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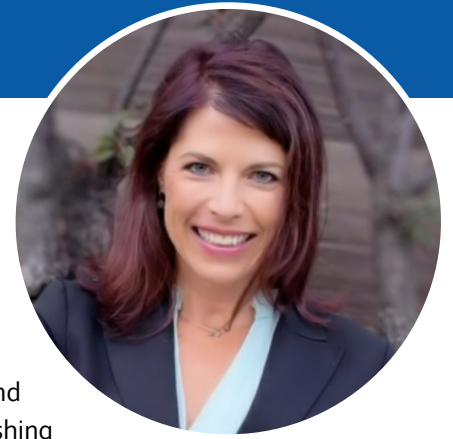
*Do You Want to Improve Sales?  
Then Improve Your Influence.*

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*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at [Sara@LaForestConsulting.com](mailto:Sara@LaForestConsulting.com) or via [LinkedIn](#).

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

Sales are about relationships. And while it's true, it's only part of the story. If you truly want to increase your sales, you must increase your influence. Influence is the ability to achieve your objective (i.e. sales) when you have neither the control nor the authority to accomplish your objective alone. And this is the place where the sales person resides.

The challenge, however, is how to do it.

There are certain basics that all sales people need:

- A good product or service that provides value to the customer
- A clear definition of why your product or service is the best solution for the customer – your differentiator
- A clear value proposition – why is the customer better off buying from you and buying from you now
- A promise that you can back up – drives customer satisfaction

Many people make the mistake of defining influence as a form of manipulation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Influence is not about manipulation; it's about mutuality. And mutuality drives off the Law of Reciprocity: if I provide something of value to you first, then you are likely to provide something of value to me. The caveat – as long as what you provide me is something that I value and my company values.

In our work, we see the potential use of influence squandered away. And there are ten reasons we found, and we call them the Barriers to Gaining Influence.

#### **10 Barriers You Need to Overcome to Gain Influence in a Sales Situation**

- 1. Fear** - This is the number one issue that stops us from using influence in a sales situation. And fear appears in many forms. It can be the fear of failure, the fear of being rejected, the fear of appearing foolish, the fear that we are not good enough. Regardless of what you are afraid of, fear stops us dead in our tracks. We don't succeed, we don't exert influence because we've convinced ourselves before we even start that we may not or will not be successful.
- 2. Inability to develop real relationships** -- People work with people they like. They buy from people they like. They provide support to people they like. To think otherwise is to miss an important component of sales success. It is impossible to exert influence on someone with whom you have not developed a real and positive relationship. It's also very difficult to get them to buy – unless they are buying on price alone.
- 3. Poor responsiveness** -- The quicker you respond the more responsive you appear. And if response is important to the person you want to influence (and buyers appreciate quick response), you have just made a positive impression on them.
- 4. Overselling** - Overselling is annoying and it also communicates uncertainty in your position. When a person says yes, and you continue to try to convince them- what are you really communicating?
- 5. Quitting at No** - Now, nobody likes rejection. Yet as a salesperson, "no" is often the response we hear. Sure "no" can mean "no", but it can also mean: "no", not right now; "no", I'm not yet convinced – I need more information. Oftentimes, an objection is not a rejection. It's a request for

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more information and an opportunity for further discussion. Don't let no be an immediate lost opportunity.

**6. Perfectionism** -- Too often, we believe that unless our proposal or request for information is perfectly framed, it cannot move forward. This is wrong. Perfection sends an unintended message that you are indecisiveness and in the worse case it can create immobilization. While you may believe you are striving for perfection, the other person wonders what's taking you so long.

**7. Over-Expressing Personal Beliefs** -- Some sales people just can't seem to keep their opinions to themselves. Think about when someone is selling to you and they stop to express a personal, political or social belief. If you're like most of use – it's annoying and frankly we don't care. Expressing personal beliefs has a way of compromising the very relationship you want to build.

**8. Lack of Focus** -- It's difficult to make a sale or to garner much respect if you go from one prospect to another; one idea to another; one sales strategy to another and finish nothing. Often your buyer will just give up, quit listening or no longer support your efforts.

**9. Poor Impression Management (Executive Presence)** -- This is not just about looking the part. It's about being the part. It's about managing your image thoughtfully and not artificially. Like it or not, unsuitably presented, tired, poorly poised, uninformed and, sloppy people present a poor and unconvincing image.

**10. Lack of Gratitude** -- People like recognition; they like to know they are appreciated; they like to be noticed in a positive way. And this includes your buyers and the people who support you in your sales efforts. Ignore this at your peril. Remember, if you are unwilling or think it's unnecessary to recognize and express appreciation for others, your chance of influencing them is remote.

***Is One of the Top 10 Barriers Holding You Back From Influencing Others and Gaining More Sales?***

We have often found that one or more of the above behavioral traits is present in sales people who believe (or who others believe) are less successful then they either want to be or can be. These behaviors are the intangibles that inhibit good sales performance. We believe these intangibles are so important to recognize and attend to (if you see these in your own thought processes or behaviors) that should you refuse to address them, you will come up short of exerting the influence necessary to get sales to advance yourself and your company.