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## Are You An Influential?

by Ed Keller and Jon Berry

Adapted from their new book, *The Influentials*. Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2003.

One American in ten tells the other nine how to vote, where to eat, and what to buy. Are you one of them?

They are not necessarily the people you would expect. They’re not America’s richest 10 percent, or the most educated 10 percent, or the 10 percent with the best jobs. They are the 10 percent of Americans most engaged in their local communities.

The Influentials have long been tracked by Roper ASW, the global marketing research and consulting firm that has been monitoring trends for 30 years for many Fortune 500 companies.

The Influential Americans - roughly one in 10 of the adult population of the United States, or 21 million people, are the people who make society, culture, and the marketplace run. They are socially and politically active and are highly engaged in the workplace. For the past five decades, Influentials have been the leading indicators of what Americans will be buying.

In early 2002, the Influentials signaled an early alert that Americans would be traveling more for vacations and personal reasons in the coming months. They were putting the “post 9/11” fear of flying behind them, and they were ready to take to the air again. Influentials also insisted that security be tightened substantially. Through their actions and words, they would influence friends, families, and others to do the same.

According to Roper’s research, Americans today are far more likely to turn to friends, family, and other personal experts than to use traditional media for ideas and information on a range of topics. More than eight in 10 people say their personal network of friends is among

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480-838-4854 • Fax 480-897-6180  
<http://www.innovainc.com>  
email: [tom@innovainc.com](mailto:tom@innovainc.com)  
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### Executive Trivia Question...

Who is the “Father of American Newspapers”?

the two or three best sources for ideas and information about restaurants. Similarly, seven in 10 say friends are the best sources for new meals and dishes, places to go on vacation, or stores to buy prescription drugs.

About six in 10 say friends and family are among the best sources on hotels, how to improve personal health, which movies to see, videos to rent, the merits of one car versus another, and how to save and invest money.

When Americans make a decision today, it's based on a conversation.

As Americans are talking more among themselves, and are more confident about what they hear from their friends, family, and personal experts, they are growing more selective about when and where they listen to the "official" voices of society. Tuning out advertising has become a part of daily life. Four in 10 Americans say they often switch the channel whenever a commercial comes on — almost triple the level of 1985. And more viewers hit the mute button to turn off the sound during commercials.

The channel with the greatest influence in America is individual person-to-person communication and this is the driving force behind most of today's consumer decisions.

RoperASW's research suggests that if the word of mouth is like a radio signal, the Influentials are the strategically placed transmitters that amplify the signal, multiplying the number of people who hear it.

Roper's objective was to find "the more articulate" citizens who

were "better educated" and took a "higher degree of interest in the world around them."

The original idea was to use the Influentials to track the thinking of the society's opinion leaders on national issues, candidates, and the public image of major companies.

After 30 years of continuous research on Influentials, the firm's more than 250 studies have produced a database of interviews with more than 50,000 Influentials and half a million Americans.

But for businesses, getting through to the Influentials is not easy. They are among the most critical citizens and consumers in the society. They hold companies to higher standards, are harder to persuade, see through hype more easily, and drive a harder bargain than the average American.

#### **The typical Influential is:**

1. Middle-aged, with a median age of 45.2.
2. Middle to upper class, with a median household income of \$55,300.
3. College-educated, with 80 percent having attended college.
4. Married, with 70 percent in this category.
5. Parents, with 53 percent having children.
6. Homeowners, with 74 percent owning a home.
7. Employed, with 72 percent in the workforce.
8. Executives or professionals, with 34 percent in these occupations.

Influentials share five common behaviors:

#### **1. They are activists.**

Their activism is evident in their involvement in the community. In the past year, three in four Influentials have attended a meeting on town or school affairs. Seven in 10 wrote or called a politician to make their opinion known. Half served on a committee of a local organization. More than seven in 10 devote at least some time to a cause or issue in the community during the course of a year.

