

5 Steps for Climbing to the Next Level and Beyond



THE
LADDER
OF
INFLUENCE

Ria Story

The Ladder of Influence

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WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT RIA AND HER BOOKS:

"I want to start by saying thank you... You made me want to try at life because you made me realize that you can make it anywhere you want, no matter where or what you are from. THANK YOU SO MUCH!" JONATHAN,
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"Ria's book (Beyond Bound and Broken) is full of hope and inspiration, and she shows us that despite experiencing horrific trauma as a young adult, that if we choose to, we can get past anything with the attitude that we bring to our life...Her book is full of wonderful quotes and wisdom."
MADELEINE BLACK, AUTHOR OF UNBROKEN

"I am using your material to empower myself and my female clients. Thanks for sharing your story and a wonderful journey of growth."
SUE QUIGLEY, LICENSED CLINICAL THERAPIST

"Very few 'victims' would be willing to share such a personal story. However, nothing about Ria is average. She chose to rise above her painful past and now positions it in a way to offer hope and healing to others who've been through unspeakable abuse. Ria's faith and marriage keep her grounded as she reveals the solid foundation which helps her stand as an overcomer. Read this story and find yourself and your own story strengthened."
KARY OBERBRUNNER, AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF
AUTHOR ACADEMY ELITE, ON RIA'S STORY FROM
ASHES TO BEAUTY

"Thank you, Ria, for bringing our conference to a close. You were definitely an inspiration to all of us! Awesome Job!"
MELINDA, PRESIDENT AGS

The Ladder of Influence

“Beyond Bound and Broken is a deeply inspirational book; one that will stay with you for years to come. The lessons are deep, yet practical, and her advice leads to clear solutions. This is a profoundly hopeful book. We all face pain, difficulty, and doubt but with resilience, we can lead vital, flourishing lives. Ria’s story although sometimes painfully difficult to read because of the trials she endured is a story of great courage and compassion both for herself as victim and for those who betrayed her. Forgiveness is a strong theme as is courage. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is struggling to move forward after experiencing a great trial.” AMAZON CUSTOMER

“...it was awesome! Ria has a real gift. I came away with so many helpful tools! Thank you, Ria.”

STEFANIE, CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

“May God continue to bless your efforts. Your triumph is a great joy, and a gift to all that would hear or read it.”

LOUIS O., HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE

“What an inspiration you are to all of us especially the women audience. Your book is a clear example & step by step guide on how to become an effective leader. It is so easy to read and simple yet meaningful which is the beauty of this book.”

K. POONWALA, CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, ON LEADERSHIP GEMS FOR WOMEN

“I was truly inspired by your presentation and the life lessons taught.”

JENNIFER, CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

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For those who have the courage to climb
to the next level and beyond.

CONTENTS

Introduction	i
1 The Ladder of Influence	1
2 Why a Ladder?	5
3 Climbing the Steps	9
4 First Step: Influence Based on Control of Self	13
5 Climbing to the First Step	17
6 The First Step at Home	21
7 The First Step at Work	25
8 Mastering the First Step	29
9 Second Step: Influence Based on Character Development	33
10 Climbing to the Second Step	37
11 The Second Step at Home	41
12 The Second Step at Work	45
13 Mastering the Second Step	49
14 Third Step: Influence Based on Competency Development	53

15	Climbing to the Third Step	57
16	The Third Step at Home	61
17	The Third Step at Work	65
18	Mastering the Third Step	69
19	Fourth Step: Influence Based on Commitment to Developing Others	73
20	Climbing to the Fourth Step	77
21	The Fourth Step at Home	81
22	The Fourth Step at Work	85
23	Mastering the Fourth Step	89
24	Fifth Step: Influence Based on Contribution of Service Over Time	93
25	Climbing to the Fifth Step	97
26	The Fifth Step at Home	101
27	The Fifth Step at Work	105
28	Mastering the Fifth Step	109
29	Mountain Moments	113
30	Keep Climbing	117
	Resources Appendix	121

INTRODUCTION

We all want, and at some level need, to be successful in life.

