Chapter 1

Principles of Influence

Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are.

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I'm sure the thought of using the words *principles* and *politicians* in the same sentence—especially when we're talking about influence strategies from Washington, D.C.—seems a little odd. We hear of some new scandal every day. In fact, in polls of the most trustworthy professions in America, lobbyists and politicians inevitably rank last.

Yet the most effective lobbyists in Washington, D.C., sleep at night. You may not understand how, especially those who work on issues with which you disagree, but they do. Sure, there are those who cheat their clients, give advice that they know is bad, or even break the law by trying (whether successfully or not) to buy members of Congress. Over the long term, however, these lobbyists simply do not accomplish as much as those who abide by the positive principles of influence outlined in this book.

If you think about it, when and if the unprincipled lobbyists wind up in jail they aren't really being all that effective.

Let's look at the example of a notorious lobbyist you may have heard of—Jack Abramoff. He's the one who went to prison for three and a half years for corruption of public officials, among other things. Before we get into this example, because I'm an ethical person I must disclose that I once worked at a law firm where, several years after I left, Abramoff would become a partner. The firm, then called Preston Gates & Ellis, was implicated in some of his egregious activities. That said, my only direct interaction with him was in a room in the company of about 100 other people. Despite the fact that he and I had no personal connection other than this brief encounter, when the details of the scandal were coming out my parents called frequently to ask, "Have you been subpoenaed yet?"—to which my answer was, "Do you know what *subpoenaed* means? 'Cause it's not good."

I was never subpoenaed, but I did learn at least one important thing in reviewing what happened: in the long run, Jack Abramoff was not a good lobbyist, in any sense of the word. Sure, initially he had some success extracting large sums from various interests (such as online casinos and Native American tribes) in exchange for "influencing" Congress to pass (or not pass) bills favorable to those clients. He lied, he cheated, he bought access, and he bribed.

But did he achieve anything? Perhaps here and there he won some small victories, but a review of some of his policy efforts shows that a version of the online gambling legislation his clients sought to defeat in 1999 was passed in 2006, language to support the Tigua tribe that he bribed Congressman Bob Ney to insert into legislation never passed, he failed to persuade Congress to reopen several Native American casinos, and eventually his efforts to keep the Northern Mariana Islands from being subjected to federal minimum wage laws failed. Oh, and he, his partner, and several other people associated with the scandal went to prison. And did I mention the $1.7 million he owes to the Internal Revenue Service?

In his autobiography *Capitol Punishment,* Abramoff claims that he saved his clients millions of dollars by preventing the passage of certain harmful new taxes and restrictive policies. It's hard to say, though, whether these things would have passed anyway, particularly because Republicans—a party not likely to support many of the taxes and other policy issues Abramoff lobbied against—were in control of both the House of Representatives *and* the Senate almost the entire time, with the exception of the 2001-2002 term, when Democrats barely held on to an evenly divided Senate.

I'm not defending what Abramoff did. His tactics were, indeed, horrible, unethical, and illegal. However, while we tend to believe he had amazing power because he could get in to see those politicians who took his campaign money (he made more than $4.4 million in contributions), in the end things didn't turn out so well for that great influencer Jack Abramoff or, obviously, his clients. As Judy Schneider, a specialist on Congress in the government division of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and a person who trains members of Congress on the legislative process, says, "That's what people don't get about Abramoff. In the end, he never really accomplished anything."

Contrast Abramoff's story with that of Wayne Pacelle, current president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and former vice president for government affairs who, along with his team at HSUS, has overseen the passage of more than 15 federal animal protection statutes and hundreds of state statutes.

Funded by membership dues and contributions, the HSUS, like Abramoff, has a wide range of influence tools at its disposal. Humane USA, an unaffiliated political action committee for the animal protection movement, contributed about $212,000 to political campaigns in the 2010 cycle. HSUS has a cadre of government relations professionals walking the halls of Congress. Their powerful professional grassroots campaign staff helps stoke and fuel communications from citizens to their representatives in Congress. They use earned media, paid advertising, and any legal and ethical tool they can get their hands on to further their cause. I'd bet Wayne Pacelle or his lobbying staff could get in to most offices on Capitol Hill.