Influentials are more likely to view their work as a career, rather than as a job. They like being where the action is at work. Half are "completely satisfied" with the opportunities their job gives them to influence decisions in the workplace - which is double the rate of workers overall.

Influentials also lead busy personal lives. They read newspapers, books and magazines, listen to music, eat out, spend time on hobbies, call friends and family, and cook. They exercise and play sports, take weekend trips, volunteer in the community, attend cultural events, shop in stores and browse the Internet.

They are not likely to pursue passive activities, such as watching television, which they do at far lower rates than the public as a whole.

Six in 10 Influentials have been to church, synagogue, or temple services in the past month, the majority going every week. More than one in 10 currently has a leadership position in their religious group.

#### **2. They are connected.**

Influentials have ties to a sig-

nificantly larger number of groups than the average American. They feel a particularly strong sense of connection to the community where they live.

Over fifty percent report at least some connection to four other communities such as:

1. A political group, such as the major parties.
2. An alumni association.
3. A group devoted to a hobby or interest, such as a reading club or a collector's group.
4. A youth-related group, such as youth soccer, Little League, or Scouts.

More than half are connected with a social activist group, such as the Sierra Club or Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Four in 10 have a connection with a professional group or union, such as the American Medical Association, or the United Automobile Workers.

### **3. They make an impact.**

They are about twice as likely as the average American to be asked for advice and opinions and are most likely to be asked their advice or opinion about "what's going on in government or politics."

Other topics that rank high include choices of restaurants, cooking, health problems, parenting issues, and how to invest. Research suggests that the Influentials have the most influence across a breadth of topics compared with any of the other major segments. Influentials stand out as influence generalists, people who know a lot about some things, and something about a lot of things, and usually track down

the answer if they don't know it.

### **4. They are people with active minds.**

Influential Americans are continuously taking input from what they see, hear, and read and then turning it over in their minds for new insights and ideas. In addition to being highly educated, many Influentials like to learn through people and experiences.

They express the highest level of interest in news and current events. Nine in 10 express interest in the environment. Eight in 10 are interested in fitness and health, nature and animals, music, politics, history, and technology.

Only about one in three Influentials admits to being interested in famous people and celebrities. Similarly, only 41 percent of Influentials are interested in fashion, however Influentials are interested in sports, but are not as passionate as men in the 18-49 age group.

### **5. They are trendsetters.**

They have a way of finding important things well in advance of other segments of the society. Influentials were among the first to have a personal computer. They were among the first to recognize the potential of the Internet. They were among the first to use automated teller machines. They got in early on individual retirement accounts, mutual funds, and stock market booms.

## **THE INFLUENTIAL PERSONALITY**

One common element of the Influential personality is a clear

sense that "This matters." They're more optimistic than normal, but they don't look at the world through rose-colored glasses. They are selective and discriminating, skeptical when the facts warrant skepticism and able to appreciate nuances to make a smart, informed decision.

They tend to emphasize the same things as most Americans: a family, a house with a yard in a safe neighborhood, a measure of financial security, and leisure time.

It is not unusual for them to change their point of view as they get more information. Listening plays a large part in many Influentials' leadership styles. They're interested in what others have to say.

Influentials are substantially more likely to say their vision of the Good Life includes a job that "is interesting" and "contributes to the welfare of society." Fewer than half of Influentials, for example, associate the Good Life with "a lot of money."

Influentials are more likely to consider a computer for office and home use a necessity rather than a luxury they could do without. Affluent Americans, in contrast, tend to view everything as a necessity. The Influentials' selectivity probably contributes to their being trusted advice-givers; they seem to have a clear sense of how much difference a product will make in someone's life.

Influentials have a firm belief in growth and change. The wide majority believe they have personal control over how their lives turn out rather than believing their fate depends on outside forces.

They tend to think that change is a good thing and that people, communities, and the society are capable of change. Influentials tend to think that they'll achieve their goals.

