Women CIOs & the Art of Influence
Techniques, tips and precautions for successfully persuading senior business stakeholders

A CIO Executive Council Research Report in partnership with The Leader’s Edge™

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Verbatim survey responses:
  • What is the most important lesson about influencing that you have learned during the course of your career?
  • What are the most common mistakes an IT leader can make in trying to influence senior business stakeholders?
  • What are the toughest challenges you face when trying to influence stakeholders over whom you have no direct authority?
  • What are the biggest differences between men and women in being an effective influencer?
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CIOs are leaders of change, and change is something that most people resist and adapt to with difficulty. Therefore, the ability to influence others is an essential tool for CIOs who routinely collaborate with and effect the thinking and actions of business stakeholders over whom they have no direct authority. Exerting influence is typically an area where women struggle, so due to the importance of influencing skills to the success of female CIOs, the CIO Executive Council’s Executive Women In IT and The Leader’s Edge™ developed a study to gather benchmarks and practical peer advice on how women IT leaders successfully influence senior business stakeholders—defined as business unit and functional leadership, the CIO's boss and the enterprise executive team. After in-depth interviews with several prominent women CIOs to investigate the issues, a survey was created and administered online. The questionnaire link was emailed to 200 women IT leaders in October/November 2008. We received 57 responses, a 29 percent response rate.

The findings indicate that women CIOs see their ability to influence as very important to their overall success. For some, it is tantamount to the role itself. “Influence defines my job. Influence is the road to credibility, and credibility enhances influencing skills,” said Barbara Kunkel, CIO at Troutman Sanders LLP. And Nancy Newkirk, vice president of IT at International Data Group, described it this way: "All I do is influence. My value is knowing the players, politics and the profile of the business.”

Yet less than half of our survey's respondents felt that they were very effective at influencing business stakeholders.

In general, age and seniority seems to be a factor. Women with more than 25 years of experience and with senior IT leadership titles reported that they were more effective than those with less than 25 years on the job and lower level titles.

Credibility and good relationship-building skills contribute most to women's success at influencing stakeholders. “You must have credibility first,” said Diane Wallace, CIO of the State of Connecticut. "Credibility comes from establishing a partnership and relationship and getting established as someone who has successes.”

Women struggle most to overcome stakeholder's competing priorities and lack of attention. To overcome obstacles, they rely most on a collaborative approach, as well as building alliances with stakeholders and demonstrating active listening. Very few pull rank and exert the authority of their position to get their way, except in areas of business security or compliance risk.

Gathering facts and cultivating relationships with key stakeholders in advance of the formal pitch are the most frequent and most effective actions respondents used to influence stakeholders. In fact, reasoning, using facts, and explaining why the action is needed are the most common form of influencing. Failure to prepare in these areas is one of the most common mistakes cited by respondents when it comes to influence.
In order to properly prepare for their influence opportunities, women most often consider the potential benefits to the individual stakeholders—though more senior IT leaders consider what's in it for the stakeholder more frequently than do their less experienced counterparts. Newkirk described her influence philosophy as: “I realize that every person is the center of his or her universe. I try to figure out that universe and then make what is important to me also important in their universe.”

The very effective influencers among the respondent base more often consider the communication style and preferences of their stakeholders than do the less effective respondents, signifying this as an underutilized best practice.

“Authority is a tricky thing for women. When you draw the line and decide to mud wrestle, then you are characterized as emotional or too emotional.”

Asked to describe the key differences between how women influence versus men, respondents reported that male IT leaders more typically use their authority and the power of their position to get their way with stakeholders, in comparison to women. One veteran woman CIO who was interviewed said, “Authority is a tricky thing for women. When you draw the line and decide to mud wrestle, then you are characterized as emotional or too emotional.” She went on to suggest, “When in authoritative mode, make sure your voice is metered, you are low key, and very deliberate. Watch the tone that you set. Folks will end up remembering the emotion, not the message. Go in with data dispassionately.”

Men also use reciprocation more often than women, essentially doing deals with their stakeholders. Women said they are more prone than men to take a collaborative approach, listening, empathizing and building connections with stakeholders.

The top category of advice women have for other female CIOs looking to improve their influence success rate is to truly know the audience and understand their needs and positions on the issues. Women cite observation of leaders, both good and bad, as their number one way to improve their influencing skills. Working with mentors was a close second, although less experienced IT leaders have not had the benefit of being mentored as much as have their more senior counterparts. One CIO who was interviewed offered this advice: “Get a mentor to keep you honest and give you the truth.”

For contrast, a limited number of findings from a smaller group of male IT leaders who responded to the same survey will be cited in the detailed results below.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following CIOs who granted interviews about their influence experience, which were a great help in understanding the issues and ultimately devising the survey questions:

- Pat Hillman, Managing Director & Executive VP Technology, Devonshire Investors
- Barbara Kunkel, CIO, Troutman Sanders LLP
- Nancy Newkirk, VP of IT, International Data Group
- Rebecca Rhoads, VP & CIO, Raytheon Co.
- Barbara Saidel, CIO, Russell Reynolds Associates Inc.
- Sherrie Littlejohn, Senior VP, Network Services and Operations, Wells Fargo
- Diane Wallace, CIO, State of Connecticut
DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the women who responded to the survey, 53 percent had titles of CIO or CIO combined with VP, senior VP or executive VP. Women with director or manager titles and their derivatives accounted for 22 percent. The remaining 25 percent held VP-only titles and other miscellaneous titles generally considered below the level of CIO.

Respondents had a median of 25 years of professional experience, ranging from a high of 40 down to a low of eight.

Respondents' company sizes covered a broad spectrum. The smallest companies, less than $1 billion in revenue, comprised 42 percent of respondents. Twenty-four percent were from companies with revenue of $5 billion or more, and 29 percent were in the middle, with revenue from $1 billion to $4.9 billion.

Male IT leaders were asked to respond to the same survey for contrast purposes. We received 25 responses, which, while not a statistically valid sample for the surveyed population, we cite the results where appropriate for anecdotal contrast. The men's lessons and best advice are also included in the verbatim section at the end of this report.
DETAILED RESULTS

Influence effectiveness governed by experience and executive level

How important to an IT leader's success is her ability to influence stakeholders? It's "very important," to 92 percent of respondents, who selected this highest choice out of four levels of importance. Only eight percent felt the ability to influence was "somewhat important," the second highest rated choice.

For two straight years, "collaboration & influence" has been ranked in the top three most important executive leadership competencies by more than 500 respondents to CIO magazine's State of the CIO survey.