Using similar tools, at a much more limited magnitude than Abramoff, the HSUS has achieved some major legislative victories in recent years and, in a very tough budget climate, managed to get record-level increases for animal welfare–related federal programs. How did they succeed? Through a combination of legislative strategy, relationship building and, yes, in some cases, having affiliated groups that support animal-friendly legislators through campaign contributions. Yet Wayne Pacelle is the respected leader of a national organization and Jack Abramoff is a convicted felon.

The differences between Jack Abramoff and Wayne Pacelle can be explained through a basic understanding of what effective influence is—and is not—about.

What Influence Is *Not* About

Many of us see the word *influence* as a dirty word. For example, we don't call guidance counselors "influence" counselors, right? Obviously, the word *guidance* has a much better connotation than the word *influence,* and yet they are synonyms. To influence simply means to effect the actions or opinions of others. The decision as to the value of the effect, with the exception of clearly illegal or immoral activities, is mainly in the eye of the beholder. In other words, the act of influencing itself isn't good or bad: we perceive it as good or bad depending on whether we like the outcome or not.

Clearly the tactics used to influence matter as well. Changing the behavior of others through bribery, for example, is bad. But bribery isn't influence. It's bribery. In fact, there are a host of things that effective lobbyists know have no place in the influence world.

The connection between "influence" and "what those people in Washington, D.C., do" certainly doesn't help. It seems like not a day goes by without hearing of some sort of corruption scandal in which unscrupulous politicians do unscrupulous things to unsuspecting citizens. Yet engaging in these corrupt practices, although they may bring some short-term gain, will not achieve lasting influence. To achieve beneficial long-term benefits, you must know what effective influence is *not* about.

Manipulation

You might have heard someone say, "That person is a good influence on so-and-so," but you've probably never heard, "That person manipulated the other person for the better." Influence is about convincing someone else to do something for a mutual interest. Manipulators, on the other hand, convince someone else to do something solely for their own benefit. Effective lobbyists find that policy "sweet spot" where both the decision makers and the lobbyists feel as if they've won—or, at least, both sides are equally miserable with the outcome. They achieve a win-win or an equal and tolerable lose-lose situation. Although they don't always succeed, you'll find many examples of these throughout the book.

I know it will be a stretch to convince you that the road to a successful political career in Washington, D.C., is paved with good intentions. Sure, lobbyists manipulate policymakers and vice versa every day. Usually they achieve this goal by pretending that a mutual interest exists, even when it doesn't. Over the long term, however, these politicians gain a reputation for double dealing and are universally rejected.

In applying this idea to your own influence situation, consider the differences between manipulation and a win-win scenario. Have you figured out how what you want will truly and honestly benefit everyone involved? And more important, have you figured out whether your solution is really the best fit for your audience? In the long run, if there is not mutual benefit to the proposal, the person you've manipulated over to your viewpoint will realize that, change his or her mind and, possibly, bad mouth you to others.

Bribery

In 2012 a chief of staff I know told me about the time he received an e-mail from a businessperson in the district, regarding a policy issue. The congressman, a strong proponent of business and economic interests, was inclined to support his constituent—except for one sentence in the message: “I’ve sent in my contribution to the congressman’s campaign and look forward to seeing you at the upcoming event.”

Because the constituent inadvertently tied support for a policy issue to a campaign contribution, that one sentence ruined his prospects. My friend politely, apologetically, but firmly had to tell the constituent “That’s it. We can’t help you now. It’s not only unethical but illegal.” This representative and his staff are on the opposite end of the political spectrum from me (we still play nicely together, though). This strong feeling against even the perception of bribery is bipartisan and ubiquitous.

I realize that many people see bribery as the most pervasive and effective technique for convincing politicians to do something (or not do something, as the case may be). Last time I checked, though, bribery is illegal and most people in Washington, D.C., don’t want to take the risk of several years in prison, even a prison for white-collar criminals. As the penalties for a bribery conviction become even more stringent (in 2007, for example, Congressman William Jefferson from Louisiana received a 13-year sentence), politicians become even more nervous.

If you prefer to look at it cynically, think about this: you rarely know if bribery is going to work—and when you attempt it and it doesn’t work, you’ve made an enemy for life and possibly earned yourself a jail term.

