

The following excerpted is from an unpublished book chapter, “Is Ethical Influence the Secret of Leadership?” (by Matthew F. Barney, Ph.D., Gregory P.M. Neidert, Ph.D., & Robert B Cialdini, Ph.D, pp. 29-35).

### The Core Motives<sup>1</sup> Approach to Understanding Social Influence

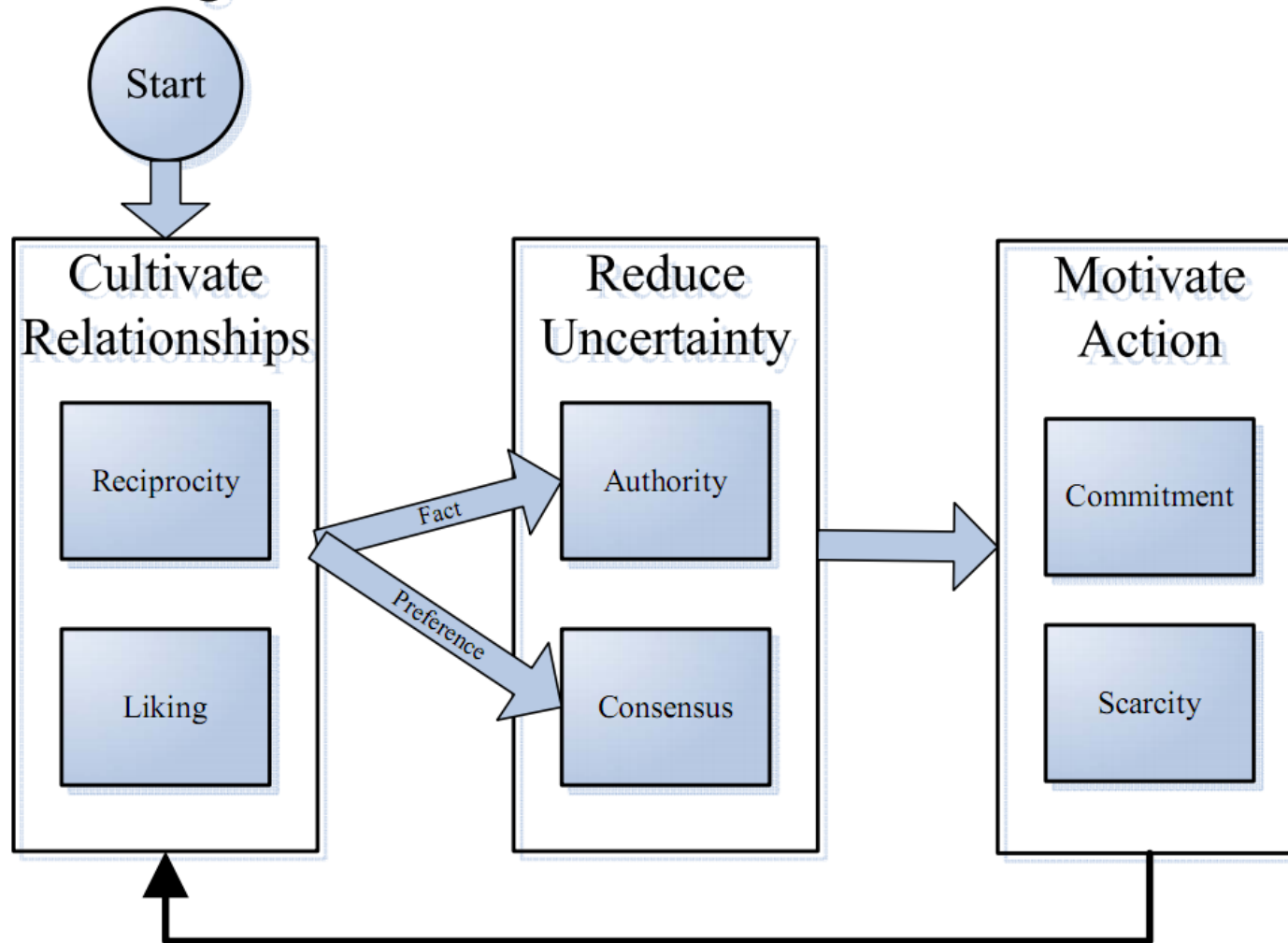
By Gregory P.M. Neidert, Ph.D.

As we noted earlier in this chapter, the six principles of social influence are quite intuitive. Having an understanding of the principles is one thing, being able to ethically and effectively employ them is quite another. Most of us understand the principles and their impact in retrospect. We recognize them once we have seen them in action on others, or when we reflect on when they have successfully been used to influence us. Beyond this level of knowledge, effective leaders also need to understand, in advance of encountering a situation, which principles are likely to be most available to them and enter the situation prepared with a plan to engage their power for mutual benefit.

Neidert (2001, 2003) formalized and proposed the Core Motives Model of Social Influence<sup>1</sup> to do just that. The model helps one understand the circumstances or conditions under which each principle is especially useful and most powerful. In this model the Core Motives for the Agent of Influence relate to three fundamental phases of the influence process: Cultivating Relationships (Relationships), Reducing Uncertainty (Uncertainty) and Motivating Action (Motivation). He developed it as both a developmental and strategic approach to more simply and effectively manage the influence process. It is presented in its developmental form below in Figure 2 and Table 3.

