novel concept and most leaders already know it matters.

They've seen the frameworks. They've heard the theory. Often, they can name the principles.

But knowing isn't the challenge.

The real challenge is using influence effectively when the leadership environment keeps shifting, when teams are flatter, decisions are shared, and authority alone no longer guarantees commitment.

This guide tackles that challenge directly.

The goal is simple: to help you influence with clarity, confidence, and integrity — so that people choose to follow, not feel obligated to.

Backed by GCG's experience coaching and assessing over 120,000 leaders worldwide, this guide is about turning influence into something visible, measurable, and habitual. You'll find practical tools, coaching prompts, and behavior-based insights to help you apply influence with clarity, confidence, and consistency.

A New Leadership Reality

In the past, influence often came from expertise.

Leaders had more experience, more context, and more authority — so decisions naturally flowed their way.

But that foundation has changed.

Two major forces are reshaping how influence works:

1. **Flatter, more distributed structures**
   Leaders today need to influence across functions, geographies, and even external partners — often without direct control. Power doesn't follow reporting lines anymore. It flows through networks and collaboration.

2. **Information parity and the rise of AI**
   Knowledge is no longer scarce. Junior team members can bring data, insight, or analysis that rivals — or exceeds — the leader's. Tools like AI give everyone access to insight, context, and even generative expertise — leveling the field in a way that often outpaces a leader's personal experience.

In this environment, influence isn't automatically attributed to the most senior voice in the room. It's about knowing how to shift momentum, build alignment, and guide decisions — regardless of where authority formally sits.



From Model to Movement

This guide builds on the foundational research of Dr. Robert Cialdini, who identified six core principles that explain how influence works.

But we're not just applying an existing model, we're evolving it.

We've taken these six principles and sharpened them for today's leadership landscape, where complexity is constant, and influence must be practiced deliberately.

GCG's global coaching work with more than 120,000 leaders, with additional perspectives from Global Leadership Assessment (GLA360) behavioral data, gives us unique visibility into what's working — and what isn't — in real-world leadership.

Each section of this guide includes:

- GLA360 data showing where leaders are strong and where they fall short
- Specific behaviors tied to each principle
- Coaching prompts to help you practice influence in real conversations

This isn't about theory.

It's a behavioral guide to building influence where it matters most — within your team, across your peers, and beyond.

The framework that follows centers on six core principles of influence — each adapted from Cialdini's foundational research and sharpened through GCG's leadership development work with 120,000+ leaders.

Principle	What It Leverages	When to Use It
01 Liking	Shared identity, positive regard	Building connection and rapport
02 Reciprocity	The inclination to return value	Strengthening relationships and collaboration
03 Social Proof	Peer behavior and norms	Reducing resistance and driving alignment
04 Consistency	Commitment to past choices	Securing follow-through and accountability
05 Authority	Perceived credibility and expertise	Earning trust in high-stakes conversations
06 Scarcity	Limited access or time sensitivity	Encouraging timely decisions and action

01 Liking

Build trust by being relatable, respectful, and human. Like likes like.

What It Means for Leaders

People are more open to ideas, feedback, and requests when they feel a sense of connection with the person delivering them. This isn't about being liked for its own sake, it's about building professional rapport based on shared familiarity, respect, and appreciation.

In leadership, likability isn't soft. It's strategic. When people feel seen and respected, they're more likely to support your initiatives, engage in difficult conversations, and offer discretionary effort.

Cialdini's research shows that liking is driven by two key behaviors:

- Finding common ground (similarity)
- Offering genuine praise (appreciation)

Both are highly coachable.

Where Leaders Stand

Most leaders demonstrate respect, recognition, and inclusivity, but they tend to treat these as baseline behaviors rather than as deliberate tools of influence.

This limits their potential to build deeper connection, alignment, and trust — since true likeability in leadership comes not from surface-level kindness, but from consistently showing others they are valued, seen, and safe to engage with.

The table below illustrates how leaders currently score on these interpersonal behaviors, underscoring both the strength of the foundation and the missed opportunity to use it more strategically.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Consistently treat people with respect and dignity	59%
Provide effective recognition for others' achievements	57%
Treat coworkers as partners, not competitors	57%
Embrace the value of diversity in people	55%
Recognize the value of diverse views and opinions	56%

The data above come from GCG's GLA360 Global Leadership Assessment, which draws on feedback from more than 20,000 leaders and 150,000 coworkers across industries, regions, and leadership levels. These items represent core interpersonal behaviors that increase likeability, connection, and trust — all of which make people more open to your ideas, input, and leadership.

More information on the next page.