For at least one CIO respondent, job satisfaction rested in her ability to sway stakeholders. "The greatest successes and most rewarding activities are the ones that have required me to enlist the support of others," she wrote in a verbatim survey response. "Simply working on things that are totally within my control are hollow victories compared to those which required team collaboration."

When asked how effective they were in influencing senior business stakeholders, only 39 percent of our respondents felt they were "very effective," the highest possible choice. The rest rated themselves as "somewhat effective" or worse.

In contrast, our small sample of male IT leaders have a higher opinion of their effectiveness as influencers. In responding to the same survey, 50 percent of male IT leaders felt they were "very effective," the other half rating themselves as "somewhat effective."

For women, the number of years of professional experience had a pronounced impact on relative effectiveness. Only 14 percent of respondents with less than the median 25 years of experience rated themselves "very effective." Those with experience greater than 25 years said they were "very effective" at a rate of 63 percent. However, more than one in three of these more experienced respondents rated themselves as only "somewhat effective," indicating that influencing is a tough skill to perfect even for veterans.

"The greatest successes and most rewarding activities are the ones that have required me to enlist the support of others. Simply working on things that are totally within my control are hollow victories compared to those which required team collaboration."
Track record and business knowledge are top contributors to success
Respondents were nearly unanimous (92 percent) in choosing “credibility” as a key contributor to their success as influencers. The “ability to build relationships” was the number two response, selected by 88 percent of respondents. Thorough understanding of the business (its products, services and customers) rounded out the top three at 76 percent. There was a sharp fall-off to other success factors, which included IT expertise, self confidence, dress and professional image and a background in a business function or P&L.

Men weight the personal aspects that contribute most to their success as influencers about the same as women, with the exception of self-confidence. More men say their self confidence is a success factor (73 percent) than do women (41 percent).
Toughest challenges are stakeholders' competing priorities and lack of time/focus

When asked to cite the toughest challenges women IT leaders face when trying to influence stakeholders, the majority of the open-ended responses pointed to competing priorities. Some respondents lamented the difficulty of convincing stakeholders to look beyond their personal agenda to what would benefit the company most as a whole. This is especially tough for initiatives that are critical to IT operations but have relatively weak business cases.

The second most common set of challenges related to the difficulty of gaining stakeholder time and attention. For some, the problem is access, with globally dispersed or aloof stakeholders who are hard to pin down. Others expressed frustration with executives' attention span and the long time it takes them to make decisions. Some complain of stakeholders essentially humoring them. "Getting them to listen—actually listen—is a great challenge," said one respondent. "Some of them pretend to listen, but later I discover that they didn't even hear anything I said." Stakeholders say yes to an initiative or commitment, but then fail to follow through, according to some respondents.

Rounding out the top challenges are stakeholders' lack of understanding of technology and its impact on business, and the influencer's lack of self confidence and credibility.
Most frequent approaches to influence are collaboration and alliance

Respondents chose "collaboration" most often (90 percent) as a frequently used approach to influencing stakeholders. As evidenced by the verbatim responses, women IT leaders claim collaboration as one of their key differentiators from their male counterparts. "Building alliances" with stakeholders, which can be taken as a specialized form of collaboration, was the number two approach with 84 percent. Said Rebecca Rhoads, CIO of Raytheon and a CIO Hall of Fame member, "Getting support and allies is an art form. Never look to be rescued, rather, share your plan and seek their opinion.” Alliances was followed closely by "active listening" at 82 percent. Listening is another differentiator for women, according to the verbatim responses. One of the female CIOs from the preliminary interviews suggested that senior IT women “practice generous listening. Some folk are so busy forming their response that they miss the listening.”

A majority of respondents also chose "reasoning" (65 percent) and "consulting" (59 percent) as successful approaches they use often to influence. Inspiring, rewarding and reciprocating were used far less frequently by respondents, and only six percent said they frequently "exert the authority of their position" to achieve their influence goals.

"Men ask, 'what's in it for me?' Women tend to be more collaborative, explore options, and are used to juggling many balls at once." --Diane Wallace, CIO, State of Connecticut

When asked which of these approaches they see their fellow women IT leaders using most often, 84 percent chose "building alliances," followed by "collaborating" (76 percent). "Active listening" rounded out the top three approaches respondents see other women employ. Interestingly, 22 percent of respondents said they saw other women use the authority of their position, compared to the six percent who admitted to exerting authority themselves. Respondents also observed women using "reciprocating" (24 percent) far more than they admitted to using this approach themselves (4 percent). The same dichotomy holds true for the "rewarding" approach. The pattern seems to be that women observe or at least recall other women using direct approaches to influence more often than they see it in their own actions.

The difference between what women say they do and what they observe men doing are even more pronounced. Nearly all of the respondents (92 percent) said that men frequently "exert the authority of their position" to get their way with stakeholders. "Men ask, 'what's in it for me?' Women tend to be more collaborative, explore options, and are used to juggling many balls at once," noted Diane Wallace, CIO of the State of Connecticut. "I think women have a better approach. I get more buy in, faster, and with more people because I look for win-win solutions that benefit the group.”

Other open-ended responses further suggest that exerting authority is the most common and preferred mode of influence among men. The number two and three most frequent approaches women see men employ are "building alliances" and "reciprocating," respectively. Only a single respondent chose "active listening" as something she has seen men do frequently.
Not surprisingly, when we asked men to describe their approach to influence, it didn't match up with the way women see them. Respondents in our small male survey sample claim to be much more collaborative than women give them credit for, with 95 percent choosing collaboration as their most-used approach. Men also take issue with woman's perception that they don't listen. Eighty-two percent of our male respondents said they apply active listening.

Where men and women agree is in the observation that everyone else, regardless of gender, uses reciprocation, rewarding and authority of position far more than they do themselves. Authority, reciprocation (scratch my back, etc.) and rewards are generally seen as less desirable or less noble influencing behaviors and this pattern could be attributed to human nature to observe such behaviors in others more than we observe them in ourselves.
**Influence in action: Women collect facts and work with stakeholders in advance**

When asked what actions they take most often when attempting to influence stakeholders on specific initiatives, 94 percent of respondents said they identify facts, figures and business implications of the initiative. With this information in hand, 90 percent actively engage stakeholders prior to formal pitches and meetings. One CIO who was interviewed shared that, “I have a meeting before the meeting and call it ‘working the street.’” Three-quarters also walk others through the initiatives, seeking input. And 65 percent said they recruit allies before meetings where decisions will be made.

