

FREE CD  
Inside

How to Win with the Power of Influence

# SUCCESS

What Achievers Read

Warren Buffett,  
Mark Cuban,  
Kim Kardashian,  
Bill Gates and  
Nicole Kidman

What They're Reading  
This Summer

DAVID HEYMAN

The Magic Behind  
Harry Potter

Martina  
Navratilova  
Everyone has  
the Heart of  
a Champion

Fire Up  
Your Sales  
Team!

# AMAZON KINDLE ZAPPOS

What's Next,  
Jeff Bezos?



SUCCESS.com  
August 2011

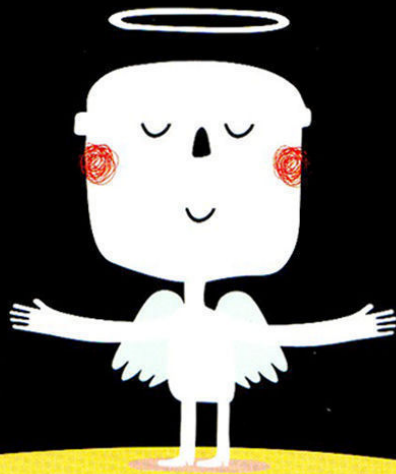
Are You Using Your Power for

GOD

or

EVIL?

by Jennifer Reed



*Each of us has tremendous influence over others.  
How are you using yours?*

Are You Using Your Power for  
G  D  
or  
E  IL?



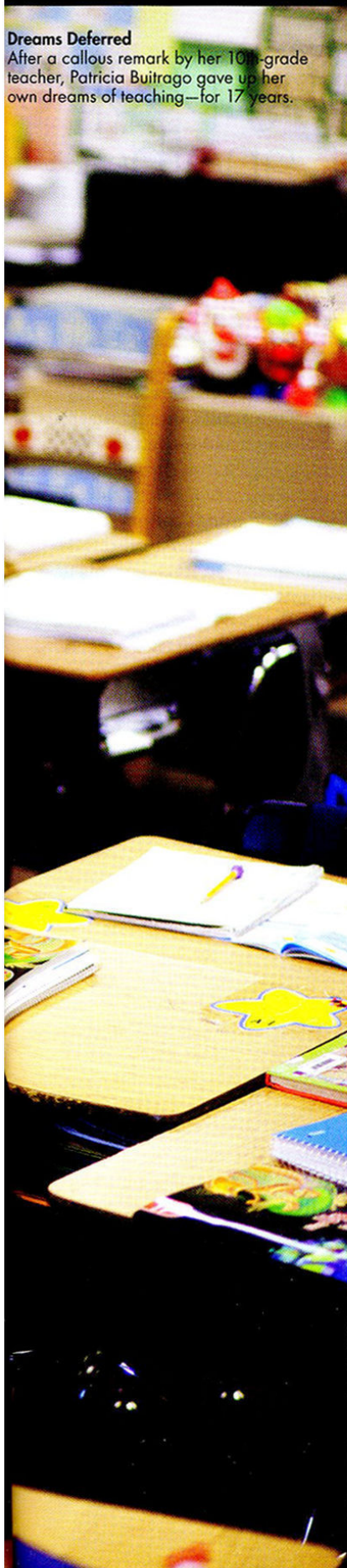
**P**ATRICIA BUITRAGO stood in a floor-length amethyst gown at a convention center in Fort Myers, Fla., one of six teachers to receive her community's top prize for teaching. Hundreds of fellow educators, local politicians and business leaders had come out to honor these instructors on the one day of the year when they were thrust into the spotlight to tell their stories.



©Aaron Bristol

### Dreams Deferred

After a callous remark by her 10th-grade teacher, Patricia Buitrago gave up her own dreams of teaching—for 17 years.



Buitrago spoke of her childhood dream of leading a classroom, inspired by her fourth-grade teacher, a spunky little woman with contagious energy. But ironically, it was another teacher, her 10th-grade math instructor, who nearly dashed Patricia's dreams.

He'd called her up to his desk at the start of class one day and, not bothering to lower his voice, told her that her grades were abysmal and he was sending her to a lower-level course. "You don't understand math. You shouldn't even think about college," he told her.

Patricia cried all the way to her new class. She'd been raised to believe in the wisdom of teachers and took his words to heart. The straight A's she received in her other courses dropped to solid C's.

"I gave up," she remembers.

Buitrago graduated high school, got married, took a job in a department store, had two kids and stayed home to raise them. She played "teacher" to her children, but her career aspirations had died the day she changed math classes.

Such is the power of influence.

Every day, in ways big and small, we influence each other. A remark like the one Buitrago's math teacher made can dismantle a dream. A word of encouragement, however, can plant a seed, grow a career, offer someone strength to persevere.

