

## Tips and Tools for PEPFAR Teams

### STRATEGIC INFLUENCE: Having Positive Impact without Direct Authority

In PEPFAR teams, the whole-of-government approach and the complexity of the issues being addressed require people from multiple agencies working collaboratively to get things done. This often means you will need the help of others to achieve your goals and to produce your deliverables – individuals with whom you have no positional authority. In these situations, you may have to rely upon your ability to influence strategically to ensure objectives are met, work is accomplished, and your agenda moves forward.

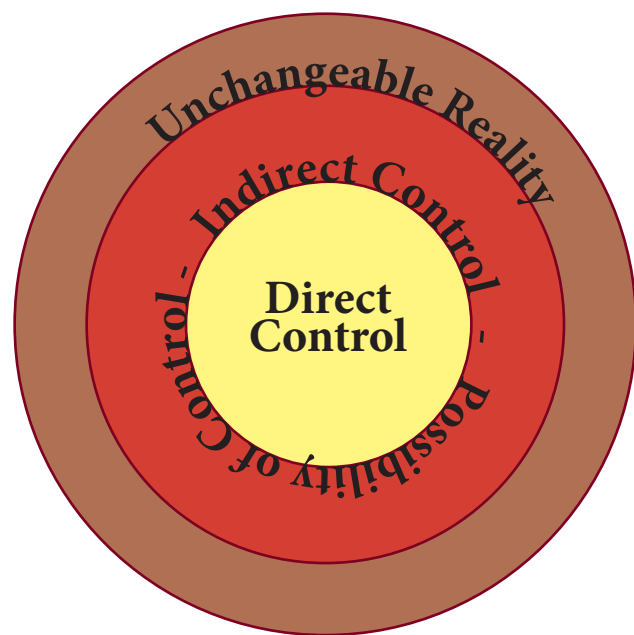
Wielding influence strategically requires both skill and intention. Likewise, there are some core precepts that undergird one's ability to influence effectively.

- **Strong Relationships:** The more you invest in relationships, the more goodwill you will have to leverage when trying to influence others.
- **Competence:** In a professional setting, competence is critical. Knowing what you're doing and having a proven track record of professionalism is the threshold to being strategically influential.
- **Positive Intention:** Using your influence for the good of the organization helps build a reputation as someone who is trustworthy and credible. Using your influence for personal gain is manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

Building on these precepts, a diagnostic approach to the situation, to the actors involved, and to your own sphere of control increases the chance that your influence will produce the desired results.

#### Assessing Your Capacity to Influence the Situation

Too often we underestimate how much we can truly influence the actions of others or the outcomes of a situation. With forgone conclusions and ill-conceived assumptions, we mistakenly believe our sphere of influence to be limited and our capacity for using influence to be minimal, but the more reflective we can be about our true span of control, the more we can expand our circle of influence.



Adapted from Steven Covey's Circle of Influence

**Direct Control** – As you begin to look critically at a situation you'd like to influence, it is helpful to identify what aspects are within your direct control. For example, if you are negotiating a scope of work on a partner activity, some things that may be within your direct span of control could include delegation or structuring of the tasks.

**Indirect Control** – The range of players you need to influence fall under your Indirect Control. We often assume that difficult colleagues are an unchangeable reality outside our sphere of influence. We need to challenge our assumptions, remembering that while we can't change others' behavior, we can change our own and, thereby, invite them to a different relationship and possibly draw them into our sphere of indirect control and possible influence. For example, if in negotiating the scope of work on a partner activity you believe your colleague from a partner agency will not support your ideas, you may not include this colleague in the delegation or structure of the task. However, if you challenge the assumption that your colleague will be a contrarian no matter what, you may craft a different kind of scope or message that could create the possibility of a different interaction.

While there is no iron-clad guarantee that changing your behavior will evoke the hoped-for change in others, it does increase the likelihood of creating a different relationship, and one that possibly could be influenced.

**Unchangeable Reality** – Covey counsels that by correctly identifying what is unchangeable in an issue, you will not waste time that could be devoted elsewhere to influencing. For example, if you want to make an immediate change that calls for more resources, yet the budget for this fiscal year is set, you might want to rethink your proposition and its feasibility. Spending energy on things that can't be changed is a sure path to disappointment and frustration. Instead, pragmatically look at what can be done and proactively plan on how best to leverage your direct and indirect control, thereby expanding your circle of influence.

## Inviting Support From Others

Once you have identified the key players in a situation around which you wish to build support, doing the next level of strategic reflection is important in tailoring a strategy for influence.