01 Liking:
Build trust by being relatable, respectful, and human. Like likes like.

Where to Apply It

- Kickoff meetings or alignment conversations
- Team reviews and retrospectives
- Difficult conversations where trust is fragile
- Cross-functional collaborations with peers or external partners

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Start with shared goals or interests.**
  "I know we're both focused on getting this to market quickly. Let's figure out how to get there together."

- **Give recognition that's specific and timely.**
  "You navigated that client meeting really well. The way you managed the pricing pushback helped us keep momentum."

- **Use language that reflects partnership.**
  "What's your view on how we approach this?"
  "What would make this work for your team?"

Watch Out For

- Forced friendliness that comes off as insincere
- Using praise without relevance
- Skipping over respect in fast-paced or high-stress situations

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"What's one thing I could do to show more appreciation for your contributions?"



02 Reciprocity

Give first. Influence follows.

What It Means for Leaders

Reciprocity is one of the most powerful and universal principles of influence: when someone gives us something of value, we naturally feel compelled to return the favor.

In leadership, this isn't about keeping score. It's about setting the tone. When leaders are generous with their time, insights, or support, especially without being asked, they create a sense of obligation and mutual respect that makes collaboration easier and requests more likely to land.

Cialdini found that even small, thoughtful acts significantly increased willingness to say yes. The same holds true inside organizations.

Where Leaders Stand

Leaders often support others, but they don't always make that support visible, reciprocal, or actionable. Reciprocity works when people feel a shared investment in outcomes.

Confidence, inclusion, and collaboration aren't just values, they're influence accelerators when offered intentionally. The table below illustrates how leaders currently demonstrate these behaviors, highlighting both their strengths and opportunities to utilize them more strategically.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Build people's confidence	51%
Strive to arrive at an outcome with others (not for others)	51%
Help others understand the impact of globalization	43%
Help others appreciate the value of diversity	58%
Ask people what can be done to personally improve	42%

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More information on the next page.

02 Reciprocity: Give first. Influence follows.

Where to Apply It

- Early project phases where alignment is still forming
- Requests for buy-in, resources, or time
- Repairing strained relationships
- Coaching conversations where trust is needed

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Give help before it's needed.**
  "I created a checklist from our last project, it might help your team get started faster."

- **Share something valuable, then invite input.**
  "Here's a rough draft of the proposal. Would love your thoughts, especially on the budget assumptions."

- **Be explicit about your intention to support.**
  "Let me take care of the first client call so you can focus on prepping the deck."

Watch Out For

- Giving with the expectation of return
- Overextending help without boundaries
- Offering help that isn't relevant or needed

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"What's something I could provide proactively more often that would be helpful to you?"



03 Social Proof

Show that others like them are already on board

What It Means for Leaders

When people are uncertain, they look to others to decide how to act, especially peers they respect. That's social proof.

Cialdini's research showed that when people see their peers embracing a behavior, idea, or product, they're far more likely to adopt it themselves. For leaders, this means one of the most persuasive things you can do is highlight what others have already committed to.

In organizations, social proof isn't about groupthink. It's about building confidence by showing momentum. Leaders can reduce resistance by making visible what others are already doing.

Where Leaders Stand

Many leaders pay attention to trends and customer input — but don't always leverage that insight to build visible credibility.

Social proof isn't just about knowing what others think; it's about showing that your perspective reflects real signals from outside the room. Influence increases when people trust that your views are informed, current, and grounded in what matters to others.

The table below illustrates how leaders currently demonstrate these behaviors, making clear both the existing strengths and the untapped opportunity to use them more intentionally.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Invest in learning about future trends	61%
Recognize the impact of globalization on the business	57%
Understand the competitive options available to your customers	56%
Regularly solicit input from customers	52%

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More information on the next page.

03 Social Proof: Show that others like them are already on board

Where to Apply It

- Introducing change or new processes
- Recommending tools, systems, or suppliers
- Encouraging behavior shifts across teams
- Securing buy-in from hesitant stakeholders

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Reference peer success.**
  "Two teams in APAC have already adopted this and cut their onboarding time in half."

- **Use data to show trends**.
  "Since Q2, we've seen a 30% increase in teams using this approach across the region."

- **Invite visible champions to speak.**
  "Priya ran this playbook in Marketing, let her share how it worked for her team."

Watch Out For

- Comparing teams that are not truly peers
- Fabricating urgency by exaggerating adoption
- Undermining individuality or autonomy

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"Is there someone else in the organization you think I should learn from or spotlight?"