Scientific studies prove the power of influence. A 2007 Harvard University report found a person's chance of being obese increases 57 percent if a friend becomes obese, 40 percent if a sibling becomes obese, and 37 percent if a spouse becomes obese. A 2009 Stanford University study found that people who have worked with entrepreneurs are far more likely to give up the security of a steady paycheck and strike out on their own, too. That's some pretty intense behavioral influence.

Our leadership styles, our moods, our means of dealing with situations, the examples we set (for good or for ill) can have a profound impact on those around us. Often, we have no idea of the power we wield.

Buitrago thinks her math teacher certainly never gave his words a second thought even as they sent her spiraling downward. Ultimately, she prevailed in her childhood dream, went to college, earned her elementary education certification and landed here, at a Golden Apple awards ceremony honoring the very best in this 80,000-student school district in southwest Florida.

"I feel cheated in a way by that teacher," she confesses after the ceremony. "I was 38 when I started teaching. I could have started when I was 21—that's 17 years."

Pause for a minute and think: What kind of influence do you have on the people around you—your family, your colleagues, your employees, your students, your friends? Then consider: Are you using your influence for good or for evil?

"Every one of us is either a plus or a minus in people's lives," says John C. Maxwell, the leadership expert, speaker and author who has written, among other things, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, co-authored with Jim Dornan.

The positive people usually know it—Maxwell himself tries to wake up each day and consider, "Who can I add value to today? It's an intentional lifestyle."

But human nature does not typically put others before the self, and many people can negatively impact others—however unintended that behavior may be. "I think it's highly probable for people to be a negative and not know it. If you are positive, it's influential because it goes against human nature," Maxwell says.

# G D or E IL?

“We are influencing people to one degree or another all day, every day.”

## Circles of Influence

A young entrepreneur receives a gift and a life lesson.

Graduation loomed for Matt Lauzon, a student at Babson College in Massachusetts. He dreamed of delving into the world of e-commerce and marrying online retailing and custom jewelry design. Lauzon turned to a Babson alumnus for advice, offering to take the man to lunch to pick his brain about entrepreneurship.

That experienced (and anonymous) businessman not only listened to Lauzon and offered advice, but he also wrote him a \$5,000 check to jump-start his company. The man did not want to be repaid; he asked only that Lauzon help out a fellow novice once he himself was established.

In this case, the cycle of positive influence would come full circle.

Lauzon, now 26, went on to establish Gemvara, a custom jewelry design company, and amassed \$25 million in venture capital funding for his launch in February 2010. But that \$5,000 gift remains his most memorable funding. “That was one of the key experiences in my lifetime,” he says from his firm’s Lexington, Mass., headquarters.

Now Lauzon is heeding his mentor’s wishes and using his growing clout in the business world to help others. He and two other young online business founders hosted an event in May in Boston that they dubbed “The Ruby Riot.” The idea was to connect young techies and business people with more experienced mentors and potential employers. In addition to the “riot,” Lauzon planned to develop paid apprenticeships and internship opportunities at his company—another way of “paying it forward.”

So the question becomes: How does one become a person of positive influence? It starts with the small things, the routine exchanges and interactions we have each day.

“All of the little things add up,” says Chris Widener, a personal-development speaker, author and businessman whose works include *The Art of Influence: Persuading Others Begins with You*. “We are influencing people to one degree or another all day, every day.”

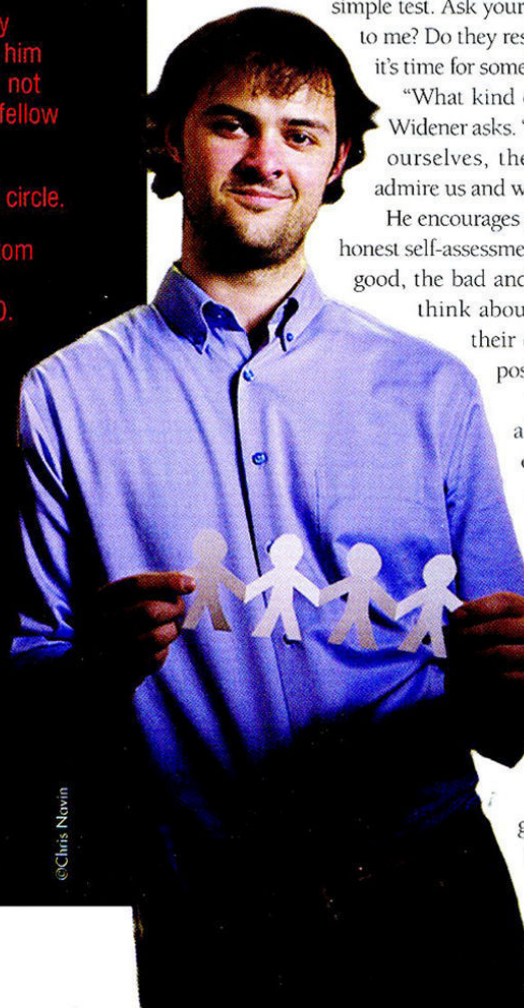
Is that influence effective? Widener says there’s a simple test. Ask yourself: Do people listen to me? Do they respond? If not, he says, it’s time for some introspection.