In fact, in the wake of all these lobbying scandals, the U.S. Congress passed a series of new rules and regulations designed to dramatically reduce lobbyists’ ability to “bribe” elected officials with cash, gifts, or other benefits such as travel. The bill, called the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, requires lobbyists to fill out a variety of disclosure forms, contribution reporting forms, and the like. The Obama administration got on the bandwagon as well, banning anyone registered as a lobbyist from talking to any executive branch employee. Not only does this make it extremely difficult to share information about the potential impact of new rules and regulations, but dinner table conversation in homes where a lobbyist is married to an executive branch employee has been dramatically impacted.

I'm not suggesting people feel bad for lobbyists because they have to fill out paperwork; however, while imposing important restraints on how the business of Washington gets conducted, these rules do have some unintended consequences. For example, the prohibition on taking a legislator out to dinner has resulted in the toothpick rule, which suggests that any food offered at a lobbyist-sponsored reception in Washington, D.C., must fit on a toothpick. In addition, to eliminate any perception that the reception might equal a meal, lobbyists and policymakers must stand throughout the entire event. Toothpick manufacturers love this rule—chair manufacturers do not.

Regardless of how you feel about toothpicks and chairs, the point is that by both regulation and effective influence practice, bribery simply doesn't work over the long run in Washington, D.C. Money for money's sake is not generally a motivation for policymakers. Members of Congress do seek funds for their reelection campaign but recognize that whereas you need money to run a campaign, you need votes to win an election. And legislators know that voters will not support those convicted of or even tainted by a bribery scandal. It's no coincidence that every lawmaker convicted of bribery—and most accused of it—either lost their seat or resigned shortly thereafter.

Applying the no bribery rule to your cause is usually pretty easy. Just ask yourself, "Am I breaking the law by offering money, gifts, or other benefits solely in exchange for a favor?" If the answer is yes, that's bribery.

Selling Out

I define *selling out* as agreeing to do something (such as taking on a certain job or client) exclusively for the money. While working on Capitol Hill I'd get an interesting phone call at least once per week that went something like this: "Hello, this is the lobbying firm of so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so. We need someone with your expertise and connections on our staff, and we'd like to pay you (insert ridiculous amount of money here)." My husband sometimes wanted me to take these jobs, but I never did because I did not feel strongly about their cause, or in some cases I didn't even support it.

In fact, in 1994, when my then boss was downsized by the voters (a euphemism for the fact that he lost his reelection), I lost my job. After about six weeks of looking I was offered two jobs on the same day. One was for a cause I believed in. One was for a cause I felt indifferent about. The cause I felt indifferent about offered me 50 percent more in salary, but I turned it down. And I'm not the only one who made choices like this. Frankly, I never met one staff person who left Capitol Hill to work for a cause he or she did not feel strongly about or at least support. I certainly didn't agree with many of these causes, but the important thing is that they did. They didn't sell out. Of course, I didn't meet every staff person on Capitol Hill, but in my experience "selling out" is the exception, not the rule.

Logic

Many people believe that if they simply tell a decision maker about their cause and proposed solution, the decision maker will see the light and automatically agree. I see this perspective a great deal with those lobbying on more technical issues, like engineers or scientists. In their world, logic reigns. Once you find the answer to a problem, you apply that answer and the problem is generally solved. If it's not, you need to look for another solution.

Unfortunately, purely logical arguments rarely work in an influence situation because these situations are subjective. The so-called right answer is almost always open to interpretation because different people see the world in different ways. Members of Congress, for example, are more likely to accept logical arguments that benefit their constituents, even if that solution is not in the best interests of the entire country. This is how representative democracy works.

Sure, you'll want to be sure your argument for your cause makes sense. But it will need to make sense from the perspective of your audience, not necessarily in terms of your perspective, or even from the perspective of how it may benefit the world at large. You'll need to put words around your purely logical statement to convince a decision maker that your approach makes sense for *both* logical and self-interested reasons. Chapter 8 will show you how.

Lying

The first time a lobbyist lies to a member of Congress or his staff person is the last. Well, I'll amend that. The first time a lobbyist is *discovered* lying to a member of Congress or a staff person is the last. But those discoveries are made sooner rather than later because information flows so freely in Washington, D.C., sometimes even by accident.