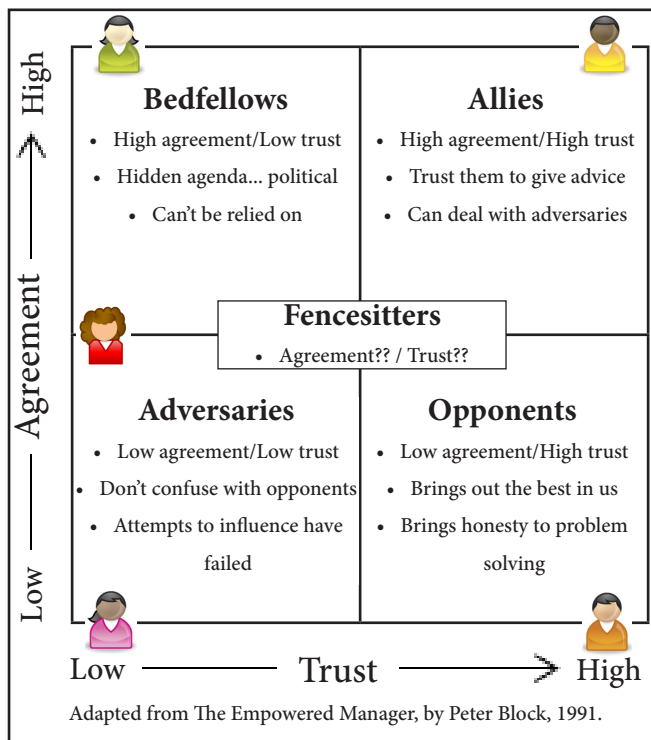
As you review the actors you wish to influence, ask yourself two critical questions:

- *In this context, how much do I trust them?*
- *In this context, how much do I agree with them?*<sup>3</sup>

Using assessments of trust and agreement, you can then craft a strategy for trying to influence each stakeholder. The following categories will help you better assess the stakeholders involved and how best to invite their support.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Allies (high trust/high agreement)** – These are people from whom you most likely will have complete support.

*Tips for inviting support from allies:* Affirm the importance of your relationship and points of agreement. Discuss shared doubts and vulnerabilities, and invite advice. If appropriate, leverage allies' positive relationships with others to advocate on your behalf.



**2. Opponents (high trust/low agreement)** – Labels notwithstanding, opponents are individuals you trust and respect, but with whom you often disagree. These people can be invaluable as a Devil’s Advocate.

*Tips for inviting support from opponents:* Affirm the importance of your relationship and the value you place on his or her differing perspective. Explore how the opponent might see your proposition differently and identify where you could problem-solve to create common ground for agreement.

**3. Bedfellows (high agreement/low trust)** – People in this category often work from a hidden agenda, agreeing with your cause on one hand, and then reversing themselves later.

*Tips for inviting support from bedfellows:* Affirm that you need their support, but acknowledge your caution (without getting into specifics). State your hopes for an improved working relationship and any changes you plan to make in your own behavior/actions. Identify shared goals. Be clear about what you would like from them and inquire what it would take to get their full support. Try to reach agreement.

**4. Fence-Sitter (unknown agreement/low trust)** – A Fence-Sitter never declares his or her position fully, always delaying or avoiding taking a position.

*Tips for inviting support from fence-sitters:* State your position clearly and ask where the Fence-Sitter stands. Push gently if he or she seems unable to commit to a position. Inquire what it would take to get the fence-sitter to support your position and to work with you collaboratively on this issue.

**5. Adversary (low agreement/low trust)** – An adversary is the great challenge, the one with whom we most likely have had conflict and unpleasant dealings. Too often, we spend a lot of time trying to influence the adversary, to no avail. However, it is wise to question whether the person’s adverse stance is an unchangeable reality or whether a different approach might, in some instances, bring the adversary into our indirect sphere of influence.

*Tips for inviting support from adversaries:* Be clear about your position on the issue at hand and test your understanding of the adversary’s position. If there has been conflict between you, own your contribution to that and, if appropriate, apologize. Alert your adversary to your plans to move forward and don’t make any demands on him or her. If possible, use an ally who has a positive relationship with your adversary to act as an ambassador, trying to influence him or her accordingly.

Remember, these roles are often situational, and actors can change categories depending on the context to be influenced.

Whether or not you hold positional authority on a team, you should never underestimate your ability to influence. By being thoughtful about your true span of control, looking candidly at your assumptions and challenging them; by reflecting on an issue you’d like to influence and assessing the stakeholders involved in regards to levels of agreement and trust; and by tailoring your approach so it is both contextually and personally specific, your capacity to have positive impact will expand exponentially, strengthening your ability to wield strategic influence.

