

# PART 1: RATIONALE

# Chapter 1:

## Purpose, approach, and value

This book is about an approach to influence that primarily uses reason and fairness but with fair use of power as a last resort (abbreviated to RF/FP or Reasonable Influence). It is for people who want to be rational and fair but not taken advantage of by cheats and bullies. You may not be able to change the world, but you probably can improve the behaviour of those nearest to you.

This first chapter gives an overview of the book including the value of reading it, its conclusions, and an outline of its arguments. It briefly dispels some predictable misunderstandings and misconceptions that might make the conclusions of the book seem unlikely or impractical at first.

### The book

This book combines:

- an argument for influencing firstly with reason and fairness but with fair use of power as a last resort (RF/FP);
- detailed recommendations (including specific techniques) for using RF/FP in varied situations; and
- suggestions on how to put RF/FP into practice.

The detailed technical recommendations are structured into three timescales: brief exchanges within discussions, encounters (whole discussions), and campaigns (sets of encounters). They are then divided into Cases, each of which introduces new challenges and new recommendations on top of those already offered. In this way the advice starts with general points that are always relevant and gradually adds more recommendations to tackle more specific and difficult challenges.

The book does not go into detail on logical and critical thinking techniques, fallacies, or traditional rhetorical techniques, all of which have been well covered by others. Instead, it focuses on how to explain clearly and patiently, so that people listen and understand, and how to counter tricks and bullying. Most of its advice shows how to use reason and fairness to best effect for influence and how to stick to reason and fairness despite challenges. There is also some advice on fairly using power.

## An outline of the argument for RF/FP

The argument begins by clarifying the meaning of reason, fairness, and fair use of power. RF/FP is not a novel approach; it is one of the most familiar and often attempted approaches to influence in recent centuries. It is what we want a responsible government to do. However, it has many competitors and is often overlooked despite its great advantages.

The next chapter describes other approaches to influence grouped into tricks, abuses of power, and sole reliance on rules.

The approaches to influence are then compared using a causal network. At its heart is the fact that RF/FP is morally agreeable to most people. It is a way to influence with integrity but also practical and efficient. RF/FP is at least competitive with other approaches and less risky, especially in the long term and when many people are involved.

Its main limitation is that RF/FP is a poor choice if you want to persuade someone of something that is not true or get them to do something that is not a good course of action.

Influence is contrasted with persuasion. *Influence* is getting to the truth or a good course of action and taking people with you. *Persuasion* is getting people to agree with you, no matter what is right. RF/FP is a poor approach to persuasion but an excellent approach to influence.

The main line of argument for RF/FP ends there but the case for RF/FP is supported by the many subsequent chapters explaining how to do it superbly. The final part of the book suggests ways to become more influential and increase reasonable behaviour by people around you.

## Counters to predictable objections

Various potential objections are discussed and dealt with in this book. In summary:

<b>Objection</b>	<b>Response</b>
This all assumes people are rational but they're not.	Although not completely rational, most people are largely rational and some people (especially people with power) are close to rational most of the time and often try to be rational. Being imperfect is a reason for trying to be better.

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<b>Objection</b>	<b>Response</b>
Emotion is stronger than reason.	Using emotion to influence is not an alternative to using sound reasoning. We are emotional in response to situations as we understand them. Thinking clearly and logically helps us understand situations correctly and so react with appropriate emotions.
Surely it is normal to schmooze and use debating tricks to get your way. How can something so many people do so often be wrong?	There are better ways to achieve the same or better outcomes. These are explained over several chapters.
The behaviours you are trying to replace are just human nature. You are not going to change anything.	We can each decide to use better methods; that is human nature too. Anyone who uses the methods explained in this book will change things for themselves.
This emphasis on logic is cold and inhuman.	Caring is a reason for using logic. Making a better, safer, more humane world involves solving problems and the best way to do that is with clear, logical thinking. Without thought, caring is just a display not a solution.
Sometimes being rational hurts the feelings of others and damages relationships.	Being rational and short-sightedly selfish can do that, but being rational and fair is quite different. People much more often appreciate being spoken to in a rational, fair way.
Explaining reasons takes time and attention. Why bother when I can get people to do what I want in a quicker way?	If you quickly trick people into agreement then they may just as quickly realize they were tricked and change position. When there are many reasons to work through, the result of patiently doing so is usually longer lasting influence.
This emphasis on reason surely means that less intelligent, less knowledgeable people will lose against more capable people.	Using reason cooperatively as described in this book is not a contest to be won by the smartest person. Instead, we just build sound reasons towards a good conclusion that people understand and agree with.
It's all very well saying that power is a last resort, but what about all those times when we need to influence people but don't have any power? For many people that's a typical day at work or the usual situation with politics.	It's a problem, but there are some less obvious sources of power that you might have. Fortunately, reason and fairness on their own can be effective in many situations, especially if done well.

**Objection**

**Response**

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But surely there are times when it is morally justified to use deception or other tricks, like when facing powerful but unfair exploitation?

Yes, that might happen but such actions are risky and have consequences for future credibility. We should hope never to have to go outside the RF/FP approach, which provides many tactics to avoid this ever being worth considering.

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There is no point when I cannot hope to influence politics, big business, or the media – and they control everything.

Typically, people are most frustrated by the individuals in their lives, such as family members and work colleagues. Influence them and you can improve your life even if the government and big business are out of reach. (This book also discusses ways to increase your small influence on wider issues in society.)

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## What you can do with RF/FP

Clearly there are limits to what can be achieved even with the most skilful use of reason and fairness, and of power if necessary. However, it should be possible to make more progress using RF/FP and the specific techniques in this book than most people make most of the time, especially with the people near you.

The techniques tackle common problems in single encounters with people and across multiple encounters. The people could range from friends and family through to difficult religious or political groups. The situations considered include deeply frustrating and frightening situations where we feel unfairly treated and powerless.

If you are someone who finds most news media disturbingly biased, is saddened by the angry tone of online debate, fed up with politicians, mildly insulted by advertising ploys, and frustrated by behaviours at work that should have been reformed decades ago, then you should find something useful in this book. There are better ways to change your world.