A sizeable number of respondents (more than one in three) said they try to give ownership of the initiative—and credit—to a stakeholder. This idea is illustrated by one interview with a CIO who stated: “Kabuki dance – socialize ideas and solutions and partner with stakeholders” She added "Make sure the business unit gets rewarded for good behavior by collaborating with IT. I get what I need. I let them get the gold star for partnering with me and taking initiative.”

Relatively few women bring in external experts to help sell their point, and even fewer appeal for help to a senior executive or resort to dictating adoption of the initiative using the authority of their position.

When asked which of these frequent actions is most effective for them, respondents generally indicated the actions they use most were also the most effective. However, the effectiveness
of giving credit to stakeholders received a higher effectiveness rating than it did for frequent usage, indicating that this is an underutilized best practice. Interestingly, 12 percent said appealing to senior executives for help/favor was often effective— double the number who admitted to using such appeals themselves. And not one woman chose "dictate adoption of the initiative" as being effective.

**Most Frequent Actions Used vs. Most Effective Actions**

![Bar chart showing the comparison between the most frequent actions and the most effective actions.]

**Men are from Planet Authority; Women are from the Collaboration Constellation**

When asked to single out the biggest differences between men and women when it comes to influence, respondents overwhelmingly stated that women are more collaborative, while men are more likely to exert the authority and power of the position. "Women create a more collaborative relation towards achieving goals; they are more patient and methodical in getting to a good solution," wrote one respondent. She added, "Men use more brut force and power to get a point made. They cut right to the point." She further elaborated that when the stakeholder audience is male, authority is not perceived as a negative approach. Presumably, this respondent believes the same is not true when women use authority on male stakeholders.

Some respondents attributed the tendency of men to use authority to a belief that men are less concerned about what others think of them. Another ascribed men's use of authority to impatience: "Most men do not invest or spend the time needed to grow ideas; they will start, but ultimately pull rank or demand reciprocation to get the results faster," the respondent
wrote. Another stated more simply, "I believe it is a patience issue." Still others think men use authority more than women because it's their prerogative. One respondent wrote, "Since women had to go up the ranks using collaboration and similar techniques, they never used position power. For the most part women never had position power to use, so it's not a tool they'd pull out." Similarly, several women stated that when it comes to influence, men benefit from having more credibility and respect than women would have in similar positions.

Men more often choose to use reciprocation to get their way, according to respondents. "Men are more likely to "do a favor or return a favor" to get things done, whereas women will work to build alliances and use reasoning to get things done," stated one respondent.

The ability to listen and empathize is another factor that separates women from men. One woman commented, "I think female executives are better at intently listening and then interpreting what they have heard into approaches, actions, etc."

"There is still an 'old boys' network operating. Therefore, there is still a strong tendency to trust what a male says/presents versus what a female says/presents."

Building relationships, a key success factor for influence, seems to favor men, according to several respondents. "Most of the IT execs I work with are men, and they interact differently with each other versus with me," noted one woman. "They interact in more casual settings like golfing, whereas I interact [with them] in more formal settings, which does create a difference in how the relationship is built and matures over time." Others put it more bluntly: "There is still an 'old boys' network operating. Therefore, there is still a strong tendency to trust what a male says/presents versus what a female says/presents."

This perspective is consistent with The Leader's Edge original research study titled "Attitudes & Issues Affecting Executive Women." which reveals that men network more frequently and on a more consistent basis than women. Men also see networking as part of their job, whereas women believe it is an additional component beyond their work load. The specific numbers from The Leader's Edge research show that the importance of networking decreases for women as they move up the ladder, with only 66 percent of senior executive women versus 75 percent of senior executive men rating networking skills as critical.

In preparation, women consider the business benefits, gather data and focus their communication

Given the finding that identifying facts and figures is the number one action women take when influencing stakeholders, it's not surprising that "gathering relevant content or data" is a top method of influence preparation, chosen by 76 percent of respondents. But even greater than that is the 88 percent of respondents who prepare by thinking about potential benefits to individual stakeholder and their departments—that is, figuring out what's in it for them. The third most popular preparation (41 percent) is to consider the communication styles and preferences of the target stakeholders.
Preparation steps diverge between the very effective and somewhat effective influencers in this study. The very effective among our respondent base are twice as likely as their less effective counterparts to consider the communication style and preferences of their stakeholders. This indicates that paying more attention to communication style could help all IT leaders become more successful in delivering their message and getting buy-in.

Among the respondents, the more senior women pay more attention than their junior counterparts to pinpointing the benefits to stakeholders and their departments. More years on the job perhaps sensitizes leaders to the powerful role that "what's in it for me?" plays in the politics of getting things done.

### Most Frequent Preparation Methods Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about the potential benefits to stakeholder</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather relevant content or data</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about their communication style/ preferences</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider optimal timing to raise issue</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider their individual motivations</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider &amp; prioritize best targets</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice argument on neutral third parties</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing to prepare</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authority is employed most often when the company faces security or compliance risk issues**

When seeking to influence a decision, exerting the authority of the leader's position is always an option, but it's not one that most women said they choose. However, when respondents do use their authority, it is most often done in the interests of security or business continuity. It should be noted that respondents with less than 25 years experience are much less likely to exert authority for security or business continuity reasons than their more senior counterparts. This may simply be because less senior IT leaders are less often directly responsible for security or continuity, and therefore are not in a position to exert authority in this area. Other top situations in which women use their authority are regulatory or compliance related.
There are significant differences in use of authority between the respondents who said they are very effective versus somewhat effective at influencing stakeholders. When asked if they exert authority when an initiative is essential to a cross-enterprise need or goal, very effective respondents were more than twice as likely (45 percent) to exert authority in these situations as their somewhat effective counterparts. This may indicate that more effective influencers are less reticent about exerting authority for the benefit of the broad enterprise than are their less effective counterparts. Perhaps because of their correlating strength in credibility and relationship building, the very effective influencers have more *license* to exercise their authority over siloed stakeholders who can't see the big picture of cross-enterprise needs.

Another significant difference comes in exerting authority in ethics-related situations. In this case, the less effective IT leaders are more than twice as likely (65 percent) to use their authority in ethics-related situations as are their more effective counterparts. This may indicate that effective influencers are more comfortable or successful with a lighter touch in convincing stakeholders to take ethics-related action versus their less effective counterparts, who have to resort to force in ethics situations.