Regardless of whether we are a CEO of a multi-billion dollar organization, a mid-level manager in a small company, or a front-line associate, we want to be successful at what we do. And, we want to be successful at influencing the people around us at home, at work, and within our circle because, let's face it, life gets better when we have more influence with other people.

When we have more influence with other people, we get more opportunities. When we have more influence, we have more options. When we have more influence, we have more choices.

Life will always be better with more options, more opportunities, and more choices.

Influence is one of the most profoundly complex, and at the same time, incredibly simple concepts. We all have some influence, yet we all want more influence. Simple. But who, how, where, when, and why we influence as well as how we in turn are influenced by others is incredibly complex because people are incredibly complex. Situations are different. People are dynamic. Relationships are complicated.

For example, we can't influence our boss the same way we influence our children. (We would never attempt to bribe our boss the way we bribe our children to get them to behave in the grocery store!) We may not be able to influence our next-door neighbor in the same way we would influence our mother. We can't influence our teammates the same way we influence our spouse.

And, we can't influence anyone else in the same ways as we influence *ourselves*.

The Ladder of Influence

In 2008, I read my first real “leadership” book. It cracked open a door to the brand-new-to-me concept of influence being a skill **I could develop** instead of being a trait I was either born with or born without.

That book helped me understand **we all have the ability to increase our influence and how much better our lives will be when we do.**

The Ladder of Influence represents 5 Steps we can use to climb as we strive to reach the next level and beyond, personally and professionally. What will this book mean to you? Only you can answer that. Maybe you are dreaming of a better relationship with your kids. Maybe you are dreaming of more influence and more options in your career. Maybe you are dreaming of both of these things and much more.

I want you to dream of “something better” because that dream is the inspiration and starting point for change. As Amy Tan said, *“We dream to give ourselves hope. To stop dreaming, well, that’s like saying you can never change your fate.”*

Most of the time, “something better” is possible. The question is, are you committed to putting in the work to achieve it? In other words, are you willing to sacrifice what is necessary to make your dream a reality? Hope starts with dreams, but you must put in the work to turn your dreams into your reality.

As Colin Powell stated so well, *“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”*

Any time you are climbing, effort and work will be required. You will struggle at times. Trust me, no one ever accidentally ended up on top of Mt. Everest. Climbing the Ladder of Influence will require energy, focus, time, and dedication, as you invest into yourself, your future, and your success.

If you are looking for shortcuts, there aren’t any. This

isn't a "get rich quick" book, or a "become a 7-figure sales person in 7 days" program you can enroll in for just \$99. This isn't a "get skinny, popular, and successful in 12 steps" video series.

This is a road map, a guide. When using any road map or guide, you must still do the traveling yourself. I can show you the steps, but you must do the climbing.

The steps I'll be sharing are principles. And, much like gravity always applies (at least, here on earth!), the principles here will always apply. I will also be sharing some practical application tips for increasing your influence both at home and at work. These applications are my suggestions based on my experience but are simply that: suggestions. You know your situation best, so take my suggestions, use what you can, and don't be afraid to think beyond what is in this book. If you find yourself struggling, revisit the principle and consider a different way to apply it. There are many ways to apply and benefit from a principle.

Along the way, there will be detours. You will encounter challenges. You will make mistakes. But, the beauty of a journey without end is there is no timeline. You may climb as fast or as slow as you choose.

The key is to keep climbing. Much like driving across the country, you cannot see the entire journey ahead before you begin. But, if you drive to the first bend in the road, you will be able to see a bit farther. And, as you drive a bit more, you will see a bit more.

Stay your course. Keep going. Keep growing. Keep learning. And above all, keep climbing.



Chapter One

THE LADDER OF
INFLUENCE

“Influence is ultimately an outcropping of trust - the higher the trust, the greater the influence.”

~ Dale Carnegie

The Ladder of Influence provides a powerful, yet simple framework to help you realize the practical steps you can take to increase your influence with the people around you: friends, family, followers, co-workers, your boss, team members, community members, children, spouses, and maybe even ex-spouses too!

There are three truths you must know:

- 1) **You can't change anyone except yourself.** This isn't a book about how to change others, fix others, or make other people listen to you. This is a book about accepting responsibility for what you can change. And then, having the courage, making the choice and taking the action to do so. Most of the time, you can increase your influence with someone. However, you must stop blaming them and start working on what you can change – yourself.