When asked what most defines success to them Influentials rate family first, far ahead of anything else. Fully 55 percent of Influentials say that being a good spouse and parent "comes closest" to their idea of success.

Their other relationships - with their friends, with their God, with themselves - are more important than outward symbols of achievement. Influentials also place particular emphasis on "knowledge" and "learning."

Idiosyncrasy is the key element in the Influentials' personal-

ity. They're comfortable creating a position for themselves outside the mainstream.

Despite being relatively skeptical of materialism, a fairly large number of Influentials report that they'd like to have a vacation home, have a beautifully decorated home, stay in a luxury hotel, travel abroad frequently for fun, and eat in an expensive restaurant.

After meeting their commitments in the community and enjoying their time with family and friends, Influentials pursue such desires as rewards, indulgences, and recreation.

Influentials appear to be doing their part to raise a new generation of self-confident, idiosyncratic thinkers. They are more likely to value the qualities of being self-confident and an independent

thinker in their own children.

They seem to like looking at things differently from others, even money. When asked what it means to them, they are less likely to say "pleasure," "achievement," or "status," and more likely to say "security," "independence," and "helping one's children."

Next month we will summarize their research on how businesses can benefit from the knowledge and understanding of The Influentials.

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Ed Keller is the CEO of Roper ASW and Jon Berry is the Vice President and Senior Research Director of Roper Reports.

## The Idea Incubator

By Frank Helton

### How Do People Select Their Mates?

Opposites don't attract after all. Most people are seeking mates who are mirror images of themselves, says a new study. Cornell University researchers asked 978 people what qualities they found most desirable in a long-term partner, and then asked them to rate themselves on those same qualities. They found that attractive people wanted attractive partners; rich people wanted rich mates; and ambitious people sought the same. In other words, people wanted to be with someone who most closely matched how they saw themselves. This

contradicts the long-held notion that men and women are looking for different things in a mate; that men want young, fertile stunners while women go for money and security. But the new findings make sense from an evolutionary standpoint, researcher **Dr. Stephen Emlen** says, "A person looking for their twin will "end up with a compatible mate, less conflict in the relationship, and a better chance of a long-term bond and successful child rearing."

### How Can Walls of Air Protect Us from Terrorists?

A repeat of the sort of terrorist

attack that destroyed the World Trade Center could be prevented by creating invisible walls around high-rise buildings and other potential targets, say engineers at the University of California, Berkeley. They've designed computer software for passenger airplanes to stop them from penetrating no-fly zones. Aircraft with this "soft wall" system would carry a database of the Global Positioning System's coordinates of any off limits areas. If a pilot tried to steer near one of these zones, the plane would resist, The system becomes increasingly forceful until it steers the plane away from the no-fly zone. Other anti-hijack measures have been proposed, most involving intervention from the ground, such as allowing ground control to take over hijacked planes. But these systems are vulnerable to

hackers and, unlike the “soft wall” approach, require human assistance, engineer *Edward Lee* says. Lee, working with aircraft manufacturer Boeing, has asked the Pentagon for research funding to test the software in flight simulators.

### How Can We Improve Men’s Aim?

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have created a video game designed to help men aim better at the urinal. The game, *You’re in Control*, has sensors in the porcelain, and displays the results of the players’ “shooting” on a computer screen at eye level. “If you look at any men’s restroom, there are usually splashes all over the floor,” says inventor *Dan Maynes-Aminzade*. “It’s a well documented problem.” His partner predicts the game will “put some of the fun back into peeing.”