### Situations in which You Most Often Use Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for security or business continuity</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory or compliance-related</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics-related</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When receiving top-down direction</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential to cross-enterprise goal</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I'm sure I'm right</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most common mistakes include a ‘techie’ focus and failure to cultivate stakeholders**

When asked what were the most common mistakes IT leaders make when trying to influence stakeholders, respondents most frequently cited the error of focusing on IT instead of the business. One successful CIO stated “I use knowledge. I understand business and the
technology. I am the bridge.” Talking too much like a ‘techie’ is part of the problem. But respondents also noted that IT leaders often fail to build and present a business case for their initiative or argument.

The second most common category of mistake was failing to cultivate stakeholders in advance, or socializing the idea or seeking their input. Two no-no's cited by one respondent were: "Not realizing that projects are a ‘partnership’ between IT and the business; And surprising upper management with a fully developed idea before testing the waters and seeking support and input." Failure to share ownership of an initiative with business stakeholders is a related error, but one respondent warns that it can also be a mistake to try to share ownership with an unwilling partner.

Poor up-front planning rounds out the top mistakes. By planning, most respondents meant obtaining numbers and other facts about the business benefits of the proposition, or even more fundamentally, about the business need that the proposition addresses. Related mistakes include overselling the potential benefits (leading to a big credibility hit when failing to deliver) and oversimplifying the challenges of the initiative in order to win buy-in.

*Women bring up something valuable and the thing gets ignored. Men bring it up and all of the sudden it is a good idea.*

Not surprisingly, several women also cited being too dictatorial or too quick to exert authority as a chief mistake. This is a common problem for women leaders. If they are too assertive, they get labeled as aggressive and too emotional. These findings are also in sync with *The Leader's Edge* original research results on the subject.

**Women use observation and mentors to improve their influence ability**

When asked for the best resources they have used in their career to improve their effectiveness at influencing, the most common choice was observation of good and bad leaders (86 percent). As an example, one senior IT woman who was interviewed shared this experience: “Women bring up something valuable and the thing gets ignored. Men bring it up and all of the sudden it is a good idea.” She went on to suggest that other women leaders should “sit next to the power broker in the room, the person who is ‘valued and credible.’ You will be respected and heard more by doing this, and your idea will carry more weight”.

Mentors were the next most popular resource (73 percent), followed by “just doing it” (47 percent). However, respondents with fewer than 25 years of experience were much less likely to have benefited from mentors in their career than leaders with more than 25 years of experience (59 percent versus 88 percent, respectively). The very effective influencers also had the benefit of mentoring more often (85 percent) than did the less effective respondents, only 66 percent of whom had help from mentors. This indicates that IT leaders should pursue mentoring earlier in their career to become more effective influencers.

*The Leader's Edge* research on mentors found that a large percentage of senior women utilized mentors as protective allies, rather than actively using them for help in obtaining
assignments or to gain visibility. Senior men use mentors to help them obtain choice assignments more often than senior women. This implies a possible underutilization of mentors by senior women.

"The decision is almost always made BEFORE the formal meeting. Never walk into a meeting without knowing the 'vote count.'"

Junior IT leaders appear more likely to be thrown into influence situations to learn by doing—nearly twice as many respondents with less than 25 years of experience said they learned by "just doing it" (64 percent) than their more senior counterparts (33 percent). "Just doing it" was also more often chosen by the less effective influencers than by the very effective (58 percent versus 30 percent, respectively). This indicates that on-the-job training may not be the best way to learn to influence stakeholders successfully. The Leader's Edge research on influencing echoes these findings overall, showing that senior women are more effective at influencing stakeholders than their junior counterparts.

Men seem to avail themselves of external resources such as networks and CIO professional and leadership associations in greater percentages than do women, according to the study.
Most important lessons are knowing the audience, building relationships and listening
When asked to describe the most important influence lessons learned during the course of their careers, most respondents cited the need to "know your audience." That includes understanding the audience's positions and motivations. The best lesson, one respondent wrote, has been "the power of one-on-one discussions to understand stakeholder positions … and align their interests with yours." Knowing the stakeholder's position on a subject or initiative in advance is imperative to successful influencing. Added one respondent, "The decision is almost always made BEFORE the formal meeting. Never walk into a meeting without knowing the 'vote count.'"

"Stakeholders are people too," one respondent simply stated, underscoring the importance of stakeholder relationship-building—the second most cited lesson. "You can't influence people until they feel you care about them and their welfare, personally," stated one woman. But still another survey respondent cautions that relationships can only carry a CIO so far. "Relying on your relationships or reputation isn't a repeatable technique if the initiative fails to deliver meaningful business results," she advised.

This caution speaks to another top lesson—that effective influencing requires credibility. "Influence can be gained when you have personal credibility, backed by sound decisions and outcomes," noted one respondent. What if you are new to the enterprise, lacking an in-house track record? "If folks don't know you, you will gain credibility at initial meetings if you come well prepared with facts, not too much detail (you tell execs what they need to know, not everything you know), and you listen and respond effectively to their concerns."

Listening—or more precisely, active listening—is itself a top lesson for influencers. One respondent defined active listening as validating your understanding of the views expressed by others before stating your own views. "People that feel 'heard' tend to 'listen' better in return," she noted. The Leader's Edge research shows that women tend to be better listeners than men, which can be an advantage when appealing to stakeholders to get buy in.

More feminine traits such as providing details, sensitivity to details, or raising their voice to be heard can be misconstrued negatively as rambling, being emotional or being aggressive.

Effective communication for senior women leaders is a necessity, respondents stated, especially as it relates to interactions with stakeholders. Research by The Leader's Edge shows that women’s communication style can hinder their success. More feminine traits such as providing details, sensitivity to details, or raising their voice to be heard can be misconstrued negatively as rambling, being emotional or being aggressive. In terms of communication and influencing, male characteristics are traditionally perceived as more direct and effective. "Many times—particularly in my early management positions—I assumed people knew what I was saying or doing," wrote one respondent, when in fact that wasn't the case.

A related key lesson is to communicate with a broader audience—don't just target the CEO for instance—but work with stakeholders at all senior levels. "It is very important that we are
able to effectively communicate in any situation and to any level of an organization," stated a respondent. "Presenting information or proposals at an elementary education level without offending your audience is key."

If this all sounds like quite a challenge, it is—patience is a virtue when it comes to influence. One respondent likened it to a chess game: "You don't have to get everything you want all at once. You can make small moves and still get across the board. And you have to do all of this without appearing to be impatient or frustrated, as the people around you will see right through you. Let the people you are trying to influence come to the right conclusions on their own; just point them in the right direction and keep feeding them the right information."