I had this happen to me several times while working on Capitol Hill. People would meet with the congressman and he would say, pretty unequivocally, that such-and-such was not his position on an issue. One group we met with went back to the district and told an outright lie to their members about what the congressman had said. One of their members was a close friend of the congressman and asked him what he had said. Once we discovered the deception, we never met with that group again.

What Influence *Is* About

Overall you'll probably notice that these ideas about what influence is *not* about will differ from the current thinking about a corrupt political system. Even very respected observers of the political process may comment that legislators and their staff are "bought and sold." I can tell you only about what my own experiences in Washington, D.C., are like. My overall goal is not to make you feel better about politics. My goal is to show you what I've seen that works, and doesn't work, on Capitol Hill. And I've seen campaigns based on the following principles work time and time again.

Passion and Conviction

To be successful, you must care, and care deeply, about what you want. Every lobbyist knows that any attempt to influence others on an issue of little importance to him or her will fall flat. The sense of "conviction" you bring to the table dramatically impacts the outcome.

Think about it in the context of sales: if you don't personally believe in the product, you are not likely to get others to do so as well. In Washington, D.C., lobbyists "sell" ideas, and there are as many different ways to care about a policy idea as there are registered lobbyists. Sometimes it's a personally held belief, sometimes it's a desire to promote a specific type of business, or sometimes it's even love for a particular region of the country. As Marci Merola from ALA's Office of Library Advocacy puts it, "People have x-ray vision when it comes to other people's motives." If your motive doesn't have the force of conviction behind it, frankly no one is going to believe you and get on board. Merola calls it the "special spark," and it's critical to success.

To understand this from a D.C. perspective, it's important to understand that there are at least three distinct kinds of lobbyists: lobbyists for hire, lobbyists with a love for their topic, and lobbyists who are lucky enough to earn money for working on a topic they love.

In general, what I describe as lobbyists "for-hire," are those who work for a law or lobbying firm under contract to a specific client. For-love lobbyists are those who are so enthusiastic about an issue that they would advocate on it for free—and in fact some of them do just that. I put so-called citizen lobbyists in this category, specifically those who, although they aren't professionals, become very involved in a particular issue for their own often very personal reasons.

The lobbyists working for both love and money tend to be connected to associations or so-called special interest groups. (By the way, please don't shudder at the term *special interest*. In the next section, we'll talk more about why they really aren't so terrible.)

In my own career, I have been all three kinds of lobbyist. I started shortly after college at a law firm that represented the interests of a range of different clients. For example, I worked closely with one of the lead attorneys for a company called Tele-Communications Inc., or TCI, a cable company that was very involved in efforts to reauthorize the Telecommunications Act. I also worked on a rather random array of issues such as nuclear energy and reinsurance concerns, which are led by the companies that insure insurance companies. Yes, there is a special interest group for everything. The firm was made up of for-hire lobbyists.

In looking at for-hire lobbyists, you may think, "Yeah, they're just passionate about making money"—and some of them are. I'm certainly not suggesting that sweet and pure motives govern every lobbyist, or even that some of those with less-than-altruistic motivations have not been successful. However, the vast majority of successful influencers often start with a profound understanding of—and enthusiasm for—a particular cause. Or, in the case of more esoteric issues, like reinsurance, they may be engaged simply because they love the legislative process. Development of campaign strategies, identification of allies, and the "thrill of the hunt" are the things that get them out of bed in the morning, not necessarily the money.

Later, I worked as a lobbyist for National Public Radio, where all I worked on, day in and day out, was protecting public radio's interests on Capitol Hill, particularly during the debates in early 1995 about eliminating funding for public broadcasting. I love public broadcasting. That's why I took the job, which, believe me, paid a lot less than other positions I was offered.

You also see this for-love enthusiasm with lobbyists associated with disease-focused special interest groups, such as the American Heart Association or the Lupus Foundation of America. The people working for these organizations are passionate about curing diseases. They may currently suffer from or may have recovered from that disease—or they know someone who has.

Sometimes you'll find for-love lobbyists who've been fighting a particular policy battle all their lives, like Lynne Bradley of the American Library Association (ALA). After working as a librarian for many years, she developed a profound level of enthusiasm for lifelong learning and the First Amendment. She now serves as director of the ALA's Washington office.