### How Can Karaoke Hurt You?

Karaoke really does hurt your ears. When Korean researchers tested singers’ hearing before and after 100 minutes of karaoke, they discovered significant hearing loss, according to the *British Medical Journal*. The researchers also found that the noise level in a typical karaoke bar where the singer’s voice is amplified against background music - frequently exceeds 115 decibels, posing a risk to the audience as well. That noise level, louder than a power lawn mower, exceeds the workplace limit allowed by the U.S.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration. But it’s not just listening to karaoke that’s dangerous. The performers are also damaging their vocal chords, say University of Hong Kong researchers. Most karaoke singers have no formal voice training, and they often sing for long stretches without drinking water. “These amateur singers are more vulnerable to developing voice problems under these intensive singing activities,” the study concludes.

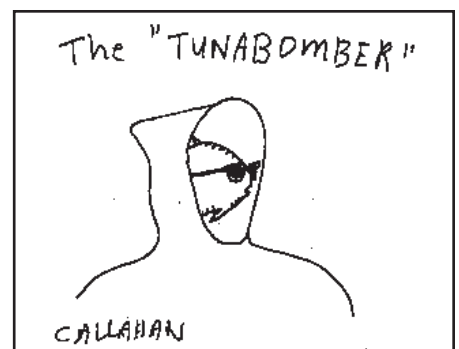
### How Can We Keep People Down On the Farm?

Michigan state officials have published a “scratch and sniff” brochure for city folk thinking of moving to the country. When scratched, the leaflet emits a pungent odor of manure,

### How Can Moonlight Help Beetles?

When African dung beetles pick up their takeout meals - carefully rolled balls of elephant dung - they need to get home quickly. If they dilly dally, other beetles may steal their dinner. So the beetles use the light of the moon to help them push the balls in the straightest line possible from the dung pile to their burrow. The scientists observed that on nights without moonlight, the beetles meandered randomly. Many animals use the plane of the sun’s rays to guide them, but the dung beetles are the first creatures found to use polarized moonlight as their compass, according to researcher *Marie Dacke*. Using polarized moon-

light, which is about a million times dimmer than sunlight, gives beetles more time to forage and a better shot at avoiding other beetles hungry for those ready-made dung balls. “They are very aggressive to each other,” Dacke says.



## From the Institute for Collaborative Alliances

### Liberia – America’s Stepchild

By Scott Romeo

A civil war rages here because two major rebel groups have been trying for three years to overthrow their dictatorial president, **Charles Taylor**. Taylor had agreed to step down two months ago under a pre-arranged cease fire. But he reneged, sparking the most recent fighting in a wider upheaval that has raged since the 1980s. President Bush is now decided to deploy U.S. peacekeeping troops.

Why? We have a special bond with Liberia: It’s the one country in the world created by American emigrants. In 1819, the growing abolitionist movement spurred **President James Monroe** to authorize the repatriation of freed slaves to Africa. A group called the American Colonization Society settled the first 86 of these pioneers on a tract of land purchased on the West African coast in 1822. Two years later the society named the territory Liberia, for liberty, and the capital Monrovia, for Monroe. When the colony declared independence in 1847, it ratified a U.S.-style constitution, adopted English as the official language, and modeled its flag after Old Glory. By the outbreak of the Civil War, about 14,000 freed slaves and slaves rescued from slave ships had become Liberians.

As a nation it did not do well. Its founders installed the ex-slaves and their descendants as the rulers, but 97 percent of the inhabitants were indigenous Africans. A huge and permanent rift opened between the two groups. For 150 years, a series of largely corrupt presidents

has preserved Liberia’s wealth for a small elite, while 3 million others have lived in abject poverty.

The US maintained its ties mainly for economic and strategic reasons. In the 1920s, Firestone ran a one million-acre plantation in Liberia as a source of rubber for the booming auto industry. During World War II the country was an important staging area for our North African campaign. With the Cold War, Liberia became a kind of firewall to contain the spread of communism in post-colonial Africa. From 1962 to 1980, we poured in \$280 million - more money per capita than we gave any other African nation. But in 1980, the tension between indigenous Africans and the descendants of American slaves finally erupted into a revolution.