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The CIO Executive Council is a member-led executive organization of global business leaders working to drive value from the intersection of business, information technology and strategy. Through peer reliance, collaboration and outreach, members apply the knowledge, insights and best practices of their peers to the success of their enterprises and their own personal achievement. [http://council.cio.com](http://council.cio.com)

*The Leader's Edge* is an international leadership development and consulting company dedicated to the growth and advancement of executive and high-potential women. [http://www.the-leaders-edge.com](http://www.the-leaders-edge.com).
ADDENDUM: Verbatim survey responses

Women's responses in red
Men's responses in blue

What is the most important lesson about influencing that you have learned during the course of your career?

Know your audience, understand their position and motivations
Every situation is different. Know your audience.
Understand what motivates your audience.
Be well prepared.
Understand who you are trying to influence and listen to their needs.
Know your audience (his/her priority and communication needs).
Understand your audience and the overall corporate goals, objectives and issues.
Understand different perspectives of the decision-makers.
Select and define appropriate targets. Build a strategy before beginning.
The decision is almost always made BEFORE the formal meeting. Never walk into a meeting without knowing the "vote" count.
You must continue to cultivate that support throughout the project, especially if it is long-running project. You do not want to assume that the support you gained at the beginning of the project will remain throughout the project. You need to keep them very much engaged.
Try to position so the idea was born by the stakeholder, so that they have the "Aha" moment; give them the credit.
Keep an open mind; there is rarely "one" right solution; look for the common ground.
Also, it is imperative to focus on the "WIIFM" (What's in it for me) factor by truly understanding the issue being addressed by the initiative.
I am easily put off by the influence I hold due solely to the position I hold. It took me a couple of years before I realized "the power of the position" and how it could be used influentially. I try to use this influence in positive ways that consider the enterprise view. I view my success as dependent upon the success of the organization.
There are four perspectives that must be accounted for when influencing: Is the person you are trying to influence more affected by 1) Passion, 2) Logic, 3) Process, 4) Emotion. If you know that, then you know how to approach them.

It is about them and their needs, not about me, my ego and my department. The business leaders have to know my motives are to enable the business plan and make the operations as effective as possible. Work with the business leaders to set IT priorities.

Knowing the audience drives not only what is presented or discussed, but how to convey the information. I have seen a presenter who had great knowledge of the topic, solution, implementation plan, etc, but could not present the information in a succinct manner and lost his case.
Listen & communicate appropriately

Learn when to listen (and shut up).

To actively listen to what someone's saying and ask them questions because you're genuinely interested. It's the best way to find out how to partner with them and it may require you to change the way you would have accomplished your goal.

Understand who you are trying to influence and listen to their needs.

Listen to the concerns of others that are impacted by any implementation or new technology.

Don't assume. Many times, particularly in my early management positions, I assumed people knew what I was saying/doing. It is very important that in any situation, we are able to effectively communicate in any situation and to any level of an organization. Presenting information or proposals at an elementary education level without offending your audience is key.

Delivery style is as important as the message.

Listen to people.

If you ask for someone's help they are more likely to do so than if you tell them what you want done. For example, "I need to ask you a favor. Would you please make sure you include all of the stakeholders in your review before you choose a direction?" instead of "Make sure you talk to all of the stakeholders."

I learned to validate understanding of the views expressed by others before stating my views. People that feel heard tend to listen better in return.

Don't underestimate the power, but use it wisely.

Be honest and admit any mistakes.

Don't dwell on past successes and always move forward.

Make my case in one or two arguments. Any more and the impact is lost.

Make the message simple; do not try to show how smart you are.

Listen and understand the issues.

Have your facts and clearly communicate the issues in business terms, not technical terms.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Listen, understand, adapt and then apply.

If you are not an articulate and passionate advocate, you won't have much influence. People follow a leader (physical or thought leader) if the leader can 1) give them a direction, 2) verbally paint a picture of success, and 3) exude enthusiasm and commitment! If you don't have those traits, you'll need a whip and a chair!

Listen before acting.

Influence is communication, communication is to influence.
Know your subject

Know the facts.
Know your subject, especially the business case for change.
If I can't get buy-in from the stakeholders, perhaps what I want isn't what they want and I need to rethink it. Know your facts—don't assume and don't make things up.

Prepare for all angles.
Your message must be based on facts.
Be well prepared,
Anticipate and be prepared.
Preparation and confidence are absolutely key.
Show business the data but let them think they made the decision.
Be prepared.
Never assume. Have the facts and show the ROI or business case, show them what their problem is, not yours
Be prepared. Seize the time/opportunity when it appears.
Know your facts. Make sure the numbers add up
Knowledge of the issue.

Build relationships with stakeholders

It's about building relationships.
Build relationships long before you need them.
Relying on your relationships or reputation isn't a repeatable technique if the initiative fails to deliver meaningful business results.
You can't influence people until they feel you care about them and their welfare, personally.
Develop strong interpersonal relationships with these executives.
Sometimes the timing is not right for your message. In many cases it is irrelevant if you are right or not, or whether your suggestion/recommendation is the right direction for the organization; it is the management of the relationship that matters.
The greatest successes and most rewarding activities are the ones that have required me to enlist the support of others. Simply working on things that are totally within my control are hollow victories compared to those which required team collaboration.
Respect stakeholders of all levels.
Stakeholders are people too.
That more business gets done outside the actual meeting (i.e., before and after the meeting)
Make alliances before, during and after projects.
Involving the business unit in the decision-making process. You will get more buy-in and a higher probability of success.
Build alliances across all levels in the organization by establishing credibility and being nice to everyone regardless of position. It is amazing how much influence administrative assistants have. You are what people say about you.

There is no limit to what you can accomplish as long as you don't care who gets the credit. Take blame, share success.

Never leave a supporter or someone you have "won over" for extended periods of time. You must continually refresh and reinforce that support and position. People get additional information, and opinions change when they only have half of the information.

**Build credibility, self-confidence and earn respect**

Be confident and true to yourself and values, no matter what happens.

Don't take things/reactions personally.

You don't always win, but neither do major league baseball players who make a lot more money than you do. They get praised if they are batting .300.

Maintain your credibility by not being afraid to admit your own mistakes

Credibility is important; trust is important; you have to have both and stick to your word.

Influence can be gained when you have personal credibility, backed by sound decisions and outcomes. If folks don't know you, you will gain credibility at initial meetings if you come well prepared, with facts, not too much detail (you tell execs what they need to know, not everything you know), and you listen and respond effectively to their concerns.

