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# Personal Excellence

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## EMOTIONAL • PASSION

# The Passionista

Make passion work for you.

by Amy Showalter

**I**N YOUR ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE OTHERS, YOU may be advised: *be passionate about your cause*, as if passion were 90 percent of successful persuasion. But, alas, passion isn't always the panacea.

Are you a *passionista*, thus limiting your upward influence? *Do you come across as self-righteous, but think that you are simply acting on your convictions? Is your request focused on how it will help you, or how your influence target can benefit or become a hero? Do you get overly emotional when others disagree with you? Will agreeing to your request make you a hero, or your persuasion prospect a hero? Will your influence target make enemies by agreeing with you? Do you engage in challenging influence situations when you are tired or low on energy?*

### Curse of the Passionista

When powerful people are asked what persuasion tactics *don't* influence them, they use phrases like: "too emotional," "can't see the other side," "fist bangers on the desk," "pushing me to make a decision quickly." Yet these behaviors all demonstrate passion!

*The problem is, they make your influence target think you are unpredictable.* When you become overly emotional or raise your voice, *others don't know what's coming next.* Being able to easily interpret someone and predict his behavior feels good mentally



and physically. It requires less work; when others have to think more about what you'll do next, you lose influence. When people have to think harder, they like you less; and less liking means less influence.

### When Can You Parade Your Passion?

When does passion work? It's when one of two conditions are present: 1) they would be a hero by agreeing to the request; and 2) when they would make new allies, friends or supporters by granting the request. You need to do your homework to find out what those instances mean to your target, as *hero* to one person is zero to another.

Passionate outbursts usually stem from a lack of self-control. Make sure your *willpower tank* is full before running full speed into upward influence encounters. *The more reserve you have, the better you can cope with the unexpected. Willpower seems to get stronger with use.* For example, willpower runs rampant in military training where recruits learn to overcome challenges. Consistently doing an activity that requires self-control boosts willpower. This reflects a greater ability to delay gratification (associated with success). Build your willpower and see how increased self-control can assist in your efforts to persuade up.

Don't lose the power of your own conviction; exercise some self-control. *Passion is best used judiciously.* When you're not helping your

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influence prospects win friends and be perceived as a good person, your passion can easily be interpreted as anger. And, after you do your fly-by and their ship is smoking and listing in port, you won't have future influence opportunities. PE



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**ACTION:** Make your passion work for you.

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