

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

SELL YOUR IDEAS THROUGH ATTUNEMENT

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Contributor: Daniel Pink is the author of five books on the changing world of work, including the New York Times bestsellers *A Whole New Mind*, *Drive*, and *To Sell Is Human*. His books have been translated into 34 languages.

THE GOAL:

Increase your ability to influence and move others to action by attuning to their perspectives.

NANO TOOL:

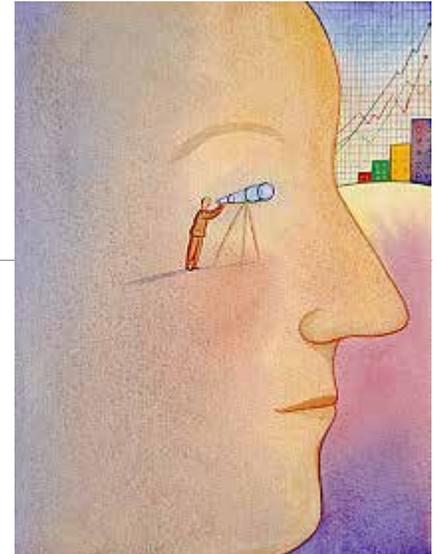
Research confirms that the ability to influence people — to engage and move them to action — is based on a complex set of skills related to attunement. Attunement involves understanding other people’s perspectives, getting into their heads, and seeing the world through their eyes. But it is more than merely understanding what others are thinking; it also includes how they are socially connected to others.

As you gather intelligence by watching and listening, a critical step is to pay attention to “social cartography,” the map of the personal and professional relationships that are important to the person you’re seeking to influence. When you understand the social landscape, you can better interpret group dynamics, including identifying the decision maker, and adjust your style accordingly.

By starting with the intent to gather information about those you want to influence, by focusing on their networks, you can gain additional tools to expand your influence and sell your ideas.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

- For one of the simplest and most cost effective examples of attunement, look to Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos. At key meetings, Bezos assembles his team — software engineers, marketers, operations people — but also includes at the table an empty chair. That chair reminds attendees to take the perspective of the most important, if invisible, person in the room: the customer. When people at the meeting discuss strategy or pricing or marketing, that vacant chair encourages them to imagine what the customer would think of what they’re discussing. This focus on attunement works. Amazon.com consistently places in the Top 10 on the University of Michigan’s annual customer-satisfaction index for the largest American companies, and has led the online retailing category for years.
- Dan Shimmerman, founder of Toronto-based Varicent Software (recently acquired by IBM), says in every sales situation he tried to understand the biases and preferences of every key player. “The mental map gives a complete picture, and allows you to properly allocate time, energy, and effort to the right relationships.” Shimmerman then relies on and refines this mental map in subsequent encounters with his prospect to ensure he’s reaching the people who matter. His skill at “social cartography” ensures that he doesn’t miss a critical player in the process. “It would stink to spend a year trying to sell to Mary only to learn that Dave was the decision maker.”



ACTION STEPS:

- 1. Keep Your Power In Check.** The next time you're in a situation where you want to gather intelligence, try putting yourself in the position of lesser power. Ask yourself, what I can do to sit in "the small chair" so the other can sit in "the big chair?" Notice how the other person responds. Was it easier to learn more about their thoughts and feelings? Were you able to gather the insights that you wanted and needed?
- 2. Be Curious about Their Social Cartography.** Find out more about the relationships of the person or groups that you want to influence. Who influences them? Whose approval or support do they need? Who do they turn to for advice? If you can understand more about their social and professional networks, you can extend your conversations to others who can help improve your influence.
- 3. Create Attunement Maps.** Take social cartography a step further by creating attunement maps. Just as a geographical map gives you a view of physical terrain, an Attunement Map can offer you a glimpse into the social and emotional landscape you're in. Because your ability to move others requires different approaches when your counterpart is positive or negative, it's important to be able to attune yourself to mood. Think of the Attunement Map as an emotional weather map to help you figure out how to approach a person or situation to achieve maximum advantage.

Here are two ways you can practice your attunement skills so you are ready to instantly assess the moods of your counterparts when you are in the midst of selling your ideas:

Attunement Map 1

In your next important conversation at work, note your counterpart's emotional tone, or mood, at the beginning of the encounter. On a scale of 1 (negative and resistant) to 10 (positive and open), what's his or her temperature? Do the same at what you think is the middle of the conversation. Has it changed? Do it again when the conversation ends. Afterward, reflect on the factors that might have changed the mood for better or worse.

Start of Conversation

1 (Negative/Resistant)

5

(Positive/Open) 10

Notes

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.....

End of Conversation

1 (Negative/Resistant)

5

(Positive/Open) 10

What Changed?

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Attunement Map 2

In your next meeting,* rate the collective mood on that same 1 to 10 scale at the beginning, middle, and end. Reflect on the factors that might have changed the mood — including your role in bringing it up or down.

**This can be any meeting — in person, online, or via phone — as long as it's a typical meeting that involves more than two people.*

Start of Conversation		
_____	_____	_____
1 (Negative/Resistant)	5	(Positive/Open) 10
Notes		
.....		
.....		
End of Conversation		
_____	_____	_____
1 (Negative/Resistant)	5	(Positive/Open) 10
What Changed?		
.....		
.....		

SHARE YOUR BEST PRACTICES:

Do you have a best practice for becoming better attuned to those you're trying to influence? If so, please share it on our blog at Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. <http://whartonleadership.wordpress.com/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others.* Daniel Pink (Riverhead Books, 2012). Argues that “we’re all in sales now,” and offers a new definition of selling with guidelines for improving your skills.
- “Why It Pays to Get Inside the Head of Your Opponent: The Differential Effects of Perspective Taking and Empathy in Negotiations,” Adam D. Galinsky, William W. Maddux, Debra Gilin, and Judith B. White, *Psychological Science*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (April 2008): 378-84. Concludes, based on three studies, that perspective taking increases an individual’s ability to discover hidden agreements and to both create and claim resources at the bargaining table.
- “Stop Stealing the Spotlight: The Perils of Extraverted Leadership,” Adam M. Grant, Francesca Gino, and David A. Hofmann, *The European Business Review*, May-June 2011: 29-31. Proposes that even though the trait is an important catalyst for ascending into leadership positions, extraversion can be a liability for leaders, placing them at risk for failure.

Daniel Pink teaches in Wharton's [Advanced Management Program](#), and is the author of five books on the modern workplace, including *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* (Riverhead Books, 2011).

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools Academic Director, Professor Adam Grant.