04 Consistency

People follow through on what they commit to, especially in public

What It Means for Leaders

Once people make a choice or take a stand, they're more likely to act in ways that align with it. Cialdini called this the principle of consistency, and it's one of the most reliable ways to turn intention into action.

In leadership, this is especially useful when trying to build accountability, drive behavior change, or follow through on new priorities. It's not about pressure. It's about helping people articulate what they intend to do, ëand giving them the chance to live up to it.

The key is visibility. When a commitment is voluntary, active, and public, the chances of it being honored increase dramatically.

Where Leaders Stand

Many leaders are strong on ethics and values, but consistency isn't just about what you believe. It's about how reliably you act.

Influence grows when people see you making principled decisions, responding to change constructively, and staying steady while enabling others to do their best work.

The table below illustrates how leaders currently demonstrate these behaviors, showing both their foundation in values and the opportunity to strengthen consistency as a visible influence strategy.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Ensure the highest standards for ethical behavior	65%
Demonstrate honest, ethical behavior in all interactions	62%
See change as an opportunity, not a problem	56%
Encourage creativity and innovation in others	48%
Create an environment focused on the larger good	48%

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More information on the next page.

04 Consistency: People follow through on what they commit to, especially in public

Where to Apply It

- Driving accountability for change initiatives
- Following up after feedback sessions
- Aligning behavior with company values
- Reinforcing team or project commitments

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Ask for public commitments.**
  "If we agree to this plan, can we all post the next steps in our team channel?"

- **Reinforce alignment with stated values.**
  "This decision reflects what we said last quarter about prioritizing quality over speed."

- **Report back on what was promised.**
  "Last week I said I'd loop in Finance, here's the update."

Watch Out For

- Vague agreements without clear actions
- Private commitments that are easy to ignore
- Overpromising without the capacity to deliver

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"What's one thing I could be more consistent about in my communication or actions?"



05 Authority

Credibility creates confidence. Lead with expertise.

What It Means for Leaders

When people perceive someone as a credible expert, they are more likely to listen, trust, and follow their lead. Cialdini's research found that simply establishing expertise early in a conversation significantly increases persuasive power.

In leadership, this isn't about asserting control or using rank, it's about signaling competence in a way that earns trust. Authority is most effective when it's paired with humility and delivered through reputation, results, or real subject-matter knowledge.

It can also be borrowed. Leaders don't need to be experts on everything. Credibility can be shared by amplifying others' expertise within the team.

Where Leaders Stand

Many leaders underplay their authority, assuming others see their value without it being made explicit.

But influence through authority comes from balancing visible confidence with humility, sharing leadership, acknowledging expertise in others, and broadening your base of credibility through diverse, strategic relationships.

The table below illustrates how leaders currently demonstrate these behaviors, highlighting both their existing strengths and the opportunity to use authority more intentionally as an influence tool.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Demonstrate self-confidence as a leader	60%
Willingly share leadership with business partners	58%
Actively expand knowledge of other cultures	53%
Build alliances with other organizations	51%
Defer to others when they have more expertise	48%

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More information on the next page.

05 Authority: Credibility creates confidence. Lead with expertise.

Where to Apply It

- Executive presentations or strategy sessions
- Launching a new initiative or change plan
- Leading without formal authority
- Introducing new team members or cross-functional partners

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Establish your credentials early, but briefly.** "I've worked on three similar turnarounds, and the patterns are familiar."
- **Use borrowed authority when someone else is better positioned.** "Priya led the last product launch, she'll walk us through what worked and what didn't."
- **Support your message with clear rationale.** "Based on what we're seeing in the market, this approach reduces risk by 20%."

Watch Out For

- Assuming others know your background or experience
- Over-explaining to prove expertise
- Using authority to shut down dissent

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"What's one way I could show more credibility or draw on the expertise around me more effectively?"



06 Scarcity

People value what they might lose more than what they could gain

What It Means for Leaders

Scarcity taps into a basic human instinct: when something is limited, it feels more valuable. That could mean limited time, access, opportunity, or availability. When used carefully, it creates urgency and helps people prioritize decisions.

In leadership, scarcity isn't about pressure tactics. It's about clearly communicating time-sensitive opportunities, limited resources, or windows of influence, so people understand why a decision matters now, not later.

Done well, scarcity motivates action. Done poorly, it creates anxiety or skepticism and might feel coercive. The difference is in how transparent and relevant the message is.

Where Leaders Stand

Leaders often bring urgency and energy — but don't always focus that urgency where it matters most.

Influence through scarcity requires more than speed. It's about signaling priority, driving accountability, and making it clear that your time, attention, and resources aren't spread thin — they're invested with purpose.

