

INFLUENCE SYSTEMS

User Manual & Technical Reference

Version 1.0 · First Edition

Compatible with: Humans, Organisations, Difficult Conversations

Platform: Reality (most versions)

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01 INTRODUCTION & SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

About this product

Influence Systems is a suite of conceptual tools designed to improve the user's ability to move people — to shift thinking, gain buy-in, or change behaviour — in professional settings. It is not a manipulation toolkit. It is, rather, a set of frameworks for understanding what is actually happening when one human tries to persuade another, and for making more deliberate choices about how to proceed.

This manual covers three core modules and one companion application. Each module can be operated independently, but performance is significantly improved when all three are running concurrently.

System requirements

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Operating environment | Any professional context involving humans with differing views |
| Minimum user version | Self-aware adult with at least one unsolved influence problem |
| Recommended | Genuine interest in the other person's perspective (see Module 3) |
| Not compatible with | Pure coercion workflows; situations where the answer is already decided |
| Persistent storage | Influence Planner companion tool (separate file) |

IMPORTANT NOTE

These tools work on the assumption that you are trying to achieve an outcome that is genuinely good for the other person as well as yourself. If that is not the case, please close this manual and reconsider your approach.

02

MODULE 1: PUSH/PULL ENGINE

The Push/Pull Engine provides four operating modes for influence. Two are push-based — they originate from you and move toward the other person. Two are pull-based — they draw the other person toward their own conclusion. Most users are over-indexed on push modes and under-use pull.

| | |
|--|--|
| PUSH | ASSERT |
| <p>Stating a position. Making a recommendation. Presenting evidence.</p> | <p><i>High clarity. Fast. Works well when the other person is already open to persuasion and trusts your judgement. Tends to generate resistance when they are not.</i></p> |
| PUSH | REASON |
| <p>Logical argument. Cause-and-effect analysis. Data.</p> | <p><i>Works best when multiple parties are competing to influence a third party who is actively weighing the options — a procurement panel, a board, an electorate. Defence and prosecution both reason; so do competing suppliers. In direct one-to-one influence, it is less effective than it appears: the other person is rarely in the role of impartial adjudicator.</i></p> |
| PULL | QUESTION |
| <p>Asking questions that draw out the other person's thinking.</p> | <p><i>Slows things down in a useful way. Creates engagement rather than reception. Surfaces assumptions. The best questions make people feel they have arrived at the conclusion themselves — because they have.</i></p> |
| PULL | VISION |
| <p>Connecting the ask to something the other person already cares about.</p> | <p><i>Requires genuine understanding of their world (see Module 3, Attunement). Powerful when used well. Unconvincing when the vision is clearly yours rather than theirs.</i></p> |

WHEN TO USE WHICH MODE

If the other person is already open: push modes are efficient. If there is resistance or ambiguity: pull modes will usually outperform a better-argued push. The most common error is applying more assertion and logic to a situation that is already resistant to both.

03 MODULE 2: CIALDINI INFLUENCE STACK

The Cialdini Influence Stack is a five-component library of psychological tendencies that affect how people respond to requests and recommendations. These are not tricks. They are descriptions of how humans actually behave — which means they apply to you as much as to the person you are trying to influence.

01 RECIPROCITY

People tend to return favours, share knowledge freely and generously before you need anything.

In software delivery, this means sharing useful thinking, flagging risks outside your remit, and recommending someone else when you're not the right fit. None of this should be calculated — clients and colleagues can usually detect performed generosity at some distance.

02 COMMITMENT & CONSISTENCY

People follow through on positions they have already taken, especially publicly.

Get small agreements early rather than attempting the large ask in one move. If a stakeholder has already agreed that a risk is real, they are more likely to support the conclusion that follows. Work backwards from where you need to get to.

03 SOCIAL PROOF

In conditions of uncertainty, people look to what others are doing.

A concrete example of how another team navigated a similar situation is often more persuasive than an abstract argument. Patterns, case studies, and war stories all carry this load. This is not namedropping — it is evidence of prior art.

04 AUTHORITY

Credibility and demonstrated expertise increase influence.

Technical people often undersell this. Credibility can be demonstrated through the quality of your questions and observations, not just through explicit credentials. The question that cuts to the heart of a problem signals authority more convincingly than a CV.

05 LIKING

People are more influenced by those they like and trust.

Rapport matters. Genuine curiosity about the other person's work matters. So does being reliable, straightforward, and easy to deal with. This is not manipulation — influence flows more easily through relationships with real mutual respect.

04 MODULE 3: PINK ABC RUNTIME

The Pink ABC Runtime addresses the underlying disposition of the user rather than specific techniques. The argument, from Dan Pink's *To Sell is Human*, is that everyone is in the business of moving people — not just salespeople — and that three core capabilities determine how well they do it.