Preparation and confidence are absolutely key.

You have to EARN the respect

You must follow through during and after the initiative to demonstrate that the results have been achieved. This sets the stage for the next initiative to be well received.

Execute successfully so they have trust in you, and build your credibility for the future.

**Other**

The greatest success comes from team efforts, utilizing the best characteristics of each participant, having strong communication plans and paths, working towards a common and clearly articulated goal with an understanding of each person's part, the schedule, and a plan to remove obstacles that occur.

It's a chess game. You don't have to get everything you want all at once. You can make small moves and still get across the board. And you have to do all of this without appearing to be impatient or frustrated, as the people around you will see right through you. Let the people you are trying to influence come to the right conclusions on their own, just point them in the right direction and keep feeding them the right information.

To be patient and wait for the proper opportunity.

Prioritize your battles, as you may have to give in on some, but you can then impress upon the stakeholders or business leaders that the high priority initiatives are truly that.

I have probably learned more from watching people make mistakes than successes. It was often easier to see what didn't work and why.

Every situation is different; you have to adapt your strategy to the particular situation being faced.

Force rarely works and should only be used when their neither time nor human resources to build consensus.

Don't play the used car salesman. One-off deals do not work in today's world.
What are the most common mistakes an IT leader can make in trying to influence senior business stakeholders?

**Focusing on IT instead of the business; not showing the business value**
- Making it about IT and not about the business.
- Not appealing to the business aspects.
- Talking technology instead of business and talking rather than listening.
- Talk too technically.
- Talk technology not business.
- Not having the ROI of every project.
- Not show the business value and bottom line savings.
- Talking about technology instead of solutions.
- Considering only the technical and IS issues, not business impact.
- Getting too technical; using technical jargon.
- Talk in a technical language instead of business language.
- Not tying the issue to the business, but trying to explain it in IT terms.
- Failing to articulate the issues in plain business language.
- Not thoroughly explaining the purpose, objective and benefits of IT-related initiatives.

**Treating these as IT projects, not business projects**
- Not preparing the "business case" or the ROI. Speaking in terms of the need to bring in new or update the technology, rather than what the initiative will produce in terms of results. You must follow through during and after the initiative to demonstrate business value.
- Failure to communicate in business terms.
- Always talk in business terms!
- Not to tie the needed decisions/direction back to business facts (costs, business impacts, etc.). The right facts should help sell the outcome.
- Being too technical and concentrating on the technical aspects of issues, ideas, projects, etc. are things that don't work well.
- Focusing on the technology. The focus MUST be on the value to the business: How is it going to help them achieve their business goals?
- The most common mistake is NOT presenting the IT needs from the senior business stakeholders' perspective.
- Not understanding the business goals and motivations when presenting a concept. It has to be a benefit in the business stakeholders mind, not just because it's the right thing to do.
- Not knowing or understanding what stake your peers have in the decision. What do they stand to lose?
- Influencing as a technology executive versus a business executive who just happens to lead the technology organization.
- Any initiative needs to be put into the context of supporting the business goals & strategy.
- Not having a true understanding of the business stakeholders' issues.
Too technical
Applying force and technical reasoning versus approaching the matter from a business persons perspective

Being too technical. To get business leaders attention, it is critical to drop the jargon and sell the ideas based on business goals and business impacts.

Not having a board understanding of the item. Getting too technical in the response.

Expecting business leaders to care about a small matter in your area.

Selling them on the technical, structural, or security measures of an initiative. Most business stakeholders are exclusively interested in whether or not IT can solve a problem or increase their competitiveness in their operation, not whether the solution will make life easier for IT or systems more secure or efficient.

To win an initiative, people have to believe that it will provide them with a SOLUTION. While the IT leader is responsible for ensuring that the environment for his staff improves through his/her choices and initiatives, I've generally found that most stakeholders have no interest in those aspects of a proposal.

Assuming that the business needs to understand IT. We need to relate back to business needs and goals. It's like buying a television; as a consumer you don't need to call the service providers to check that it will work or know how it works on the inside. All you need to know is how to work the remote control.

Talking about the technology and not how the technology will solve a business problem.

**Poor factual preparation & overselling**

Poor preparation, no knowledge of all the facts including benefits to those senior business stakeholders or major risks.

Not have a clear understanding of the business goals and objectives.

Not having the facts straight.

Not knowing or understanding the impact on the business.

Trying to do it by your self. It's impossible to know all the answers to what they're going to ask. You need a team.

No clearly understanding of the current business priorities

Jumping to conclusions.

Not having all the facts, figures thoroughly researched.

Not having all the information.

Giving too optimistic a view of the cost/benefit of a proposal—then not being able to deliver on it.

Making assumptions about background knowledge and understanding of implications of the issue.

Over-simplifying the change required.

Over-simplifying the complexity or interdependencies.

Over-selling.

Not providing facts and data to support your effort.
Not linking the IT effort to a specific business goal.

Overwhelming them with facts. It is better to overwhelm them with information on how this benefits their personal interests.

Lack of the facts and figures necessary to prove the benefits to be derived from the project being undertaken.

Not having the facts correct.

Over-economizing and valuing savings more than value.

**Not seeking stakeholder input/Cultivating relationships / Listening**

Lack of customer focus.

1) Not realizing that projects are a *partnership* between IT and the business. 2) Surprising upper management with a fully developed idea before testing the waters and seeking support and input. 3) Not being respectful of the business person’s time by scheduling too many, too-long meetings.

Not listening to other perspectives/

Not building relationships early enough.

Not believing in taking time to develop personal relationship.

Non-collaborative.

Not listening enough.

Not sharing the ownership of initiatives.

Getting a false buy-in.

Allowing the business leaders to tell IT what solution they want, rather than explaining what they want and allowing IT to create the appropriate technology solution.

Assume that getting the boss at the top is all they need. It is critical that you have support from all levels of the organization from the task workers, middle management to senior executives.

They do not take the time to understand the other person’s point of view, i.e. their critical success factors.

Ignoring the importance of personalities.

Springing it on them.

Assuming you are the only expert.

Ignore other influences because you know you are right.

An absence of buy in and commitment from the business stakeholder.

Failing to determine the specific goals and needs of senior stakeholders in order to create win-win situations.

Operating in a silo; need to build partners and relationships.

Not understanding the operational impacts of a decision.

