

How to Win Friends and Influence People

Summary

By Dale Carnegie

What does it take to be a more likable and effective leader, and how can we increase our sphere of influence?

How to Win Friends and Influence People is as relevant today as when it was first published in 1936. It teaches us how to win people over, make friends, inspire, and influence through leadership. Through introspection, we can alter behavior, be happier and more successful, and connect more meaningfully with others to inspire change.

Carnegie condensed complex information to give concise insights on relating to people. These insights ranged from newspaper clippings to philosophers' insights and psychological findings. He read hundreds of biographies and interviewed scores of successful people to unpack their insights into dealing with and inspiring others.

Briefly, this summary explores why this advice actually works, and we'll share some actionable insights from the book. Carnegie presents this in four sections, offering principles and action-orientated strategies to interact with and motivate others. Part one explains the fundamental techniques of handling people. Part two looks at six ways to make people like you. Part three teaches us 12 ways to be more adept at handling arguments. Finally, part four identifies nine ways to lead and inspire change without being offensive or causing resentment.

Carnegie's Timeless Insights Have Revolutionized Many Lives

Dealing with people is probably the biggest problem we face, especially in the realm of work. The Carnegie Institute of Technology found that technical knowledge accounts for about 15% of one's financial success in specialized fields such as engineering, but 85% is due to skill in "human engineering." In other words, how to deal with, and lead people. Carnegie says, 'the person who has technical knowledge plus the ability to express ideas, to assume leadership, and to arouse enthusiasm among people – that person is headed for higher earning power.'

A manager, notorious for being critical and unappreciative, attended Carnegie's workshop, and had read his book. After studying the principles, this manager drastically altered his life philosophy. He went from having 316 employees, to having 316 friends. He inspired loyalty, enthusiasm, and teamwork. The business became more profitable, and, more importantly, he found far more happiness in his business and at home. These teachings don't just apply to business; on many occasions, spouses told Carnegie that their families had been far happier since their partners attended his training.

Carnegie's tactics are famous, but he emphasized that they need to be based on sincerity. The key to dealing with people is to have a genuine desire to connect with and learn about others. Carnegie's hope for us, is that we learn how to love, respect, and enjoy other people.

Before we look at insights, there are three fundamental principles to remember. These are: be less critical, show honest appreciation, and be genuinely interested in the things that interest others.

People Have a Deep Need to Feel Important

When we resort to criticism, we hurt a person's pride, which can make them resentful. George Johnston was the safety coordinator for an engineering company. One of his responsibilities was to ensure that employees had to wear hard hats when working on site. He reported that whenever he came across workers not wearing hard hats, he would authoritatively tell them about the regulations they needed to comply with. He would get sullen acceptance, and the workers would often remove the hats after he left.

He decided to try a different approach. The next time he found some of the workers not wearing their hard hats, he asked if the hats were uncomfortable or did not fit properly. He then reminded the men in a pleasant tone of voice that the hats were designed to protect them from injury, and suggested that it always be worn on the job. The result was increased compliance with the regulation, without further resentment.

Perhaps Johnston knew something that psychologist B.F. Skinner had already discovered. Skinner proved that animals rewarded for good behavior learn much more rapidly, and retain what they learn far more effectively, than an animal punished for bad behavior. Later studies showed that the same applies to us. Criticism doesn't lead to lasting change and can incur resentment. It kills ambition, whereas appreciation arouses enthusiasm.

The second fundamental principle is to show honest appreciation.

Appreciation Drives Behavior Change

When it comes to giving praise, Ralph Waldo Emerson framed it nicely. He said that every person he met, was superior to him in specific ways. So, there was always something to learn from and appreciate in other people.

Stevie Wonder, blind from childhood, said that he felt unappreciated until one teacher changed his perspective. She asked him to help her find a mouse in the classroom, as he had sensitive hearing. He said that this led him to understand his life in a new way.

People have a hunger for appreciation, but phony flattery gets us nowhere. Others see straight through it. The key with this, is to be honest and sincere.

Deep Connection Requires That We Show a Genuine Interest in Others

Try to find out how others spend their time, and what excites them. Be fascinated about what fascinates them. Another way to show genuine interest is to ask others for advice. Allow people to share their interests and demonstrate their expertise, and they will associate their passion and excitement with your presence.

Let's Now Explore How to Be Likeable, Handle Disagreements, and Lead to Effect Change

To be more likable, remember these three things: it's important to smile more, remember a person's name, and get better at listening.