Behavior	Global Percentile
Communicate a positive, can-do sense of urgency	59%
Clearly identify priorities	52%
Hold people accountable for their results	51%
Successfully eliminate waste and unneeded cost	48%

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More information on the next page.

06 Scarcity: People value what they might lose more than what they could gain

Where to Apply It

- Project prioritization and trade-off discussions
- Securing buy-in for pilot programs or limited funding
- Coaching conversations about time-sensitive opportunities
- Aligning teams around short-term targets or deadlines

Micro-Practices to Try

- **Communicate real constraints without drama.** "We have one slot left for the pilot cohort, if we want in, we'll need to confirm by Thursday."
- **Highlight timing without pressuring.** "If we miss this month's board cycle, we'll need to wait until Q2 to move forward."
- **Use data to reinforce urgency.** "Customer churn has increased 15% in two quarters, waiting another one risks deeper losses."

Watch Out For

- Creating false urgency
- Using scarcity to manipulate or rush people
- Downplaying others' valid concerns in the name of speed

Feedforward Prompt to Use with Coworkers

"When I'm trying to create urgency, what's something I could do to make it feel more helpful and less pressured?"



Apply Your Principles with Purpose

Start small. Stay focused. Influence where it matters most.

You've just explored six proven principles of influence. While they're all useful, trying to apply them all at once isn't realistic, and it's not necessary.
At Global Coach Group, we've seen that leaders create the most measurable impact when they focus on just **two high-impact behaviors** at a time. Not six. Not ten. Two. That's where change becomes visible, repeatable, and trusted.

This section will help you:

- Choose two principles that matter most for your current goals
- Identify the people and situations where you'll apply them
- Build a 90-day rhythm for putting influence into daily practice

Choose Your Two Principles

The right focus depends on where you are in your leadership journey and what's happening around you. To decide, reflect on three key questions:

1. **What's your leadership priority right now?**
   Are you driving change? Rebuilding trust? Trying to accelerate decisions?

2. **Where do you tend to meet resistance or friction?**
   Is it alignment, follow-through, or urgency that breaks down?

3. **What feedback have you heard recently, from coworkers or GLA360 feedback?**
   Are there signals about how you're showing up, or what others want more (or less) of?

Goal	Useful Principles
Leading change	Social Proof + Consistency
Building trust	Liking + Reciprocity
Strengthening follow-through	Consistency + Reciprocity
Gaining buy-in from senior leaders	Authority + Scarcity
Driving collaboration across silos	Liking + Authority

Choose **two** principles that best support your work over the next 90 days. They don't have to be your "weakest areas", they should be the ones with the most upside, based on what you're trying to lead right now.

More information on the next page.

Apply Your Principles with Purpose: Start small. Stay focused. Influence where it matters most.

Map Your Influence Moments

Influence isn't abstract. It's always applied to someone, about something, in a specific moment.

Start by identifying **3 to 5 people** whose support, engagement, or alignment will make a difference this quarter. Then ask:

- What outcome am I trying to create with this person?
- Which principle might help move the conversation forward?
- What's one action or message I'll use to apply it?

Use this simple influence map:

Stakeholder	Situation	Principle	What I'll Do Differently	What Success Looks Like
Priya (peer)	Hesitant to join pilot	Reciprocity	Offer to lead onboarding for her team	She opts in before the due date
Marc (exec)	Stalling on a budget decision	Scarcity	Highlight risk of missing Q2 window	Decision made by end of the month
Delivery team	Misaligned on priorities	Consistency	Recap shared goals in weekly thread	Team aligns around top 3 goals

Keep It Light, But Keep It Going

You don't need a complex system. The key is visible practice, week by week.

Each week:

- Apply each principle in at least one real conversation
- Try one new micro-practice or message tweak
- Reflect: What landed? What felt awkward? What could I repeat?

Each month:

- Ask one feedforward question per principle
- Spot patterns in what coworkers say
- Adjust based on what people are experiencing

After 90 days:

- Review what's now a natural behavior
- Choose whether to deepen your current focus or shift to a new pair of principles
- Share your influence story, what's changed, and what impact it's had

Visibility Builds Trust

Let people know what you're working on.
Say: "I'm focusing on building better influence habits this quarter. You may notice me trying a few things differently. I'd love your input along the way."

This isn't performance. It's leadership transparency. When coworkers see your intention, and are invited to shape it, they're far more likely to engage, respond, and follow.

Make Influence Measurable

Because leadership isn't what you intend, it's what others experience.

