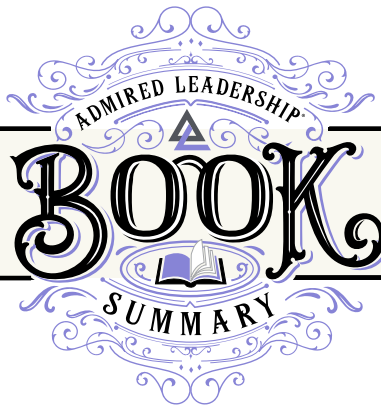




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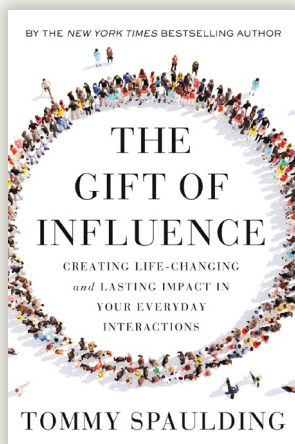
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# The Gift of Influence

Creating Life-Changing and Lasting Impact in Your Everyday Interactions

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Tommy Spaulding is the founder and president of the Tommy Spaulding Leadership Institute, a leadership development and executive coaching firm located in Denver, Colorado. A renowned speaker, Spaulding travels the globe inspiring his audiences to lead more fulfilling personal and professional lives. In his book, **The Gift of Influence**, he explores our potential to influence those around us, recommending ways we may leave a positive imprint on the lives of others through interest, investment, and intention.

## Key Quote

“Here’s my promise to you: If you commit to living a life of positive influence, you will never look at your personal and professional relationships the same way again” (p. 13). — **Tommy Spaulding**

## KEY POINTS

### How do positive and effective leaders L.E.A.D.?

**Lift.** Leaders lift people up, highlighting the greatness of others.

**Embrace.** Leaders embrace others for who they are, valuing them regardless of what they can get from them.

**Act.** Leaders are active rather than inactive, stepping up to right wrongs and to make things better.

**Devote.** Leaders give of themselves, sacrificing to help others.

### What are the key aspects of positive influence?

**Interest.** Leaders are incessantly curious, seeking to learn about the people in their life.

**Investment.** Leaders purpose to make long-term contributions to the lives of the people around them.

**Intent.** Leaders aim to be a positive and selfless influence.

### Key Concepts:

#### 80,000 PEOPLE

We each influence around 80,000 people throughout our lives, enough to fill a stadium. How will those 80,000 people remember us at the end of our days? Our legacy is our choice (pp. 9-13).

Influencing is “not what you can get out of those eighty thousand people – it’s what you give to those eighty thousand people” (p. 11).

While the word influencer has been monopolized by social media sites such as Instagram and TikTok, it may be better defined as those who make an authentic effort to help and serve others (pp. 10-11).

#### INFLUENCERS LEAD

**Lift.** Influencers uplift others not by **telling** but by **showing** them their defining qualities.

Ms. Lynn, a junior high school teacher, instructed the students in her class to compliment each of their peers. She gathered and shared these words of praise with her eighth-grade students, amounting to lists that many kept well into adulthood (pp. 17-23).

**Embrace.** Influencers accept others for who they are, “seeing and valuing someone for more than the service they provide for you” (p. 24).

Spaulding’s son, one of the top hockey players in his age group, spent time on and off the ice with Tristan, a weaker player, building his confidence and embracing him onto the competitive team when others did not (pp. 24-28). The coach of Tate’s elite team recognized that Tate was a true influencer who embraced other players for who they were and named him captain of the team.

**Act.** Influencers take action to help others with “compassion, positive intent, and love” (p. 29).

After his hometown was rocked by gang violence, George Taylor, a successful businessman, sought to reduce gang-related violence in North Carolina by starting a company that solely employed gang members, giving them a fresh start and steady paycheck (pp. 29- 38).

**Devote.** Influencers dedicate their lives to the service of others.

This attribute was exemplified in the person of Sister Loreen Spaulding, the author’s aunt. She assisted Liberian refugees for eight years during a time of political strife, facing down a firing squad to save her students and eventually escaping violence by paddling a canoe through the rainforest. She had been the last one to leave the mission (pp. 39-45).