If You Want to Make a Good Impression, Start With a Smile

William Steinhardt, a New York stockbroker, decided to take Carnegie's simple advice to smile more. He turned this into an experiment, and began each day by practicing his smile in front of the mirror. He made sure to greet his wife, the doorman, the subway cashier, and all the traders in his office with a beaming smile. The result was that people smiled back. At home, Steinhardt said that there had been more happiness during the two months of the experiment than in the entire preceding year. At work, complaints and grievances decreased, while his revenue increased.

Smiling is a win-win; you feel better, and others are then drawn to you. Carnegie explains, 'The expression we wear on our face is far more important than the clothes we wear. Our smile brightens the lives of all who see it.'

A Person's Name Is the Sweetest Sound They Will Ever Hear

Theodore Roosevelt was well-liked by his staff. He made a habit of greeting them all by their names. Roosevelt deliberately made time to listen to them, and tried to remember what they had said so he could refer back to it later. This showed others his appreciation for them, but he believed that he got far more in return.

When someone forgets your name, it probably makes you feel like they don't care. Our name is part of our identity. Here are two simple tricks to remember a person's name. When someone introduces themselves, immediately repeat their name. This helps you remember, and gets you into the habit of fully listening to what they're saying. If you didn't hear it correctly, ask them to repeat it. This act will indicate that you're paying attention, and that you genuinely care about meeting them.

Suppose you forget names, but always remember faces. Then you're probably more visual, so try to recall images rather than words. Create an image that you can associate with that person. For example, if the person's name is Jack, imagine them performing jumping jacks in front of you. The more vivid, or even absurd the image, the more it'll stick.

Learn to listen well, and you may be surprised at the deep connections you forge. Carnegie once attended a dinner party where he met a botanist whom he found to be fascinating. He listened for hours with excitement as the botanist spoke of exotic plants and indoor gardens. Before leaving, the botanist told the host of the dinner party that

Carnegie was a "most interesting conversationalist," and gave him several compliments. Of course, Carnegie had hardly said a word. All he did was listen intently. He listened because he was genuinely interested.

Carnegie said, 'I had him thinking of me as a good conversationalist when, in reality, I had been merely a good listener and had encouraged him to talk.' The takeaway is this: be interested in being interesting. In contrast, Carnegie says that the recipe to be instantly disliked is as follows: 'Never listen to anyone for long. Talk incessantly about yourself. If you have an idea while the other person is talking, don't wait for him or her to finish: bust right in and interrupt in the middle of a sentence.'

So to be likable and appear interesting, talk less and listen more. Ask questions about the other person's accomplishments, and what they love. If they're having a tough time, reminisce with them, and ask them how they overcome obstacles. To truly listen, we need to make a conscious effort to give the other person our full attention.

So far, we've looked at how to be friendly and likable. But disagreements arise. Next, we'll address how to handle situations of conflict.

Sometimes It's Best to Avoid Arguments

Patrick O'Haire, a salesman for a trucking company, was argumentative and always relished a good fight. If a customer said anything offensive about his trucks, he would launch into an aggressive argument, and feel satisfied if he thought he'd won. However, the problem was that despite his perceived "victories," he was losing customers and revenue.

When it comes to heated arguments, nine times out of ten, we haven't

convinced someone of our way of thinking, and we've likely lost a customer or a friend. The trick is to remain calm and receptive, instead of losing our temper. Sure this is easier said than done, but these tactics may help.

Anyone who takes the time to disagree with you is passionate about the same things as you. Try to take what they say as useful feedback and an opportunity to preempt mistakes. Listen without protest or resistance. If someone keeps going on about something you believe is wrong, listen calmly until they eventually run out of steam. Try to find areas you agree on and focus on these. Promise to think over their views and reflect carefully. Finally, postpone action to give both sides time to think through the issue to reach a mutual agreement.

O'Haire put these to the test, and as a result, learned when to avoid arguments. When a customer told him that he preferred another brand of truck, he just agreed. Unsurprisingly, this made it hard for the customer to keep arguing, and the conversation could be redirected towards what was good about O'Haire's trucks. As a result, he became a more successful salesman at the truck company.

In Addition to Avoiding Arguments, Telling Someone They're Wrong Is a Direct Blow to Their Intellect, and Self-Respect

Criticizing someone usually makes them defensive, and drives a wedge between your relationship.