You can try new behaviors, run better meetings, or deliver sharper messaging. But none of it matters if the people around you don't experience a shift.

That's why influence must be measured by perception, not just intention.

At Global Coach Group, we call this the triple win: leaders improve, coworkers feel the difference, and organizations move forward. The best way to close that loop is through **feedforward,** short, focused questions that help you track your influence in action.

Use Feedforward to Get Real Signals

Feedforward is simple: you ask a few trusted coworkers for **one suggestion** on how you can get better at a specific behavior. It's forward-looking, low-pressure, and always focused on progress, not evaluation.

You only need **one question per principle,** sent once a month.

Examples:

Principle	Feedforward Prompt
Liking	"What's one thing I could do to make our interactions more engaging or respectful?"
Reciprocity	"Is there anything I could offer more proactively to support your work?"
Social Proof	"How could I better share what others are doing to help build alignment?"
Consistency	"What's one thing I could be more consistent about in my communication or actions?"
Authority	"What's one way I could show more credibility or draw on others' expertise more effectively?"
Scarcity	"When I try to create urgency, what's something I could do to make it feel more helpful and less pressured?"

More information on the next page.

Make Influence Measurable:
Because leadership isn't what you intend, it's what others experience.

What to Look For

You don't need a formal dashboard. Just look for:

- **Patterns:** Are people mentioning the same behavior?
- **Shifts:** Are coworkers giving more positive reinforcement over time?
- **Outcomes:** Are decisions moving faster? Are meetings more productive? Are people following through?

These are the signals that your influence is working.

Keep Your Feedback Loop Simple

Once a month:

- Choose 1–2 people you've worked with closely
- Ask 1 feedforward question per principle
- Thank them, and note any suggestions
- Choose one action to apply next

Once a quarter:

- Reflect with your coach or manager
  "Where has my influence created traction?"
  "Where do I still need to build trust or clarity?"

Share What You're Learning

Don't wait for formal reviews. Influence builds faster when people know what you're working on.

Try something simple:

"Thanks for that suggestion last month, I've been trying it in team check-ins. Let me know if it's landing."

That 20-second message creates visibility, reinforces consistency, and strengthens credibility, all in one move.



Influence That Lasts

This isn't about using influence once. It's about building a leadership habit.

This guide is designed to help you turn influence into something lasting, a repeatable behavior that shows up when it matters, and that others can feel in how you lead.

When used intentionally, the six principles become tools for trust, alignment, and momentum. Over time, they shape how people experience your leadership, not just in what you say, but in what they choose to follow.

You don't need to be persuasive in every conversation. But you do need to be clear, deliberate, and focused in the moments that count.

That's how lasting influence is built.

As You Continue, Remember:

- **Influence is not a soft skill.** It's a strategic behavior.
- **You don't need to be persuasive all the time.** You need to be deliberate when it matters most.
- **The best influencers stay curious.** They ask more, assume less, and adapt constantly.
- **Leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room.** It's about guiding momentum, shaping decisions, and helping others succeed.
- **Influence is how you do that, ethically, visibly, and consistently.**

For Coaches: Supporting Influence in Practice

If you're coaching a leader through this guide, help them:

- Narrow their focus to the principles that matter most now
- Observe behavior change in real time
- Use feedforward to guide reflection, not just performance
- Reinforce progress with examples, not just encouragement
- Tie influence to broader leadership goals and GLA360 feedback

Influence becomes sustainable when it's visible, measurable, and aligned with what others actually need from the leader.



For Clients



We Deliver a Triple Win

Better Leaders, Better Teams, and Better Results — boasting a 95% success rate confirmed by coworkers, based on more than 100,000+ leaders coached.

Global Coach Group delivers the best results-based coaching worldwide through our network of over 4,000 world-class certified coaches, powered by our proven Triple Win Leadership Coaching approach and proprietary digital tools.

Triple Win Leadership Coaching, captured in Everybody Wins by Will Linssen — Amazon #1 International Bestselling Author.

Author



Will Linssen

Will Linssen has been ranked World's #1 Leadership Coach by Global Gurus (USA) and World's #1 Coach Trainer by Thinkers50 (UK), serves as advisor to the Harvard Business Review, and is recognized as a LinkedIn Top Executive Coaching Voice. He is an Amazon #1 International Bestselling Author. With more than 30 years of experience in executive leadership across Europe, North America, and Asia, Will holds the International Coaching Federation's highest accreditation: Master Certified Coach.

He is the founder and CEO of Global Coach Group, the world's #1 international leadership coaching network, with over 4,000 coaches worldwide serving Fortune 500 companies and leading multinational corporations.