“What kind of life are we living?”

Widener asks. “The more we change ourselves, the more people will admire us and want to follow us.”

He encourages people to conduct an honest self-assessment and reflect on “the good, the bad and the ugly” and then think about how they can use their daily interactions to positively touch others.

Widener will always remember one childhood encounter. He was about 12 years old and a ball boy for the Seattle Supersonics. One of his tasks was to lug two 5-gallon jugs of Gatorade onto the court before the start of each game. Widener broke his arm. He



©Chris Navin

**Matt Lauzon**  
Paying It Forward



reported to work anyway. The team trainer, upon seeing him, said he couldn't keep his job if he couldn't do his job.

Well, it happens that Dennis Johnson, the late Celtics star who was then a young guard on the SuperSonics, was sitting on the trainer's table at the time and overheard the exchange. For the next six weeks, Johnson carried the Gatorade onto the court himself. Widener says it didn't matter to Johnson that the fans would be filing into the seats and likely witnessing the basketball player hauling his team's drinks.

"He taught me an interesting lesson in leadership," says Widener, who then paraphrases Scripture: "Whoever becomes great must become the least. Whoever wants to become the leader must become a servant of all."

**L**ately, I've been thinking a lot about influence. Two years ago, I became a high school journalism and English teacher, and I discovered my influence reaches beyond my wildest expectations. It starts the minute my students walk into the room. My moods set the tone for that day's lesson. If I'm frazzled, they're distracted. If I'm tired, they are listless. If I am energized, they are engaged.

Long after Buitrago had her run-in with that math teacher, I had my own discovery about how a teacher's small remark can have a broad reach. My school underwent a scheduling shake-up at the end of the first semester, and I inherited a young woman from another instructor's class. I was immediately struck by her: She was attentive and mature—a standout in a class comprising too many kids who cared too little about academics.

She bombed her first grammar quiz, which surprised me. I attributed her performance to her adjustment to the class. She came after school for a review and retake, raising her score from a D to an A.

Then, she did poorly on a writing exercise, surprising me again. I invited her for another tutoring session. "Let's fix this. You really should be an A student," I told her. Based on her classroom behavior, I assumed she had always done well in school.

I never imagined my earnest comment to her would have such a meaningful impact. A few months later, I asked my students to write personal essays about someone who had influenced their lives. This young lady wrote about me. Of my "A-student" comment, she wrote, "No one had ever told me that before, not even my mother."

I later learned she was a special-needs student with learning

## Competitive or Conniving?

Nasty office politics provides a cautionary tale.

Mike Sprouse was in his late 20s and working for a major entertainment company. He was the youngest senior executive in company history and working under the supervision of a division president.

A colleague whom Sprouse thought to be a friend emailed the boss, suggesting Sprouse was too young and inexperienced for his position. The message was bandied back and forth some 12 to 15 times before it somehow landed in Sprouse's inbox. He was appalled by the damning language—his colleague was trying to influence the division president and undercut Sprouse's worth.



Mike Sprouse

Though hurtful, the incident helped Sprouse shape his own behavior as he climbed the business ladder and became a company leader himself. "I never wanted to do that if I were in a similar position," he says.

Now 36, Sprouse is based in Chicago and serving as chief marketing officer for Epic Media Group. Sprouse sometimes catches wind of less-than-desirable behavior in lower-levels of the company. And when he does, he quietly tells employees "not to go down that path."

In his words: "In business, I believe we're impacted immensely by the words and actions of others because of the basic fact that most businesses are tremendously competitive. Especially in competitive environments, people tend to want to listen and use information or influence in order to get ahead or to advance. This is sometimes human nature, but true leaders do not use their influence exclusively in that way. True leaders exert their influence by boosting others up around them to make the team or company better in addition to bettering one's self."

## Have You Filled a Bucket?

### Teaching Children about the Power of Influence



Carol McCloud

**Imagine a generation of children being taught the power of influence starting in their preschool years.**

Carol McCloud has turned this concept of influence into language so simple

that the 4-year-olds she once taught could get it.

McCloud is author of the Bucket Fillers series, brightly illustrated children's books that teach how kind words and actions can "fill the buckets" of the people we encounter daily, from moms and dads to school bus drivers to classmates.

"All day long everyone in the whole wide world walks around carrying an invisible bucket," begins her first book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* "You feel very happy and good when your bucket is full, and you feel very sad and lonely when your bucket is empty... You need other people to fill your bucket and other people need you to fill theirs."