When Benjamin Franklin was a young man, he was famously opinionated, and prone to attack those who disagreed with him. One day, an old friend took him aside to tell him that his friends were abandoning him.

Benjamin's friend said, 'You're impossible. Your friends find they enjoy themselves better when you are not around. You know so much that no man can tell you anything, for the effort would lead only to discomfort and hard work. So you are not likely ever to know any more than you do now, which is very little.'

Franklin was wise enough to listen and made it a habit not to openly oppose others. He even decided to remove words like "certainly" and "undoubtedly" from his vocabulary because he felt they were too rigid and reflected an unbending mind-set. Instead, he used phrases like "I imagine."

Carnegie's advice is as follows: "If someone makes a statement you know is wrong, try saying something like, 'Well, I thought otherwise, but I may be wrong. I frequently am. And if I am wrong, I want to be put right. Let's examine the facts.'" In other words, using phrases like "I may be wrong" and "Let's examine the facts" can work wonders during heated arguments.

So, show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say, "you're wrong." And, if you're ever in the wrong, make sure you admit it.

This brings us to an interesting point. We experience cognitive dissonance when our brain holds two opposing viewpoints, and we can't decide which one is correct. Our brains don't like this. To avoid this tension, we choose a thought and commit to it 100%. In the case of an argument, we might refuse to back down from our opinion, even if, on

some level, we know it might not be entirely accurate.

Carnegie recalls walking his dog in the park. The rule is that dogs must be kept on a leash at all times, but he didn't see the sign stipulating this. A policeman saw him and said, 'If you don't put your dog on the lead, I will give you a fine the next time I see you.' The following week, he forgot to put his dog on a lead and was seen by the same policeman. Before the policeman spoke, Carnegie immediately owned up and said, 'I'm guilty, I've got no excuses. You warned me that if I did this again, you would fine me.' His act of ownership made the policeman soften and show leniency.

Carnegie says that if you're wrong, admit this quickly and emphatically. It helps the other person feel validated, which could lead to a more positive outcome.

We've covered three ways to deal with disputes, but what do we do when we notice something, or someone, needs to improve? How can we communicate this without hurting feelings or denting enthusiasm? In the last section of the book, Carnegie provides ways to give feedback that will inspire others to take action. We highlight two: give honest praise, and hold someone to high standards.

Firstly Begin With Praise and Honest

Appreciation

Just as a dentist gives Novocain to dull the pain of drilling, you should begin with praise and honest appreciation before correcting someone's mistakes. It's always easier to hear the negative after hearing praise about what we did well. But, praise needs to be sincere. You have to

appreciate the work to sound genuine. To make sure someone knows it's honest, give specific praise about specific items well done, rather than generalities.

While it's always good to start with praise, problems arise when we follow such praise with the dreaded "but." For example, we might say, 'You've done a great job, BUT you could have prevented these careless errors.' This sentence starts well, but collapses when we add the word, but. The good news is that with some minor tweaks, these same words can be said without negative consequences. Follow the sincere praise with the word "and," instead of using the word "but." Listen to this contrast. 'You've done a great job, and if you focus next on building a checklist, you'll improve your accuracy rate.'

This way of paraphrasing avoids the negative response of feeling like a failure. The principle here is to draw attention to people's mistakes indirectly. Avoid the direct surgical approach. People generally know when they're wrong. Being overly explicit about it might invite resistance and resentment. If you find that someone isn't doing as well as they could do, don't berate or belittle them. Instead, try to find a way to build that person up while encouraging them to do better.

We Can Change a Person's Attitude or Behavior by Giving Them a Big Reputation to Live Up To

Carnegie's advice is if you want to improve a particular characteristic, act as if the person already possesses them.

For example, Mrs. Ruth Hopkins had the notoriously bad boy, Tommy,

allocated to her class. Her excitement for the year ahead turned to dread. However, then she decided to reframe his bad-boy reputation as natural leadership. With a new reputation to live up to, he had an incentive to change. And he did. Sometimes people act out because they have a history of feeling unappreciated. When people value certain traits, this makes us feel important, and it's a feeling we want to hold onto.

In Conclusion

Beyond tactics to truly master the art of human relationships, we need to act in accordance with values of kindness, fairness, and respect for ourselves and others.

We'll end on this quote from Carnegie: 'Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation, for your character is what you are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.'