A ATTUNEMENT

The ability to step outside your own perspective and see the situation from the other person's point of view.

For consultants, this is harder than it sounds. Being brought in as an expert creates a subtle pressure to lead with your own frame. Attunement means resisting that: starting by understanding what the client is actually trying to achieve, what pressures they are under, and what success looks like to them. The better you understand their world, the more precisely you can position what you are offering.

B BUOYANCY

Staying resilient when you are not getting traction.

Consultants are often trying to move people on things they are ambivalent about, inside organisations where they have influence but not authority. Pink's counterintuitive finding: interrogative self-talk — "*can I make this case well?*" — outperforms positive self-talk because it prompts actual preparation rather than mere confidence. The relevant application is often not bouncing back from outright rejection, but not quietly abandoning an idea after the first lukewarm response.

C CLARITY

Helping people see their situation differently, not just providing more information.

The shift from problem-solving to problem-finding. Clients can usually solve their own problems once they have correctly identified them — what they often cannot do is see past their current framing. A consultant who says "*here is the answer to the question you asked*" is useful. One who says "*I think you may be asking the wrong question*" is valuable. In software delivery, the stated requirement and the actual need are frequently not the same thing.

05

THE INFLUENCE PLANNER — COMPANION TOOL

The Influence Planner is a browser-based application available at experiments.mattballantine.com/influenceplanner/. It provides a structured eight-step process for working through a specific influence challenge. No installation is required. No data leaves your device.

Launching the application

Open <https://experiments.mattballantine.com/influenceplanner/> in any modern web browser.

Step reference

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 01 | The influence challenge | Describe the situation plainly. Do not attempt to frame it well yet. |
| 02 | What's in it for you? | Surface your own stake honestly. Understanding your motivations clearly will help later. |
| 03 | What's in it for them? | Shift perspective entirely. What does this look like from their position? What pressures are they under? |
| 04 | Restate the challenge | Having considered both sides, revisit your framing. A good restatement acknowledges both sets of interests. |
| 05 | Can they legitimately say no? | Is this genuinely their decision to make? If so, your approach must respect that. |
| 06 | Do they already want to say yes? | Are you pushing on an open door? This shapes whether you need to persuade at all. |
| 07 | Tactics: what, when, how | Reflective prompts across four areas: approach, relationship, timing, and the ask itself. Write your plan. |
| 08 | First action | Not this week. Not when the time is right. What can you do today? |

Saving your output

On the final step, select **Print / Save PDF**. This opens a clean single-page summary in a new window and triggers your device's print dialogue. Choose *Save as PDF* to retain a copy. Your browser may ask permission to open a new window — allow this once.

DATA & PRIVACY

All data entered in the Influence Planner is stored in your browser session only. Nothing is transmitted. Closing the file clears the session. Save your PDF before closing if you want to keep your work.

06

TROUBLESHOOTING & KNOWN ISSUES

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| ERR_01 | Logic and evidence are not working | The other person may not be in a state to receive them. Switch to pull mode. Ask a question instead of making an argument. See Module 1. |
| ERR_02 | The other person agrees in the meeting but nothing changes afterwards | Verbal agreement without commitment. Return to Commitment & Consistency (Module 2, principle 02). Seek a specific public next step, not a general yes. |
| ERR_03 | You are being ignored | Authority deficit or liking deficit — or both. Review Module 2, principles 04 and 05. Consider whether you are the right person to make this case, or whether someone else should carry it. |
| ERR_04 | You keep solving the wrong problem | Clarity is not running. See Module 3, component C. Spend more time in problem-finding before moving to problem-solving. |
| ERR_05 | The print window does not open | Your browser may be blocking popups. Allow popups for <code>experiments.mattballantine.com</code> and try again. |
| ERR_06 | You feel resistance is unreasonable | Attunement is not running at full capacity. See Module 3, component A. The resistance usually makes complete sense from where the other person is standing. |

07 WARRANTY & ETHICAL USE POLICY

Warranty

This product is provided as-is. No guarantee is given that applying these frameworks will result in the outcome you want. Human beings are not deterministic systems. The frameworks described in this manual improve your odds; they do not fix the result.

Results will vary depending on context, relationship history, organisational culture, the specific individuals involved, and factors you have not yet identified. This is normal. Consult the Troubleshooting section and try again.

Ethical use

These tools are designed for use in situations where the outcome you are seeking is genuinely good for the other person, or at minimum does them no harm. Dan Pink describes this as *servant selling*: it is not manipulation if the goal is to help the other person arrive at a better outcome.

The line between influence and manipulation is not always crisp, but a reliable test is this: would you be comfortable if the other person could see exactly what you were doing and why? If not, reconsider.

FINAL NOTE

The single most important thing in this entire manual is not a framework or a principle. It is genuine curiosity about the other person's situation. Everything else follows from that, or it doesn't work properly.