1) Thinking you can fix their business problems. 2) Fixing something in one area and missing the upstream or downstream impacts. 3) Leading implementations that are really business operations changes and assuming that your changes will stick when the IS folks are gone.

Not involving the business leaders and their staff. Lack of communication. Not relating project benefits to each stakeholder. Not being collaborative.
1) Expecting them to "get it." 2) Expecting them to see the obvious and act upon it. 3) Under-communicating. 4) Assuming silence is understanding and buy-in. 5) Not giving the stakeholder enough time to process the decision to be made in their own terms.

Not building relationships.

Not understanding the operating needs of the stakeholders.

**Being too authoritative**

Using an authoritative approach.

Do not force them.

Top down, authoritative, or using position power to get the job done.

Not understanding the business model and the unwritten rules before driving hard.

Using command and control to demand action.

Dictating.

Pushing too hard too fast.

Being too strong-armed

Trying to force an issue or not gather appropriate support from stakeholders.

Too authoritative and/or condescending in tone.

Arrogance, or "I know better," when you don't have the business perspective.

Dictate. It's best to build credibility and support, so you don't have to dictate or use an authoritarian approach. If you're not getting support and buy-in from the business unit, do not proceed with the initiative/project. It will not get high enough priority to succeed.

Pushing initiatives with authority and without communication.

Exerting authority before having created trust.

Using his/her position of authority as the reason to doing something.

**What are the toughest challenges you face when trying to influence stakeholders over whom you have no direct authority?**

**Competing priorities and lack of stakeholder incentive, especially for infrastructure investments**

IT is not something most business people consider when assessing competing priorities; hence the challenge is gaining a higher ranking for IT related issues.

Overcoming their personal agenda and promoting the overall right outcome for the company.

It is when I find there are competing priorities. It really depends on what the other priorities are and how effective is their respective influencer.

Finding the common ground so both of us benefit.

The initiative has a week business case, but requires global implementation which is a distraction to more critical business processes.

Different business imperatives; goals in conflict; priorities are different.

Selling them on what's in it for them.
Demonstrating that the IT need (when in fact the IT need is critical) is more critical than their business needs.

It's most challenging when I clearly know the topic is not a high priority item for this stakeholder or he has already formed his position which is contrary to the desired outcome. Having them understand the impact of a certain initiative on the organization, even when their department isn't directly involved. In my current organization, I tend to have a broader view of the organization than my peers, so I am constantly trying to have them realize the interconnectedness of many initiatives.

Understanding their perspective and trying to make sure their needs are taken into account. Redirecting them if they are off on a tangent.

Each business unit wants to do their own thing and be independent (without recognizing the benefits gained by leveraging the overall infrastructure/strategy).

Getting them to include the initiative in their already long list of priorities.

Convincing them to invest in foundational items, i.e. switches, storage, warehouses, etc. When the stakeholders' goals and incentives do not support an IT initiative that is in their best interest, because it may impact their budget negatively (we allocate IT costs). It takes significant finesse and understanding the benefits from their perspective to get the support needed. This is not always easily achieved.

Getting them to buy into the bigger picture. They may agree temporarily, but may not always support it when it comes down to the wire. Their personal interests usually win out.

The biggest challenge is when the initiative will not impact the performance measurements that affect their compensation or businesses bottom line. Typically, this comes into play when the initiative is in the area of government compliance or security.

The ability to influence change in a matter that seems "trivial" to the stakeholder or is not as high of a priority as the business related matters.

Getting their buy-in. Showing them how it impacts them. What is in it for me?

Understanding their business issues and defining things so that they also win.

Differing agendas both fighting for same budget dollars. Getting them to agree with me means less money for them.

Given the tight financial times at the moment it is predominately when negotiating funds for projects and expenditure from outside your budget control.

Budget.

Getting them to see the bigger picture, not just their department's needs. This is always a challenge. Their annual performance review is based on them reaching their department's goals and objectives, not how well the overall organization did.

**Getting a stakeholder's time and focus**

Getting their time and focus.

Taking the focus off myself and putting it onto the issue at hand.

Ensuring that the technology concerns get a high enough level of priority with stakeholders. Typically stakeholders will agree [to the idea or project], but fail to commit themselves or their staff in actively contributing to the solution by attending meetings regularly or completing necessary work.

Getting them to stay focused.

Getting them to agree.
Visibility, access,
It takes too long for decisions to get made at all levels of the organization. The higher you go, the longer it takes.
Getting to discuss things with them face to face. With 15 offices across 8 countries, that's a challenge.
Getting them to listen—actually listen—is a great challenge. Some of them pretend to listen, but later I discover that they didn't even hear anything I said.
Having the time to develop trust, influence and persuasion.
Getting their attention and commitment.
Getting their full attention for IT matters when they're struggling with the day-to-day issues in their world.
They own the solution and the process. I can only take care of the technology.
Getting beyond the culture of "this is the way we've always done it and I don't want to change."
Close-mindedness—it takes a lot of time and effort to move someone outside their comfort zone.

Stakeholder's lack of understanding of technology and its impact on business
The lack of understanding around technology and how it impacts business.
IT is seen as a cost center not a business partner.
Getting everyone to understand the FACTS.
Getting them to see the big picture and effect on the enterprise.
Educating the stakeholders on issues so educated decisions are made. Gaining buy-in and support of IT issues. Understanding that IT is arterial to the organization and just as important as the most "sexy" ventures of the organization.
Understanding.
Determining how to speak their language and put the item I am trying to sell into context that is very meaningful for them.
Communicating the information at the level of detail appropriate for each individual to help them understand.
Some stakeholders operate in a silo environment and to get them to see the vision of enterprise-wide efforts is tough. This can only happen if we have board direction.
Treating technology as a strategic asset verses a cost center.
Misaligned goals. Lack of understanding of the need for the change.
Consistent use of our systems; no compliance and urgency to use new systems.
Influencer's lack of self confidence/credibility; stakeholders think they know more about IT

Self confidence (lack of).

Convincing them that my business experience is just as valuable and essential to the organization as my IT experience. With a solid background in both business and IT, I can bridge the gap between business and technology well, but sometimes it is difficult to get stakeholders to understand. I tend to be pigeon-holed as only IT.

History. "They've always done it that way."

What would best influence them, such as bringing in an expert, if often not supported by our IT management or cannot be funded. Also, we are sometimes not provided adequate time and/or opportunity to do the groundwork ahead of time to make an initiative effective.

Some stakeholders are not open to influence in particular in areas where they felt they have core competencies (even when they do not). In particular, technical people want to be "the experts" and are very threatened by other opinions.