Even those lobbyists associated with trade associations (those made up of individuals representing different kinds of businesses) generally believe that the types of businesses they represent do some good in the world. In some cases their passion may be making the marketplace better for that business. In others, they may believe strongly that removing taxes and regulations on businesses is good for the whole country.

Finally, some lobbyists (like me) are lucky enough to work for both love and money. Since 2000 my focus has shifted to what is known as grassroots lobbying, although I do represent a couple of clients on Capitol Hill—just to keep up with the latest twists and turns in the D.C. insider game. Although we are for hire, our firm never takes on a lobbying client whose views we don't feel good about.

As you apply this principle to your own situation, ask yourself why you are willing to spend your valuable time on your cause. Is it love? Money? A combination of both? The answer to these questions will reveal to you your passion. Without your own lasting and authentic conviction that what you want matters, you'll never convince others it's a good idea. It's also unlikely that you'll outlast the many perils of your journey to success. Understanding your own motivation behind your influence effort will help you stay in the game for as long as it takes to succeed.

Reason

As Ben Franklin said, "If passion guides you, let reason hold the reins." In identifying your passion please don't go overboard. There's passion and then there's obsession. Every good lobbyist knows the location of that invisible line, and never crosses it. Those that do are rarely successful.

Nothing demonstrates this better than a meeting I had with a lobbyist from an environmental group bent on protecting old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. At the time, I was working for a very "green" member of Congress (i.e., recognized as a supporter of the environment). He had supported this group's position on every vote and every bill. He was very much "for" trees.

But the lobbyist didn't think my boss was doing enough for this group's position. He wanted more action on our part, including making public statements, introducing bills, and demanding certain funding levels. He begged, he pleaded, he wheedled, and he cajoled. He wept over the fate of the trees. Finally, he became so impassioned that by the end of one of our meetings he was pounding on the table, berating our staff, and insisting that he would bring the wrath of the environmental community down on our heads if we didn't comply. The congressman politely but firmly told him to leave and never darken our door again.

Needless to say, this lobbyist did not get what he wanted. However, had he been reasonable by, for example, asking us to take one additional step instead of seventeen, over time he likely would have seen a dramatic increase in our activity on the issue.

One of those for-love citizen lobbyists who lived in our congressional district understood this principle well. Her cause was animal welfare and at the time, she never received a dime for her work. I'm sure her involvement even cost her money.

This advocate (let's call her Kelly, as that was her name) called me before every congressional vote on animal welfare issues. Whether it was allowing military handlers to adopt their war dog partners or boycotting Canada for not preventing the slaughter of Canadian seals, she was on the phone with me two or three days before the vote telling me her opinion and asking for the congressman's support one way or the other.

The entire staff loved animals, so the congressman, to avoid a mutiny, consistently voted the animal welfare party line. However, a vote to ban the practice of whaling by Native American tribes caused some real problems. *Whaling,* for those unfamiliar with it, is the Native American tradition of hunting whales and using those resources for sustenance throughout the year.

The tough part for us was that the congressman's district included a number of tribal areas. Although they were not technically constituents, because tribes are considered separate nations, we were loath to interfere with their culture and the congressman wound up voting against the measure.

Kelly expressed her disappointment, reiterated her reasons for supporting the bill, let us know that she would be sharing our position with others in the district, and said she hoped we'd be able to agree on other issues in the future. That was it. No fist-pounding or yelling. She was passionate about the issue, but let reason guide her actions. After that, we voted with her perspective 100 percent of the time, and eventually the congressman even changed his mind on the issue that started it all. In fact, I later heard she was so good at the influence game that she was hired by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to train other citizen advocates.

As you apply this principle to your own effort, ask yourself how you can reduce concerns that you might be a little *too* passionate about your cause. What factual evidence can you use to back up your argument? Why would someone else want what you want? Balance your passion with your reason. Passion will keep up your spirits through a long and arduous process. It will lend a credibility and authenticity to your voice. Reason will serve to put your passion into the realm of reality so you can avoid ongoing disappointment.

