**Assessing Our Ability to Influence Others**

By: Jim Clemmer

***"Ain't no use worrying about the things out of your control, because if they're out of your control, ain't no use worrying... Ain't no use worrying about things in your control, because if they're in your control, ain't no use worrying."***

In our personal and leadership development workshops we often conduct a 'degrees of control' exercise. We ask participants to come up with examples in the following areas: **1. Direct Control**; **2. Influence**; and **3. No Control**. While there's often lots of debate and not always full agreement, examples under No Control generally include things like the weather, the economy, natural disasters, freak accidents, and the like. Discussions about my degree of Direct Control usually boil down to just one thing — me. However, some autocratic people fool themselves into thinking they have direct control over their teams, kids, or people reporting to them. Many other people are quick to surrender to the Victimitis Virus and declare they have no control or even influence over the behavior of anyone else.

Our degree of influence is clearly the largest area — and the one open to the most debate. The amount of influence I have is directly related to the strength of my Influence Index in each situation. The CLEMMER Group developed the Influence Index to help participants gauge their position with a person or group in **a particular situation**. Each time I am trying to influence (lead) another person or group toward my point of view or course of action, I need to assess my position of influence. An objective and honest assessment of my position will tell me if the time is right and I have enough strength to proceed.

The assessment is based on a five-point scale. 1 is extremely weak, 2 is fairly weak, 3 is moderate, 4 is fairly strong, and 5 is extremely strong. Using that scale, we can score ourselves in each of the following 12 areas for **a particular situation**:

* my clarity around what a successful outcome would look like
* my understanding of their position and win (how they'll benefit?)
* my persuasion and communication skills
* my timing and the fit of my proposed action with the situation
* my tone and approach (will I increase or decrease defensiveness and conflict?)
* my genuine desire for a win/win outcome
* my credibility with this person or group
* my passion and commitment (including persistence)
* our levels of mutual trust
* the strength of our relationship
* how well I've covered the bases with other key influencers and built their support
* my appointed role, position, and authority

A total score of 45 points or higher, shows I am in a strong position to influence that person or group in that situation. A score of 25 - 44 is not very strong. I might want to wait for a better time or strengthen a few of my lowest areas (which may take some time and hard work). If I score 24 points or lower, my ability to influence is very low. I clearly have a lot of work to do if I want to increase my leadership on that issue or in that situation.

The seventh U.S. President, Andrew Jackson, once said, "One person with courage makes a majority." It often takes courage to use the Influence Index. It's much easier to throw up our hands and walk away muttering, "I told them, but they just won't listen." The reason they don't listen often has a lot to do with my ability to influence. My ability to influence has a lot to do with my choice accumulations. If I am going to improve my Influence Index, I will have to change my choices and get to work on changing me to help change them.

Jim Clemmer's  [practical leadership & personal growth books](http://www.jimclemmer.com/online-book-store-audio-leadership-books-leadership-management-time-management.php), [workshops](http://www.jimclemmer.com/customized-workshops-for-staff-and-management-teams.php), and [team retreats](http://www.jimclemmer.com/management-team-retreats.php) have helped hundreds of thousands of people worldwide improve personal, team, and organizational performance. Jim's web site,  [JimClemmer.com](http://www.jimclemmer.com/), has over [300 articles](http://www.jimclemmer.com/leadership-articles.php) and [dozens of video clips](http://jimclemmer.com/index.php?option=com_seyret) covering a broad range of topics on change, [organization improvement, self-leadership, and leading others](http://www.jimclemmer.com/leadership-articles.php). Sign-up to receive Jim's [popular monthly newsletter](http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter/), and follow his [leadership blog](http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/). Jim's international best-sellers include *The VIP Strategy,* [*Firing on All Cylinders*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/firing-on-all-cylinders.php)*,* [*Pathways to Performance*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/pathways-to-performance-a-guide-to-transforming-yourself-your-team-and-your-organization.php)*,* [*Growing the Distance*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/content/view/726)*,* [*The Leader's Digest*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/the-leaders-digest-timeless-principles-for-team-and-organization-success.php) *and* [*Moose on the Table*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/content/view/961). His latest book is [*Growing @ the Speed of Change.*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/growing-the-speed-of-change.php)