How’s Your Influence?

Next to the favor of God, everything rises and falls on leadership.

John Maxwell’s great one word definition of leadership: INFLUENCE.

The principle I want to drill down and focus on is the fact that:
Your influence is either increasing or decreasing; it is never staying the same.

Insert your own personal illustrations. Below are relationships to consider:
  - Job (co-worker / boss)
  - Home (kids / wife)
  - Children’s Ministry (Child / Parent)

The more relational the environment, (because relationships move and change slowly), the more it may feel like its in neutral and holding it’s own . . .
Like it’s staying the same, but it’s not!

Each of you in this room has leadership influence.
How far you develop that influence is up to you.
What you do with your influence is up to you.

Is your influence increasing?

How do you know?
  - People want to be around you.
  - More people follow.
  - People say yes easier.
  - Your productivity increases.
  - People seek out your advice.
  - Favor and momentum are not strangers to you.
  - Your level of responsibility grows.

Is your influence decreasing?

How do you know?
  - At work… what’s the ultimate sign that your influence is over? FIRED!
  - What kinds of things happen at work or home that let you know your influence is decreasing? (See above list)

Keep growing as a leader!
5 Practices That Will Increase Your Influence:

1. **Encourage people.**

   John Maxwell says that encouragement is 51% of leadership. I want to raise the bar for encouragement, with this new definition.

   • Encouraging leaders naturally **draw** people to them.

   In a public environment . . . people will migrate to you!

   Life is wonderful, but it’s difficult.
   - Think of people who when you see them, you light up and move toward them.

   - Now, who are those who when you see them you want to hide because they suck the life out of you?

   - *(Insert a personal illustration recounting 2 such examples).*

   • Leaders who discourage others will **drive** people away.

   If you are a leader and people do not migrate to you, there is a reason. *(Not about personality.)*

   Leaders do, on occasion, have a bad day.

2. **Solve problems.**

   Anyone here have a problem?
   Anyone sitting next to your problem? *(Smile)*

   Anyone can spot a problem.
   For some people that’s there spiritual gift!
   The gift of complaining – some people really good at it!

   • **Clarify** the problem.

   First make sure you are not trying to solve a tension.
   Manage tensions; solve problems!

   *Insert your own illustrations. Below are mine:*
Married… My wife is a morning person. I’m a night person. That’s not a problem, that’s a tension. That’s not going to change.

When I go speak somewhere, the creative team wants the lights low and the ushers want the lights high! That’s not a problem, that’s a tension.

In the local church there is always a pull for resources, energy, promotion etc., between evangelism and discipleship. That’s not a problem that’s a tension.

Tensions are realities of life that don’t go away, so we learn to manage them through maturity and reason.

Problems are real issues that need to be fixed.

• **Right-size** the problem.

Insert your own illustrations. Below are mine:
When the lights went out in the Superdome, in the middle of the Super Bowl, that was a problem. Someone needed to fix it!

The goal in the moment was not to figure out who did it, who was going to pay for it, who would be fired, how to rewire the entire system in a better way, or how to make sure this never happens again! Right-sizing the Super Bowl problem had one focal point of clarity!
GET THE LIGHTS ON NOW!

Right sizing removes the drama and brings clarity!
(Who puts drama in? Commentators!)
Leaders remove it!

Insert your own illustrations. Below are mine:
[My ministry area] is “Out of money, out of money!!”
Right-sized: OK… how much money… by when? Let’s break this down!

• **Identify and implement a solution.**

  o They figured out what to do, and in 34 minutes, the lights were back on!
3. **Initiate productive change.**

Smart leaders don’t change something just for the sake of change. They make changes to improve things.

The saying I communicate to our 12Stone Staff is:

“Make things better not different.”

*If you have a great restaurant, but something happened and people don’t like the food, don’t just change the menu; make the food better!*

“If you changed something and no one got mad, you just changed something that didn’t matter.”

*Insert your own illustration(s). Below are mine:*

- PF Chang’s changed their Flat Bread… people upset… it mattered!
- Pastor Kevin – Still senior pastor but no longer preaching. You think that change would get people upset?! You bet! That mattered!

- **Get buy-in** from those above you. (And key people around you.)

- **Communicate why** you are making the change.

  *Insert your own illustration. Below is mine:*

  - Small Groups – a big change from year-round to semester based.

- **Give the people time to adjust.**

  - SG’s: People experience loss… something they were used to.

    Consider: What are the losses they are experiencing? It’s the transition from the old to the new.

    Let them talk about it.

4. **Trade excuses for results.**

You know the old saying, “If you want something done go to the busiest person you know!”

*“There are two types of people in the business community: Those who produce results and those who give you reasons why they didn’t.”*

*Peter Drucker*
We are all tempted to make excuses. (It’s human nature)

Positive source:

It comes from a natural desire to explain what we don’t understand. (Why is my business not growing? Why is my marriage not working?) This helps us explain why a situation isn’t like what we wanted or expected.

If it stops there, that’s OK. Not productive, but OK.

Negative source:

It comes from a basic insecurity that wants others to see us differently, (usually in a more favorable light), so much so that we are willing to not accept responsibility and even deny reality.

Not OK, and counterproductive.

“Good leaders always make things happen.” (Productive leadership energy)

You can’t fake results.
You either did it or you didn’t.

Insert your own illustration(s). Below are mine:

- 49’s and the Ravens… only one team won. The other didn’t. That’s it.
- Starbucks bought Teavana for $620mm. Starbucks plans to expand Teavana’s current 300 mall-based stores, and include loose-leaf tea bars for specialty teas. That acquisition will either work or it won’t.
- Church in CA: Launched a new campus with 1,000 top people from it’s Central campus . . . It started dropping… 900 – 750 – 600 -- 500 – 400. The Campus Pastor would never own it, never took responsibility, made excuses and then eventually spiritualized it and started preaching on Gideon. (Goal 300!) Went to great lengths to convince the board that God was the author of shrinking the campus. They finally convinced him they were the authors of shrinking his paycheck and eventually he was gone.

This was a good guy!
They picked him of all the others for a multi-million dollar launch.
What went wrong?
What goes wrong in stories like this we hear?
When the leader makes excuses and won’t face the truth. 
That’s where it starts. 
Put that same energy into making it work!

Trade excuses for energy toward solutions and positive momentum.

• Start it . . .
• Finish it!

5. Invest in people.

Insert your own illustration. Mine is below:
You are doing this so well on the Children’s Ministry team. 
Investing in the lives of kids and families!!

• Care

It all starts with actually caring. 
The kids (or adults) have to matter to you. 
They need your heart as much as your mind. 
It’s not all about what you know, as much as how much you care.

Caring helps keep frustration down. 
Caring helps you go the extra mile…

  o Write a parent a note or have coffee with them.

• Cultivate

Look for the best; bring out the best!

  o Maybe it’s someone at work or a neighbor. 
Get them around great people, put a book in their hands, invite them to an inspiring event, tell them you believe in them!

• Challenge

If you truly care, and you are cultivating the best in them, you will be courageous enough to tell them the truth and challenge them to be better!