

Sooner or later (probably sooner), you're going to meet someone who isn't especially interested in your Town Team. They may even dislike your Town Team.

These people come in all shapes and sizes. Local politicians who want the glory for themselves, cynical traders who've "seen people like you come and go all my life", sceptical residents who can't get a bead on why they should help, stone-faced Council employees who would rather die than say yes to anything you're thinking ... These folks all have their reasons, too.

If you've decided you don't need a particular person on board then that's fine – save your energy and walk away. But there are times when, for the sake of your team and its cause, you can't take "not interested, pal" for an answer. That's when it's time to think like an influencer. Someone who turns a "no" into a "yes."

Below is a list of influencing techniques we've found especially good for Town Teams. Read on and be inspired!

## Speak the language of the audience

This is a seriously big one. Break it down in to one, two, three -

1. Think of the person or people you need to influence
2. Think of what their needs and concerns might be
3. Then start thinking of how your idea overlaps with their needs

Let's say you're helping a trader with some placemaking out front of a shop, and you're copping grief from a stone-faced local government engineer called Ralph. It's tempting to get cross at Ralph. But don't.

Think constructively. Think: Ralph's an engineer ... working in local government ... he's got angry customers and stressed out bosses pulling him in every direction ... he'll get in a lot of trouble if our idea goes wrong ... he doesn't need to hear about "community spirit" or "our story" ... he just wants us to give him the info he needs for an assessment ...

See how it works? Put yourself in Ralph's shoes for a bit and you start seeing clear as day he needs technical information. Now you prepare a letter that explains exactly "how high, how long, how many". Bring diagrams that show exactly what you want approved. Show Ralph a list of the risks you've identified in this area and your plan for mitigating them. Take the trouble to research the relevant policies, then explain exactly how you've met them. Directly address Ralph's fears, and you'll probably get Ralph's yes!

One, two, three. Same method applies to everyone you're hoping to enlist support from.

It may help if you brainstorm your audiences and their needs. Try this template to get you started. And if you don't know the needs of a group/person, ask!

Idea or Project: Placemaking on a footpath outside shops		
<b>Local traders</b>	Need more sales! Business conditions are tough and getting worse Frustrated with the Council Parking	Placemaking is all about attracting more people to use a space Does this guarantee sales – no, but increasing foot traffic can sure help Let's work on a positive plan for the place and your business
<b>Local government engineers</b>	Technical information, especially around risks and policies Diagrams Quantifiable data	Work out what we actually want to do and get the ideas drawn up
<b>Councillors</b>	Votes! Popularity!	Show councillors the support we have, explain we ARE the voters! Get presentation ready

## Be patient and gently persistent

Sometimes, people just need time to wrap their heads around your idea. You might say they're just saying "no" upfront to give themselves the space they need to process your concept on their own! It may be fair enough if they've never met you before, or if they've come across a badly executed version of your idea in the past.

Be patient with the "no" person. Let them mull it over, talk it over with their friends and so on. Let them hear from others about the good work you're doing all over town. If your idea is sound, they'll gradually accept it, and maybe even come to love it more than you do!

Of course you can persist. Gentle follow-through will make a big difference. But it's wise to give it a few weeks or even longer.

Oh, little tip. Patience and persistence work well with traders and the general public when they're lukewarm. But if a government agency has officially refused one of your ideas, you'll probably need to revisit your proposal, rather than revisit the front counter!

## Trials (also called prototypes)

Another tried and tested tactic! Let's say you want to show people first-hand how fabulous your main street will be when there's a row of trees down the middle, when

there are bike racks all over the place, when it's a place for people to gather instead of pass through. A huge idea!

The boffins at Council laugh, saying: "no-one's gonna approve that! Even a basic version would cost five million bucks!" But you know better than to insist on immediate, permanent and massively expensive change. You get a week-long "new street-trial" approved instead.

A 20km per hour speed limit. A dozen potted trees, shifted around on trolley jacks. Ten car bays filled in with bean bags, lounges and chairs. Bike racks made hipster style out of old pallets. Total cost: \$4,000 including insurance. The trial is a huge success. You gather heaps of feedback and suggestions from inspired attendees. Council sees the writing on the wall, and starts making plans to change the street permanently!

The rest becomes history, because you're an influencer, and you made the idea much easier for everyone to accept.

## Be a good soul

It's said that "who you are shouts so loudly I can't hear a word you say." Be a person whose goodness and sincerity "shouts" in everything you do. People will know it a mile off, and they'll come to stick by you. They'll cut you a lot of slack even if you make a mistake here and there.

We've seen people who started with little more than their sincerity do wonderful things over the years!