

Promoting Discipline & Learning

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Ronald Reagan and the Art of Influence

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An example of how to influence and improve relationships

When you are about to engage in a disagreement, try the following:

Say, "I don't want to win; I just want to understand what you are saying. My objective is **to clarify, not influence.**

"You're saying that you believe A B and C. I believe A B and D. So don't we really agree more than we differ?"

At the worst you have clarified. At the best you have minimized any disagreement.

In any event, it's good to know where you agree and where you differ.

The key is to state at the outset that your goal is not to win, but to clarify.

Clarity is not only more important than agreement, it often leads to influence itself.

Here is an example that changed a situation from "telling" and attempting to influence to asking a **reflective question** that—through **clarification**—influenced the world.

The events occurred on November 20, 1985 at Fleur d'Eau, Geneva, Switzerland, during the Geneva Summit meeting between the U.S. President, Ronald Reagan, and the USSR General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev accused Reagan of lecturing him. Reagan responded that he (Reagan) had been misinterpreted.

Later that afternoon, Reagan asked Gorbachev (and just their interpreters) to go on a short walk to the cabin by the lake. During the conversation the president asked the following question to the general secretary, "If the United States were to be attacked by something from outer space, would the U.S.S.R. come to the rescue of the United States?"

Gorbachev responded, "Of course."

Reagan responded, "Me, too," meaning that it would be the same if the situation were to be reversed.

The **question asked** and the resulting responses immediately **changed the relationship** between the two world leaders and the beginning of the end to the "cold war."

To review, **telling** or lecturing (versus sharing) **were reduced** by asking a brilliant, **reflective**, and creative **question**. This led to clarification that influenced, improved relationships, and established a fresh mindset.

More on increasing effectiveness and improving relationships can be learned by subscribing to the free monthly newsletter, "**Promoting Responsibility & Learning**," at www.MarvinMarshall.com.

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