This is not easy to do. The reason we blame other people is it's easy. If it's “their fault,” then we don't have to do anything to improve the situation. We blame others because there is only one alternative. The moment we stop blaming others is the moment we must accept responsibility. Humans naturally want to externalize blame. But, that doesn't serve us. What if we always believe it's up to the other person to change the situation, but they never do? The greatest limiting belief is the victim mindset.

Playing the victim will not take you forward in life. Playing the victim won't help you be successful.

Playing the victim won't allow you to realize your potential, fulfill your purpose, or achieve your goals. Avoid the victim mindset at all costs. You cannot change everything, but you always have the power to change yourself. Find the courage to change yourself, and develop the wisdom to understand that changing yourself changes the world. *Your* world.

- 2) **There will be people you simply cannot influence.** These people do not share your values. Perhaps that near-retirement, fussy, been-there-forever person you work with isn't interested in being influenced by a 30 year old with new ideas. They simply aren't going to change, for you or anyone else, because they don't value growth, change, or seeing things "get better." Perhaps the fairly new, young front desk associate you hired won't read the personal growth book you recommended to her, although she won't stop complaining about not being promoted quickly enough. She simply doesn't value sacrificing her Netflix-every-night habit to invest in her own development. You will be able to influence most people, but there will be a few who don't want your influence. Don't hate them, blame them, or fight them. They are heading in a different direction in life. It's their life, and they get to choose the path they will travel. Stay positive, stay true to your course, and keep climbing. You may be surprised one day to discover you've gained influence with them simply because you refused to give up on doing the right thing and staying positive.

- 3) **You will never stop climbing.** That's because you will be at different places at different times in different relationships. You may climb to the fourth step in one relationship. Then, you meet someone new and have to start again at the bottom as you begin developing that relationship.

There are five "steps" on the Ladder of Influence. You will find yourself striving to climb to different levels at different times with different people. And, just like a real ladder, you can't skip steps. On a real ladder, you must use the step below to climb to the one above. You cannot stand on the third step of a ladder until you've climbed past the second step. Even in long term relationships where you have achieved a certain level of influence, you must never forget that your influence was built from the ground up – and with every interaction, you must remember to start with the bottom step, *Control of Self*.

If you fall off the Ladder and lose all influence, you may be able to rebuild the relationship but only by going back down to step one and starting again. And even then, you may not be able to repair the relationship. Relationships are built on trust, and trust is like an egg. Once dropped, it's difficult to put Humpty Dumpty back together again without some permanent damage. Remember, relationships should never be taken for granted.



Chapter Two

WHY A LADDER?

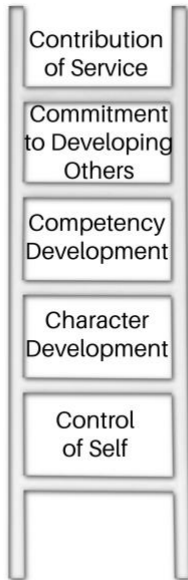
The Ladder of Influence

“When you increase your influence, you increase your options.”

~ Mack Story

Influence is incredibly dynamic. You can obtain some influence simply from having a title or position of authority such as manager, owner, or police officer. But, this type of influence is limited, because people who follow you because they “have to” only do what they “have to.” In this book, I will focus primarily on authentic influence – that is, influence based on who you are as a person, how you interact with people, and the relationships you have with others.

Why do I use the framework of influence as a ladder? To begin with, it’s clear there are different degrees of influence. I use the framework of a Ladder because the degrees of influence stack on top of one another.



You can build influence with people around you simply because you are proactive and have *Control of Self*, or you can

lose influence if you don't. This is easier to understand when you consider the following. I bet you've never lost your temper, yelled at someone, and thought, "I think they'll like and trust me more now!" Or, have you ever had someone get mad and blame you for something, and you trusted them MORE as a result? Most likely, the answer to this question is no.

As time passes, your *Character* will strengthen or weaken relationships. For instance, you'll generally have much more influence with your spouse than you will with someone you have just met. However, if you have developed a bad relationship with your spouse, you may not have a lot of influence in that relationship either.