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## THE FIRST I OF INFLUENCE: INTEREST

Influencers are “obsessively interested in learning about the people around them, whether they’re friends, coworkers, neighbors, or complete strangers” (p. 52).

This interest stems from genuine, selfless curiosity. Being curious is important because “(1) Everyone has a story, (2) people are willing to share that story if asked in an authentic way, and (3) to have a positive influence on the lives of others, we need to take the time to learn about them” (p. 58).

When we approach our interactions with a desire to learn, we not only learn about but from others. Engaging with others is surprisingly tough. A recent Harris poll found that 69% of managers cite communication with their employees as the most difficult part of their role (p. 65).

We all have opportunities to treat others with kindness. A 2010 study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that generosity is contagious, which means our kindness may even have a domino effect (pp. 74-81).

## THE SECOND I OF INFLUENCE: INVESTMENT

Investment is characterized by a long-term contribution to the lives of others (pp. 83-120).

Lack of investment – which can manifest as broken promises – can have a lasting negative impact on organizations.

According to a London School of Economics study, when employees feel the organization hasn’t followed through with its word, they may take it out on coworkers or clients (p. 92).

How often do we tell people we are there for them without really meaning it? Influencers go beyond ambiguous promises and act to help others in whatever way they can (p. 97).

The words we use have the power to uplift or oppress others, and we must be intentional when using them. What differentiates influencers is that they approach every word as if it is their last (pp. 99-105).

“Your presence is the single greatest gift you can offer” (p. 110). Often it is just about continuously showing up so people can count on you, without the expectation of something in return (pp. 110-120).

### **The Third I of Influence: Intent**

Intent is defined by how we may sustain our influence from a place of positive, selfless intention (pp. 121-167). Unsurprisingly, leaders who put their employees’ needs above their own see an improvement in employee retention (p. 137).

Spaulding quotes Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, “A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves” (p. 132).

According to Gallup, the main reason employees leave an organization is a bad boss. While nobody strives to be a poor leader, the reality is that often there is a discrepancy between how leaders and employees assess the leader’s performance (pp. 145-146).

Influencers are purposeful in how they act toward others, no matter the setting. A study by Dr. John Gottman and Dr. Robert Levenson in the 1970s found that five positive interactions are required to cancel out one negative interaction (p. 149).



*Lack of investment – which can manifest as broken promises – can have a lasting negative impact on organizations.*



The benefits of setting aside our ego and asking for help are two-fold: we can honor others by asking for support, and often people like us more after they've helped us (pp. 160-167).

## THE CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

The final I of influence is "I" – in other words, myself. To make a positive impact on others, we must first focus on ourselves (pp. 178-185).

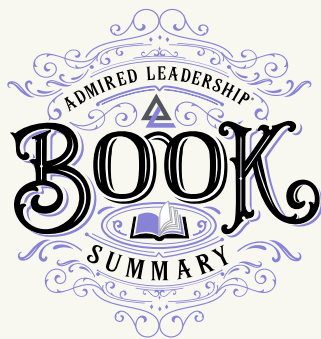
"If everything is important, then nothing is" (p. 181). There is a benefit to prioritizing what matters most to us, which sometimes involves sacrificing other tasks and responsibilities that are pulling us away.

In 1938, Harvard University conducted a longitudinal "happiness" study, finding that the main indicator of living a healthy, fulfilling life was satisfaction in relationships (pp. 181-182). Going beyond that, we may increase levels of happiness by engaging in authentic, deep conversations rather than surface-level small talk with those close to us (p. 185).

What in our lives are we approaching with laser focus and vigor (pp. 186-194)? We must focus on the one thing we believe we're the best at and go above and beyond in our pursuit of it.

"Was I loved? Did I love back? Did I make a contribution?" (p. 199). If we strive to lift, embrace, act, and devote ourselves to our positive influence, we will be able to answer these three questions with certainty (pp. 195-199).

Spaulding, T. (2022). **The Gift of Influence: Creating Life-Changing and Lasting Impact in Your Everyday Interactions.** New York: Crown Publishing Group.



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