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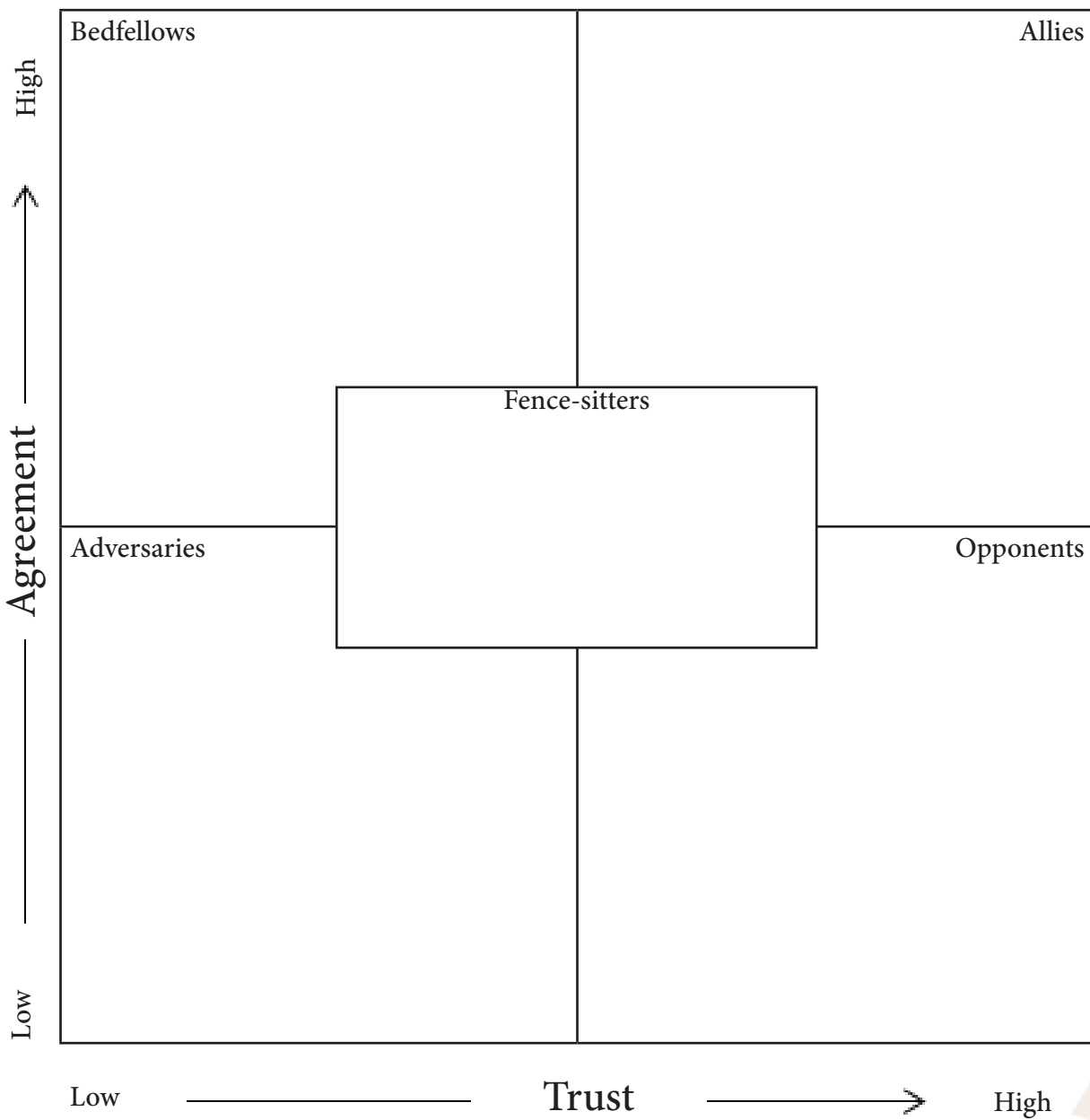
<sup>1</sup> David Bradford and Allan Cohen. *Influence without Authority* (Hoboken, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Covey. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York, 1989)

<sup>3</sup> Peter Block. *The Empowered Manager* (San Francisco, 1991).



3. Who are the key players with whom you will need to build support? Add each player to the most appropriate category below:



4. For each individual categorized above, reflect on what approach would best serve inviting him or her to your cause. Review the “Tips for Inviting Support” and create a tailored conversation strategy for each person using the questions below. To plan multiple conversations, make copies of this page.

- How did you categorize this person and why? What do you know about their position?
- What is your desired outcome for the conversation? Are you trying to build trust or agreement?
- What information may be new or surprising to this person?
- Where might you have mutual interests?
- What are the key messages you want to deliver in your conversation with this person? How will you present your position and engage the other person in positive and collaborative ways?