McCloud was at an education conference when she first heard

about the bucket concept, a phrase coined by psychologist Donald Clifton. McCloud began using the idea in her preschool classroom.

"This is very simple language. They understand it," McCloud says. "It's much more concrete than, 'Are you being good? Are you being kind?' Those are abstract concepts."

McCloud—who no longer teaches—and her team have visited some 500 schools in the United States. Hundreds more schools, she says, have dubbed themselves "bucket-filling schools."

"Almost everything we do is filling a bucket or dipping in to a bucket," she says. "If they can learn that [concept] early, they will be the best parents, the best bosses, the best friends."

disabilities. Because I did not have her at the beginning of the year, her file had not been flagged for me. I think now it was better that way; I saw only her maturity and determination. She saw only my belief in her.

Look at this young lady and look at Patricia Buitrago. Two students, two remarks, two entirely different paths.

I think about co-workers who have influenced me, particularly in the rocky two years of my transition from journalist to teacher.

"This school needs you," a respected veteran instructor told me during my first year.

Me? A career changer with no classroom experience and no clue how to handle the curriculum that had been thrust upon me?

My expression must have betrayed my skepticism. He persisted. With my real-world experience, I could offer much to these students, he told me. His words helped me persevere at a time when I was

ready to hand in my classroom keys.

The power we have over each other is enormous.

**T**hat's why communications expert Lillian Glass suggests we weed out what she calls the "toxic people" in our lives.

Her book *Toxic People: 10 Ways of Dealing with the People Who Make Your Life Miserable* identifies some all-too-familiar personality types: the cut-you-downer; the gossip; the opportunistic user; the bitchy, bossy bully; the snob; the arrogant know-it-all; and a host of other kinds of people who make us wince.

"Who are the people throughout your life that make you miserable?" Glass asks. Reflect on how other people make you feel, she suggests. Do you feel bad about yourself after being around them? Do they make you stressed? Who are some of the most troubling characters in





your life? If you attached adjectives to them would the words be the same? That's how you figure out the negative influences in your life.

Often, the person left feeling miserable thinks there's something wrong with him, especially over time as the negative person's comments gain traction and begin influencing his life, Glass says.

The most important thing is to deal with the people and the tensions they create. Glass offers 10 strategies, ranging from using humor to confrontation. "You need to confront it," she says of the negative feelings brought on by others. "That's the most important thing. You can't keep it in—it's like pressure. You will explode."

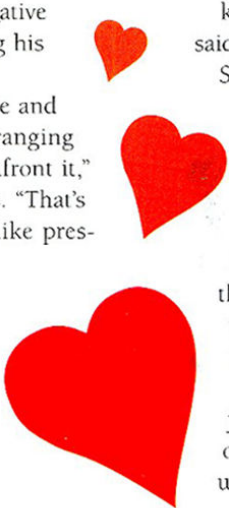
**U**ltimately, a chance comment by Patricia Buitrago's then 5-year-old son, C.J., set her back on the path she had abandoned all those years ago. (Even the youngest among us have influence).

It was open house at C.J.'s soon-to-be elementary school, and Buitrago had taken him to meet his kindergarten teacher. "I'm holding his little hand, and I remember saying to him, 'You know C.J., I always wanted to be a teacher.' And he said, 'Why don't you, Mommy?'"

She enrolled in her local community college the next day. She later went on to graduate *summa cum laude* from a state university.

Buitrago keeps her graduation robe hanging in her bedroom and posts her goals next to it, a self-motivation technique she shares with her students. After her own experience, she thinks hard about the influence she has on her fifth-graders. "I think teachers don't realize everything you say to a child matters. They process everything," she says.

She's right about children, but then, she could just as easily be talking about adults. The power of influence is a tremendous one. How are you using yours? **S**



## TURN THE PAGE TO GREATER SUCCESS

[SUCCESS.com/store](http://SUCCESS.com/store)

 <p><b>The Richest Man in Babylon</b> by George S. Clason</p> <p>Classic book holds the secret to acquiring money, keeping it and making it earn more money.</p> <p>(Y5010-006)</p> <p>Paperback Retail \$8.99 <b>ONLY \$6.99</b></p>	 <p><b>Put Your Dream to the Test</b> by John C. Maxwell</p> <p>Get powerful direction to help you create a clear and compelling path to your dream.</p> <p>(M2010-010)</p> <p>Paperback Retail \$19.95 <b>ONLY \$12.99</b></p>	 <p><b>Twelve Pillars</b> by Jim Rohn and Chris Widener</p> <p>This popular novel will challenge and encourage you to become the best that you can be!</p> <p>(J2010-010)</p> <p>Paperback Retail \$12.95 <b>ONLY \$9.00</b></p>
--	---	---