Ethics and Honesty

At the time of my marriage in 1996, I was working for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. To ensure my compliance with ethics rules, I requested (and received) a letter from the Office of Congressional Ethics approving my receipt of wedding gifts. Even though absolutely no one at my wedding was a registered lobbyist, I asked for this letter to avoid any appearance of impropriety (and, incidentally, I framed this letter and left it on the gift table so everyone would feel perfectly comfortable in their gift-giving). Sure, wedding gifts are discussed in some detail on page 82 of the U.S. House of Representatives' Code of Ethics manual, which is 456 pages long. But one can never be too careful, especially when it comes to the gift rules.

Believe it or not, most policymakers and their staff go to great lengths to protect themselves from any suggestion of an ethical breach.

Lobbyists do the same. Although violations of the code of ethics certainly occur, the consequences of such violations are so dire that the vast majority of people in D.C. do all they can to keep their reputations intact.

In addition, valuable political relationships must stand the test of time, and time translates to trust. Every lobbyist knows that if a member of Congress violates the ethics rules he or she runs the risk of reprimand or even expulsion, depending on the level of misconduct. The House Ethics Committee conducted more than 70 investigative hearings from 2009 to 2010 and filed more than 15,000 pages of reports on matters before its jurisdiction. Frankly, no one wants to be mentioned anywhere in those 15,000 pages, which is why effective lobbyists recognize and respect Congressional Ethics rules—and will never ask members of Congress to violate them.

As you're applying the ethics principle to your own cause, ask yourself whether what you want (or perhaps more important, how you're getting it) violates any ethical boundaries. Do you feel good about what you're doing? Are you being honest with others? Is someone agreeing with you and taking action simply because you're paying him or her? Can you tell your mother what you're doing? The answers to any of these questions will tell you whether you've crossed a line.

Relationships

Winners of the influence game thrive on one-on-one relationships, whether professional, personal, or somewhere in between. Many professional lobbyists work on Capitol Hill early in their careers and then parlay that experience into ongoing relationships with staff and/or legislators. Some get to know newer staff and members by helping them understand a particular policy issue or region better. Others have personal connections through friends or family members. And, yes, some build these relationships by attending fundraisers in the hope that the person running for election will remember them when he or she gets into office.

People in Washington, D.C., work hard to build these relationships because they know they will dramatically increase the potential for success. Note that I refer to these as "built" relationships: in other words, they do not simply emerge out of thin air. Tactic 21 ("Don't Network—Netplay," see Chapter 6) discusses the idea of relationship building in more detail. For now, just know that built relationships are essential to any successful influence effort.

Individuals

According to a study by the Congressional Management Foundation, personal visits from constituents influence members of Congress more than any other factor. That's right: more than visits from lobbyists (number five on the list), more than hordes of postcards and e-mails, and more, even, than campaign contributions. In fact, 97 percent of the offices surveyed indicated that constituent visits have a great deal or some influence on key policy decisions, such as how to vote or what bills to support.

The story of Erin Brockovich, as told in the movie of the same name, shows the power of the individual in fighting for a cause. This brash, single mother started (and won) a campaign against a large California power company accused of polluting the groundwater. Her efforts resulted in the federal Superfund law, which focuses on cleaning up hazardous waste sites.

If you doubt whether a single individual can still make a difference in today's corrupt political world, consider the example given by Bradford Fitch, president and chief executive officer of the Congressional Management Foundation. He tells the story of a citizen who showed up for as many of a senator's town hall meetings as he could get to with one message: Medicare was paying too much for a medical device he used. He'd shopped around and found a better price. Eventually, the senator championed the cause, and legislation was eventually adopted changing the standards and reducing the costs. It would be naïve to say that the medical device industry wasn't involved. It would be inaccurate to say the constituent who politely and persistently approached his senator wasn't instrumental to the success.

Crowds

Whereas individuals can make a difference, the combination of individuals and crowds is an almost unstoppable force. All 140,000-plus special interest groups in the United States have one thing in common: they have a special interest. Yes, that seems obvious, but have you ever really thought about it? Those millions of people associated with those thousands of groups come together in support of specific issues or goals. They have organized themselves around a shared enthusiasm that reflects their passion for the change they want to see in their lives and the lives of others.