The revolution was led by **Samuel K. Doe**, a 28-year-old Army sergeant from an indigenous family. Doe’s insurgents staged a military coup, captured and dismembered **President William R. Tolbert**, and publicly executed 13 Cabinet members. Doe’s ethnic group, the Krahn, also terrorized the Gio and Mano, who were allies of the ruling class. Despite his savagery, Doe won the Reagan administration’s support, along with \$500 million in aid, by declaring himself a staunch anti-communist. Although Washington pressured Doe into holding free elections in 1985, he seized the ballots and declared himself the winner. But Doe’s reign was short-lived.

The new ruler was to become

Charles Taylor, 55, was one of 15 children born to Americo-Liberian parents. Educated at Bentley College, near Boston, he returned to Liberia in 1980 to join dictator Samuel Doe’s regime. He lasted only three years before falling out with Doe and fleeing to the U.S. with an alleged \$900,000 in stolen funds. Imprisoned in Massachusetts while awaiting extradition, Taylor literally sawed his way out to escape back to Africa. There, he received support and training from Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi and raised the rebel army with which he ousted Doe.

As president, he took to dressing in golden robes and is rumored to practice witchcraft. In interviews, Taylor has dismissed charges that he authorized his troops to commit atrocities to maintain power. “Murder and rape, those things weren’t permitted,” he said in 2001. When told that heads and skulls had been posted on stakes in territory that he controlled, he responded, “Well, it depends on which head you saw.”

Taylor invaded Liberia from neighboring Sierra Leone in 1989. His army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, was a ragtag collection of young men and boys, who kept themselves high on drugs and depravity. One of its murderous factions toppled Doe, cut off his ears, and killed him in a drunken execution that was widely distributed on videotape. The NPFL practiced cannibalism on their slain enemies, kept women as sex slaves, and shot anyone who even “smelled” like a Krahn. Their invasion ignited wholesale slaughter among various warlords, with

Taylor emerging as the most powerful. In 1997, he won a presidential election against 12 other candidates, mainly because voters thought he would finally stop the killing. But he did not.

As rebels and Taylor's troops continue to battle, more than 200,000 Liberians have died. Another 800,000 have been left homeless by tribal fighting, and nearly 700,000 have fled the country. Today, Monrovia is a cesspool of misery; schools have become refugee camps and weeds sprout from the shattered buildings. Beaches function as vast, open latrines. Pro-government militias prey on those who venture out after dark. The infant mortality rate is 130 per 1,000, and 70 percent of the country is unemployed.

Taylor lost control by meddling outside his own borders. In the 1990s, his support of Sierra Leone's brutal Revolutionary United Front allowed the rebel group to gain control over that country's rich diamond mines. The RUF, notorious for hacking off opponents' limbs, used the sale of these so-called "conflict diamonds" to buy more weapons and consolidate its terror. Taylor used his share to enrich himself and to assist insurgencies in neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast. His goal was to keep the region unsettled enough to prevent unified action against him.

This strategy worked for a time. But in 2000, the United Nations responded by banning the export of conflict diamonds. In June, a special court set up by the

U.N. indicted him on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Guinea and Ivory Coast are also want to oust Taylor by supporting separate rebel factions. Guinea backs the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, while Ivory Coast supports the Movement for Democracy in Liberia.

It is unlikely that the US can bring order, but Liberians want the US to try. Even though America has largely ignored them since the Cold War ended, many still revere what they regard as their mother country. "We are the 51st state," said *Herbert Walker*, a street merchant. "We sang your national anthem and learned American history. We love American dollars. Why won't you help us?"

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## Letter From a Concerned Citizen

From: Jennifer Barker, University of Arizona student

This is a letter sent to both Arizona senators.

Your state may be considering these effects as well.

Dear Senator,

I was stunned and saddened to hear the EPA's recent announcement that it will no longer regulate several greenhouse gases, among them, carbon dioxide. These gases contribute to global warming and the deterioration of the ozone layer, which pose a particular threat to the state of Arizona.

