

DISCO: It starts with me.

Dr Judi Newman (2025)

In the book “Influence” you can learn an evidence based framework grounded in applied neuroscience – not opinion or guess work. Maximise your influence and impact.

Sometimes leadership problems do not lie with the team but are inherent in the leader themselves. This issue is amplified when you are leading without the positional authority. Korn Ferry (2025) reported that approximately 72% of leaders reported that their roles require them to influence others without having formal authority over them. This finding underscores the changing nature of leadership, where success depends on the ability to build trust, relationships and clarity to influence rather than rely on formal positional authority. This shift calls for leaders to establish a toolkit of persuasion tools and a deep understanding of emotional intelligence and human motivation. A practical tool for how you lead with influence, even without the positional authority can be shown in the DISCO framework. Leadership starts with strengthening your own leadership resilience and mindset.

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| D | Draw a line in the sand: Know your boundaries. Anchor into a place of certainty. Align your thinking and decision making to values, purpose, priorities, safety, standards, rules, or evidence rather than the loudest voice. If you walk past repeated dysfunctional or unhelpful behaviour, you are part of the problem. Learn to say no when appropriate. |
| I | Influence strategies: Inspire (brain 1 GUT), connect (brain 2 HEART), clarity (brain 3 HEAD). We judge someone by their trustworthiness, warmth and credibility. These three factors are associated with deeply integrated and sequential neural circuits of the emotional, social and thinking brain. You can't separate cognition from emotion so how someone feels about you will effect their thinking and determine their willingness to engage and cooperate. Build trust, and establish rapport in order to maximise growth and engagement. Unite the team to reduce the them and us mindset. Understand that we lead with our gut, heart and head and when to use which. |
| S | Structures shape desired behaviours: You can't influence by personality alone. Modify the decision making environment to create settings where people are more likely to make certain choices. Examples of structures are meeting agenda design, meeting protocols, training, induction programs, instruction manuals. Sometimes you may have to delegate the inconvenience to change people's behaviour. Make it simple for people to give you what you are asking for. |
| C | Composure : Know your triggers. Learn calming techniques so that you can access your PFC for problem solving and critical thinking at challenging times. Learn to be calm under pressure. Don't allow your response to become part of the problem. You don't have to win or be right all the time. You don't have to buy in to every comment made. Use strategies to bring about a collective contribute state rather than an agitate state. Project your strengths and intent not your fears and ego. |
| O | Ownership : Take action rather than wait for other people's validation or permission. You can only control your own behaviour. You can't control other people's mood, behaviour or opinions. Other people don't have any power over you unless you give them that power. None of your self esteem is invested in what someone thinks of you, unless you let it. Take action yourself, rather than allow yourself to be blown around by other people's choices or locked into other people's |

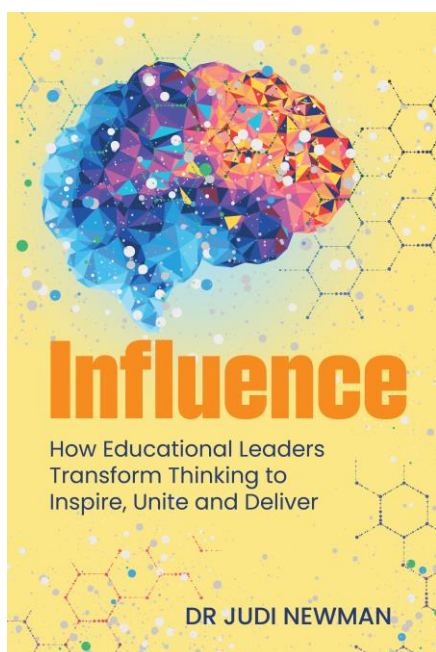
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| | thinking. You won't please everyone all the time so ask yourself, who are you going to disappoint today and can you live with the discomfort of their disapproval. This takes courage and resilience but is an important part of leadership. No one is going to give you permission to step up your leadership. |
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Table 1: The DISCO framework

Take action

When you are in a tight spot, you can't control other people's behaviour so what can you do? It is in the doing that lies the answer. Doing may take courage and be uncomfortable. Be comfortable with discomfort. Take action. This is how:

1. **A** ATTITUDE: Understand that the solution comes back to your actions. You can only control your own behaviour. You can't control other people. (Consider the DISCO factors)
2. **C** CONSEQUENCE: Clarify what you want happen. What do the results or outcomes look like? What is your goal?
3. **T** TATICS: How can you step up your influence to create the conditions to shape the desired behaviours? (Work through the INFLUENTIAL factors)



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References

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