This is an engineering organization and many of the engineers I work with aren't the best listeners in the world. They think they know everything.

Everyone believes that they "know" IT because they use technical things like BlackBerries and once designed their brother's website. Getting them to recognize that IT has value over and above consumer electronics is hard. Getting most IT people to talk in business terms is also a challenge.

Getting them to understand that they have to tell us what they want to do and let us find the technology; they can't bring in the technology solution.

Getting them to understand that new technology almost always impacts workflow and processes. They cannot get new technology without taking a more holistic view of the operation. Technology is a tool not a solution.

What are the biggest differences between men and women in being an effective influencer?

Women are more collaborative; men are more likely to exert the authority and power of their position

Women create more collaborative relationships towards achieving goals. They are more patient and methodical in getting to a good solution. Men use more brute force and power to get a point made. They cut right to the point. When the audience is male, this is not perceived as a negative approach.

Men tend to use their position power as a fall back. Since women had to go up the ranks using collaboration and similar techniques, they never used position power. For the most part women never had position power to use so it's not a tool they'd pull out

Men start from a position of authority.

We need to continuously prove that we have a right to sit at the table. Woman collaborate more than men, men tend to use their position more.

Men are less concerned about what others think and will make quicker decisions since they don't feel a need to collaborate and get consensus.

Men use authority and position more frequently whereas women are more team-oriented and use collaborative approaches.
Women are more inclusive. Men tend to promote themselves more. Collaboration versus use of power. Creating a win-win versus a win-lose.

I have seen men play the "power" card far more often than women. Men are more likely to "do a favor or return a favor" to get things done whereas women will work to build alliances and use reasoning to get things done.

Men tend to present themselves with more self-confidence than many women. Women are less likely to resort to exercising their direct authority when necessary. Women tend to be more consensus-oriented and employ techniques along that line as a primary methodology.

I like to "plant seeds" with new concepts, ideas and approaches adding "water" with each interaction I have with executive leadership. I follow-up with anecdotal stories or cite examples of what other organization are doing. I also play to whatever motivating factor drives the senior executive. If it is the CFO it is ROI and efficiencies. For the provost it is the impact on academics. Most men do not invest or spend the time needed to grow ideas. They will start, but ultimately pull rank or demand reciprocation to get the results faster. I believe it is a patience issue.

Most women in leadership that I know are better listeners and collaborators than men. They will share knowledge and not hoard it. They are willing to take on unpopular projects. However, some of the women have to work to control their emotions and not be ruffled by their ideas not being accepted. Many of the men in leadership that I know are more likely to use alliances and play political games to jockey for influence.

In my opinion, women are more inspired to listen and collaborate, whereas men sometimes take a more reciprocating approach.

The only, and somewhat subtle, difference is that male IT professionals tend to use position as more of a crutch than do women.

I see men more willing to exert authority while women rely more on collaboration and alliances. Women seem to be more effective in influencing other women. Women are collaborative in different ways than men— their collaboration seems to be more nurturing whereas male collaboration is frequently based on getting over something or solving an issue for competitive reasons.

Women will generally work to collaborate and build consensus more often than men even if it means temporarily changing alliances to do so. Many will most often seek the middle ground and will less frequently "command" when consensus cannot be reached. This can on occasion be seen as indecisiveness, even when not true.

Men will tend to "command" more often and attempt to inspire more. Men do collaborate but the collaboration tends to be through people they consider "buddies" or have built personal networks with over time and have more of tendency to value these personal alliances even when they may not be the best choice in getting buy-in. Men have a greater tendency to make what they perceive as "decisive" moves, even if that move fragments a team or hurts morale.

IT is essentially gender neutral. While it is a male dominated arena, those women who choose to participate in IT are valued in similar ways as men. Therefore, the role of "influencer" is also gender neutral. The only, and somewhat subtle, difference is that male IT professionals tend to use position as more of a crutch than do women.
Women are better listeners than men, and have a greater sense of empathy for those they are trying to influence

Active listening.
Emotional intelligence.
Listening. I think female executives are better at intently listening and then interpreting what they have heard into approaches, actions, etc.
Empathy.
Women executives seem to be better listeners
Women are more sensitive.

Relationship building: Men interact more casually and easily with other men, and there are more opportunities for men to build relationships. Men have the "good old boys" network

How they have built their relationships. Most of the IT Execs I work with are men and they interact differently with each other versus with me. They interact in more casual settings like golfing, whereas I interact in more formal settings which does create a difference in how the relationship is built and matures over time.

There seems to be more camaraderie among men within the decision-making group, providing more opportunities for discussions and therefore influencing decision-making.

Men seem in general to be more at ease with each other than with women.

There is still an "old boys" network operating; therefore, there is still a strong tendency to trust what a male says/presents versus what a female says/presents.

It's still the good old boys network in my industry.
I can't really generalize other than to say that men tend to do more with relationships (there is a reason it was called the "good old boy," network while women work harder and are more detailed.

Women build relationships; men go for the solutions.

Men start from position of credibility and respect; women have to demonstrate it

Credibility for men is granted to them by virtue of their position in many cases. The same is not true for women. They need to demonstrate actions that gain credibility before it is given.

Perceptions of credibility/
Respect.

Men tend to present themselves with more self-confidence than many women.

People listen automatically when a man speaks.

My experience with women in CIO roles leads me to conclude their approach to influencing revolves around exerting their influence based on their authority and position. It appears there is a constant need to reaffirm their value and competency in the role.

The woman's lack of confidence in her ability or "place" in the position. Men are generally more arrogant and willing to "push" their accomplishments while women tend to be more reserved. The ability to build alliances/teams. Females tend to get others to agree with their solution so they feel more confident in presenting the solution.
Other

Men will often put their long term personal gain ahead of what is the short term good of the organization. While women more often want to "do what is right" at each decision. Because men are more often strategic in this way (making themselves look good), they sometimes have more influence at higher levels.

The ability to adapt to the situations at hand quickly and remove the "emotions" out of the equation.

I think both can be effective; the differences are less gender related and more background related. For example, I have noted in my career that women who have played team sports (not the swimming team, but soccer, field hockey, etc.) approach issues differently than women who haven't played team sports, and those who haven't played sports approach a problem like men who haven't. Carved in the National Archives building is the saying "Past is Prologue," and that's correct. What you are and how you approach an issue is a direct outcome of all that has come before in your life. I stress to the younger folks today to learn how to deal in teams, as that is the way of the future more now than ever.

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