Are you aware that ours is the only place on the planet where all seven planes of life exist next to each other? The Arizona ecosystem supports diverse flora and fauna, from the icy tundra on our mountaintops to the desert where we make our homes. It is now believed that the Sonoran Desert's ecology is more varied than the tropical rain forest. This is a system that would be devastated by the temperature shift this new policy will cause. The effect could be especially severe for the rare endemic plant that we fight so hard to protect, the Saguaro Cactus.

Though it may not seem so, your actions in this situation will directly affect Arizona tourism and commerce. With Phoenix as one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, the influx of business we are now experiencing is wonderful for the state's economy, but it could be devastating to our ecology. Without regulation of gas emissions, new factories built to the lowest environmental safety specifications

could quickly turn our famous blue skies brown with noxious and unhealthy fumes. This would decimate Arizona tourism, even encouraging full-time citizens to leave the metropolitan area, stifling our economic growth. When the Clean Air Act is reinforced, these businesses would have to operate against the law while they are adapted, or they would be forced to shut down temporarily, affecting state profits.

Now, CO<sub>2</sub> is a natural gas in the air we breathe, so how can it be dangerous? Its presence in the ecosystem, especially when increased suddenly, encourages fires (as you know, a major issue for our state). Even if you are not preoccupied with your state's environmental matters, you must be concerned about the homes and lives that may be lost to forest fires.

Speaking of lives lost, Arizona currently has the highest rate of skin cancers. This is due, in part, to the frequency of sun exposure experienced by our citizens. Though we cannot affect this incidence, we are able to control what we put between ourselves and the sun. Allowing harmful gas emissions to fill this space will wear away the ozone above our city. The thinning of the ozone layer and the absence of a protective cloud cover enjoyed by most other climates will push skin cancer numbers to epidemic proportions.

Obviously, this recent overturn of a thirty-year old policy will only hurt our state and country. Please question the EPA's decision and take action to ensure its recall. This is not just for our planet and our health, but for the well-being and future of our children. Thank you for your time and your careful consideration of this matter.

# What Does Love Mean? - Part 1

From: Bill Billica

## Animal Whys?

by Jocelyn Little

• Baboons have been used with great success as goat herds on the Otjiruse farm in Southwest Africa. In the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dr. Walter Hoesch, the internationally known German zoologist, did a thorough study of a baboon named Ahla that worked for the Aston family on that farm. Ahla was raised from the age of two in the company of goats and fed goats' milk. She was never trained, but accompanied the goats all during the day, rounded up strays, reunited kids and ewes, and knew all eighty goats by sight. The only thing Mrs. Aston had to teach Ahla was not to carry the young kids up trees under her arm for fun. Otherwise she behaved in an exemplary fashion and enjoyed riding on the backs of the big goats.

• The young of the polyphemous moth, which feed on broad-leaved trees, increase their body weight 80,000 times in just two days.

• A boy named Hugh Perkins of Summersville, West Virginia, was laid up in the hospital in 1939. His pet homing pigeon, Billy, traveled a hundred and five miles in ten days and located the correct window ledge of the hospital in Philippi where his owner was. Proof that it was Billy and not some friendly wild pigeon came with the identifying band on his leg.

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year olds: "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

Rebecca - age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."

Billy - age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."

Karl - age 5

"Love is when my mummy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."

Danny - age 7

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your chips without making them give

you any of theirs."

Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."

Terri - age 4

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mummy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss."

Emily - age 8

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."

Nikka - age 6

"There are two kinds of love. Our love. God's love. But God makes both kinds of them."

Jenny - age 8

An author and lecturer once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a 4-year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his Mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."

### Executive Trivia Answer...

Benjamin Harris, publisher of Public Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestic, issued from the London Coffee House in Boston, September 25, 1690.

### Thought To Ponder...

All great civilizations, in their early stages, are based on success at war.

Kenneth Clark