You will also develop a certain amount of influence based on your *Competency*. For example, if you are excellent at your job, have a reputation as being an expert, or perhaps have become highly skilled after years of gaining experience, you'll have a degree of influence with someone who comes to you for help at work.

If you've ever had a trusted mentor pour into you for an extended period of time, they likely had a high degree of influence with you. Perhaps they took time to mentor you, counsel you in difficult times, or gave you good advice. They built a high degree of influence with you based on their *Commitment to Developing Others* (namely, you).

Someone like Mother Teresa still has tremendous influence long after her death, even with those she has never met. She has influence based on her *Contribution of Service over Time*, the highest step on the Ladder of Influence.

You move to a higher degree of influence as you climb higher on the Ladder. And, you can't simply jump to the top step. You must start climbing from the bottom. This applies whether you are in a professional environment at work or a personal environment at home.

Authentic influence is based on relationships which are determined by character and values. In other words, relationships are built on trust. The more trust you have in the relationship, the more influence you will have.

Developing trust takes time.

Developing a high degree of influence takes time.

It's important to note that influence can be positive or negative. There are, and have been throughout history, some powerful influencers who used their influence in negative ways. Hitler for example. The difference is whether influence is used to manipulate and control or to motivate and inspire others to achieve positive results.

Remember, my focus in this book is to help you develop *authentic* influence which is based on who you are as a person. I'm not concerned with the amount of *artificial* influence you may have because of your title, position, rank, or a specific situation.

To truly develop your influence and leadership as a person in a position of authority, I highly recommend a book written by my husband Mack Story, "*Blue-Collar Leadership & Supervision*[®]." Even if you don't consider yourself "blue-collar," the content will be relevant.

Of course, I'm biased because I'm married to him. But, his book explains how to excel at leadership and influence as a person with a title or position far better than most "leadership" books I've read. Download free excerpts from this and most of his other books at BlueCollarLeadership.com/download. No email required. No subscription or registration. No signing up for a spammy sales pitch or newsletter. Just another resource we provide to help you climb.

RESOURCES APPENDIX

*Download free chapters from most of Ria and Mack's books at:
RiaStory.com/Download*

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Fearfully and Wonderfully Me: Become the Woman You are Destined to Be, Ria Story
- 2) PRIME Time: The Power of Effective Planning, Ria Story
- 3) 10 Foundational Elements of Intentional Transformation, Mack Story
- 4) Blue-Collar Leadership[®]: Leading from the Front Lines, Mack Story
- 5) Defining Influence, Mack Story
- 6) The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen R. Covey
- 7) The Five Levels of Attachment, Don Miguel Ruiz, Jr.
- 8) The 5 Love Languages, Dr. Gary Chapman
- 9) Leadership and Self-Deception, Arbinger Institute

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Straight Talk: The Power of Effective Communication, Ria Story
- 2) Change Happens: Leading Yourself and Others through Change, Mack and Ria Story
- 3) Creative Followership, Jimmy Collins
- 4) The Speed of Trust, Stephen M. R. Covey
- 5) Who's Buying You?, Mack Story
- 6) Blue-Collar Leadership[®] & Teamwork, Mack Story

IDENTIFYING YOUR PASSION/PURPOSE

- 1) ACHIEVE: Maximize Your Potential with 7 Keys to Unlock Success and Significance, Ria Story
- 2) Put Your Dream to the Test, John C. Maxwell
- 3) The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren
- 4) Start with Why, Simon Sinek
- 5) The 8th Habit, Stephen R. Covey

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Leadership Gems/Leadership Gems for Women, Ria Story
- 2) Blue-Collar Leadership[®] & Culture: The 5 Components for Building High Performance Teams, Mack Story
- 3) Blue-Collar Leadership[®] & Supervision: Unleash Your Team's Potential, Mack Story
- 4) 10 Values of High Impact Leaders, Mack Story
- 5) The 5 Levels of Leadership, John C. Maxwell
- 6) Leaders Eat Last, Simon Sinek
- 7) The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, John C. Maxwell
- 8) It's Your Ship, Captain Michael Abrashoff

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~ Sam McLamb, VP & COO

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