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Figure 2: Core Motives Model Flowchart



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### Cultivating Relationships

Influence scientists consider the person making a request an “Agent” and the receiver a “Target”, and for our purposes the Leader is typically the “Agent”. In the influence process, when the Agent and Target are unknown to one another, the Agent has little or no standing in the eyes of the others with which to make a request. One of the first questions the Target of influence asks is, “Why should I listen to you? Why should I take the time to listen to what you have to say?” To be effective for both the short and long term, the Agent needs first to connect with the Target at a personal level and create a relationship. The two principles most central to cultivating relationships are Reciprocity and Liking. The other principles are certainly useful in augmenting relationships, but we can safely assert that if the central issue in your influence strategy has to do with initiating, building, maintaining, and repairing relationships and you do not use the principles of Reciprocity and/or Liking as the core of your strategy, we can confidently predict that your attempt at influence won’t be as successful as it could otherwise be.

### Reducing Uncertainty

Once a personal connection, a relationship, has been established between the Agent and the Target, the Target is more open and receptive to the Agent’s request. The Agent now has substantially improved standing from which to make his/her request. The next question the Target asks is “What evidence or assurances do you have, such that if I take your advice and move in your direction you are advocating, that the future will have a better outcome for me than by doing nothing or by following some other course of action or someone else’s advice?” Here, the core issue for the Target is that s/he needs to have convincing evidence or assurances from the Agent that will reduce the anxiety for making a move from his or her secure base. For the

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Agent, it is having the appropriate evidence ready and available to provide to the Target. The two principles central to this core motive are Authority and Consensus/Social Proof.

When we are uncertain about how to proceed, when we can't find the answers within ourselves, we look outside of ourselves for the answers. If the solution to our problem is perceived as a matter of fact, we turn to those we believe to be authorities on the matter. This includes getting guidance from lawyers on legal matters, physicians for health concerns, auto mechanics for problems with our vehicles, and so forth. In these circumstances, the principle of Authority will be most powerful in affecting one's decision.

However, when the issue is a matter of opinion, taste, or subjective judgment, we turn to others like us for evidence on how to think, feel and behave. Hence, the principle of Consensus/Social Proof is most potent in these situations. As with the previous core motive, other principles positively impact Targets' comfort with moving into untested waters and new directions at your request. However, if you enter a situation where individuals are likely to be uncertain and anxious about acting on your request and you have not come sufficiently prepared with the germane Authority and/or Consensus information to provide them, your influence strategy won't be as successful as it could be.

### Motivating Action

Once you have convinced a person that the direction you are recommending is a good one, you've successfully convinced them that the request you are making is the right one, your last hurdle is to motivate the Target to move from a decision to acting on your request. In this phase

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of the influence process, the Target of influence is saying, “Okay, I agree that this is the right direction to move in, but why should I act now instead of later?” At this juncture, the key challenge for the Agent of Influence is one of alignment: what does the Target genuinely stand to lose by not acting on the request in a timely fashion and how does taking advantage of the window of opportunity align with the Target’s values, attitudes, beliefs and past behaviors. Thus, if the Agent wishes to engage the powerful internal motivation of the Target, s/he will turn to the principle of Consistency. If, on the other hand, there are extrinsic factors in the environment that genuinely threaten the Target’s ability to move on this opportunity in the future, then the principle of Scarcity is the most potent to engage. Certainly, as before, the other principles impact whether or not a person will act on a request, but if you don’t use either Consistency or Scarcity as the core of your approach you can’t be as effective as you otherwise could be.

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<b>Table 3: Core Motives Model</b>		
<b>Core Motive</b>	<b>Influence Principle</b>	<b>Leader's Challenge</b>
Cultivating Relationships	Reciprocity  Liking	Have I <b>connected</b> with the individuals to be influenced on a personal level, by uncovering similarities, areas of cooperation, meaningful gifts and concessions? Have I cultivated <b>personal relationships</b> with those I hope to influence by giving to them first?
Reducing Uncertainty	Authority  Consensus	Do I have appropriate <b>evidence</b> from authoritative sources and from similar others to reduce the <b>uncertainty</b> of the people I hope to influence? Does that information sufficiently <b>assure</b> them that moving in the direction I am advocating is a wise decision to make?
Motivating Action	Consistency  Scarcity	How do I <b>motivate</b> the person to follow-through with their decision? Have I aligned my request in such a way that they understand why they should take action on my request now, as opposed to later?

### Bundling the Principles

The Core Motives Model helps us understand the sequence and rationale behind our social influence processes. It is also important to understand that each principle, when genuinely available in the situation, serves to amplify the other principles with which it is combined.

Therefore, for the greatest impact on those we wish to influence and lead, it is incumbent on us to identify all of the principles that are naturally and genuinely available to us in a situation and then to proactively employ them to move others in mutually beneficial ways. In this chapter, we could only cover a sample of amplifiers for each principle. But the best approach for leaders

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involves bundling multiple principles and amplifiers to get the highest level of influence – where ethically appropriate.

While Gandhi can be rightly recognized as one of the most influential leaders ever, he also failed to achieve some of his goals, by his own acknowledgement. Today, not all Indians look on his accomplishments with fondness. But no one disputes the fact that Gandhi successfully led hundreds of millions to follow his path. He held extremely ambitious goals, and even his failures showed dramatic examples of successful ethical influence. Consistent with Neidert's Core Motives Model, Gandhi was a master at bundling multiple principles simultaneously with breathtaking results.

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