

How to split wood and influence people

Or: What I've learned from doing both

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1. Start with what's manageable.

When a 98-year-old oak fell in my field, I first had to cut it into logs before I could reduce it to firewood.

- *The best route to influencing people is to first establish and manage positive personal relationships.*

2. Leverage your efforts.

The simple tools of a wedge and a maul exert much more power than I can with my bare hands.

- *Partnering with like-minded individuals in purposeful actions creates clout where it counts.*

3. Work strategically.

To most easily split a log, I place the wedge in a tiny crack that's already opened in the grain, and simply strike it to produce its opening results.

- *To expand a relationship, insert genuine interest into someone's life.*

4. Strike true.

Forcefully introducing the maul to its intended mark makes a clean, satisfying split.

- *Leading with integrity creates trust; trust leads to influence.*

5. Go with the grain.

With the proper touch of the maul, wood cleaves quickly and easily along its grain. To force it apart otherwise requires much more energy, and can leave you breathless with broken and ugly pieces.

- *When we work within our own (and others') natural bents and strengths, work becomes pleasure and everyone benefits.*

6. Avoid the knots.

Twists, gnarls, and branch joints are highly resistant to splitting. While the dense wood is still valuable and burns well, it is better to work around them.

- *When working with people, controversial does not have to be adversarial; respect for a diversity of opinions, approaches, and alternate solutions adds value to results and all involved.*

7. Know when to split.

Or not. Saturated, rotten wood does not split; it absorbs the blows and remains basically unchanged. And it's no good to burn anyway. I've learned not to waste my time on it.

- *Some folks refuse reasonable interchange of ideas and suffer from brain rot: time to move on.*

8. It takes effort.

Both splitting wood and influencing people require intentional exertions to make the desired changes to our present and future circumstances.

- *They're worth it.*