Take the example of the Lupus Foundation of America, which combines the best of the powers of the individuals and crowds. The members of its national network of chapters, branches, and support groups across the country have come together in support of improving the quality of life for people with lupus. With both individuals and chapters involved, they can generate not only direct patient stories, but lots of them. This approach has resulted in a wide range of successes, including funding for the establishment of a national public awareness campaign through the U.S Department of Health and Human Services aimed at populations most at risk for lupus.

As you apply these principles to your own influence situation, think about whether and how you can combine the power of individuals and numbers. Tactics 19 through 23 in Chapter 6 will help guide the way.

Perseverance

In his iconic work *The Dance of Legislation,* Eric Redman described the inner workings (or nonworkings) of the U.S. Congress. He estimated that it takes an average of seven years to pass a bill through the legislative process. Sure, it's an estimate, and perhaps an inaccurate one at that, but this much is true: it often takes a long time to succeed.

Dave Wenhold, former president of the American League of Lobbyists and partner at Miller/Wenhold Capitol Strategies, a lobbying firm in Washington, D.C., stresses the importance of perseverance when talking about influence. As a lobbyist for the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), Dave recognized that opportunities existed for his clients in a government mandate that all television programming be closed-captioned by 2006.

Turns out, court reporters are the ones who do the closed-captioning. The mandate highlighted the fact that these highly skilled workers are in short supply. To solve this problem, Dave suggested the NCRA ask Congress to establish a federal program that would increase the pool of court reporters available to undertake this work. Seeing this as a win-win (court reporters win, the hearing impaired win, government wins), Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) first introduced S. 2512, the Training for Real Time Writers Act, on May 14, 2002.

From 2002 to 2010 the legislation was reintroduced every two years (bills that don't make it through the process in that time frame "die" and must be "reincarnated" in the next session). It garnered more and more support and even passed the Senate twice. Hearings were held, votes were taken, and legislators had nothing but nice things to say. Court reporters from across the nation came to Washington, D.C., every year to lobby in support of the legislation. They met with legislators at home. They begged. They pleaded. But after seven years nothing had become law.

Dave pointed out all along that a political regime change would be necessary to get the bill through the long and arduous process. But after seven years his clients came to him and said, "Can we lobby on something else? We're tired of this issue. It isn't going anywhere." Feeling a responsibility to give them the best advice he could, Dave said, "We shouldn't stop. Let's press on. We're on the cusp." One year later the bill passed. After eight years, the court reporters had won a $100 million grant program.

What would have happened if they had stopped the effort in year seven? Members of Congress would likely have moved on to priorities put forth by others. Through perseverance, the NCRA won the influence game—to the tune of $100 million. Could you use $100 million? I certainly could.

What is true for the legislative process is true for life in general. As the proverb goes, "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." Too many would-be influencers give up right before they are about to succeed. Don't make that mistake.

Relevance

As you've probably discovered, many people make decisions based on self-interest. This does not mean that these decisions are bad or wrong or not altruistic in any way (although some are). It simply means that someone has done a very good job of convincing the decision maker that his or her support for a particular cause is in his or her best interest. And the only way you're going to be able to even begin that process is by establishing your relevance.

In the political arena, this often means explaining why your special interest can help a member of Congress get reelected (or perhaps to explain why your lack of support would be detrimental to reelection). In my days on Capitol Hill I ran into some nontraditional players who are very good at this, such as the American Radio

Relay League (ARRL), which represents the interests of ham radio operators.

You'd never think of this group as a well-heeled special interest, right? In fact, you've probably never thought of this group at all. Those of us who grew up in a noncomputer era may be more familiar with these technology enthusiasts than others. Basically, ham radio operators connect to one another and the world through radio technology. Through a variety of tests designed to demonstrate their extensive knowledge and responsible use of the airwaves, they earn a license to use what are known as the amateur bands of the radio spectrum.

Unfortunately, many people think of amateur radio operators as, frankly, somewhat odd people who sit around in their basements saying "breaker, breaker" into a microphone all day. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, amateur radio operators play an essential role in providing emergency communications after natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. After major events such as Hurricane Katrina, or the earthquake and tsunami that devastated most of eastern Japan, ham radio operators were some of the only communication resources available to emergency responders.

You're probably wondering why I know so much about ham radio operators. Well, it turns out that these airwaves—the same ones used by cell phone companies, commercial and public radio, and over-the-air television (remember that?)—are regulated by a federal agency known as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). And my first boss on Capitol Hill served on a committee that oversaw the activities of the FCC. That's why the government affairs director for the ARRL came to visit me one day regarding a volunteer licensing issue with the FCC. I'll confess, I was not particularly enthusiastic to be meeting with this group. I really didn't know anything about them and was a little frustrated that they were taking up time in my already busy day.

However, my frustration turned to enthusiasm when the first words out of the lobbyist's mouth were, "We have 5,000 members in your district." Our congressional district had one of the highest numbers of ham radio operators of any legislative district in the country. Through that one sentence, that lobbyist immediately demonstrated the relevancy of his organization to the self-interest of both my boss—who wanted to represent his constituents well and, if you're cynical, get reelected—and me, who wanted to keep my job. In addition, the idea of promoting emergency communications seemed very much in the interest of the country at large, not just our constituents.

Clearly this lobbyist knew why he wanted to talk to me: we were in a position to help him with his cause. What made the meeting so memorable was that he immediately made it clear to me why I would want to meet with him. Plus, they put me on the cover of *American Radio Relay League* magazine. It made my year.

Authenticity (or Charm)

Decision makers need to feel positively about you and what you have to offer. Unfortunately, those positive feelings do not automatically result from someone simply knowing about you and your cause. You'll need to wheedle, coax and, yes, charm your way into the person's good opinion.

In Washington, D.C., some people confuse charming with smarmy. Lobbyists have a reputation for a style of fake charm associated with snake oil salesmen. Many believe that lobbyists slink their way into congressional offices with a wink-wink and a nudge-nudge (and, of course, a big campaign check). The truth is that though some lobbyists do try it, this tack usually proves wildly unsuccessful. It's clear that the lobbyist is being nice only because he or she wants something.

What is real charm? I like to consider it in the same way Justice Potter Stewart defined pornography in *Jacobellis v. Ohio:* "I can't describe it, but I know it when I see it." All I know is that real charm comes from a real place. Charming people feel a personal connection to their cause and, to put it simply, are nice. They also look for ways to create win-wins for both sides. People always know when you're being nice just to get what you want. So find that real reason why you want something and be as nice as you can be in asking for it. That's a good start.

Action

Let's say you've reached a point where a decision maker knows who you are and what you do. He or she feels positively about all that. But they're called decision makers for a reason. They make decisions. And they're not going to do that until you ask them to take an action.

As a congressional staff person I had too many people come to our office to "educate" us on an issue. Think back to some of those times when you were educated or, worse, when you were *told* you were being educated—like maybe in your eighth-grade algebra class. What kinds of feelings did that evoke? Resentment? Boredom? I don't know about you, but one of the first things that popped into my head when people said I was going to be educated was, "Will this be on the test?" Frankly, I wasn't planning to write down the information until someone told me I had to do something with it.

Similarly, in an influence situation, the "ask" triggers that little switch in someone's head that says, "Hey, I'm going to have to do something with this information so I better pay attention." That ask equals the sell, and it applies whether you're selling a product, a service, or an idea. Sometimes you'll need to make a series of asks over time to promote an attachment to your cause. In D.C., special interests frequently ask a legislator to make a statement in support of their issue or support a "National 'Whatever' Week" resolution before asking them for something more controversial They reason that the more time and energy the legislator spends on a cause, the more their potential for success increases.

Know the Difference Between a Good Cause and a Special Interest

In Washington, D.C., the difference between a good cause and a special interest is simple: you agree with the policy perspective of a good cause and the other side is always represented by one of those horrible special interests.

Everyone has a special interest and hence everyone *is* a special interest. It's just that your special interest may be diametrically opposed to another's. Or, more likely, others may not be convinced that your interest is in the best interest of everyone else. It's not. That's why it's a special interest. If it were good for everyone it would be a common interest.

To be influential you must give up the idea that your special interest (or your self-interest) is bad or unworthy because it doesn't coincide with everyone else's. Perhaps more important, you must recognize that other people may have good intentions, even when they disagree with you. Your job is to promote your special interest, without vilifying the interests of others, in adherence to the principles of honesty, integrity, and ethics outlined at the beginning of this book.