SSDA News

Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades

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SSDA-AT Advocates for Smarter Regulations While Protecting Key Safeguards

By Roy Littlefield

SSDA-AT is intensifying its efforts in Washington to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on service stations and independent automotive repair shops, while preserving essential safety and environmental protections.

As Congress expands its use of the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to roll back federal regulations, SSDA-AT is actively engaging lawmakers to ensure small business perspectives are part of the debate.

The association's position is clear: reform should focus on improving how regulations work—not eliminating important safeguards that protect public health, consumer confidence, and the industry's long-term stability.

SSDA-AT is advocating for a more practical regulatory approach, including clearer rules, faster and more predictable permitting processes, and the removal of duplicative or conflicting requirements that increase costs without delivering meaningful benefits. These challenges are especially burdensome for smaller, community-based businesses that often lack the resources to navigate complex and shifting compliance demands.

By working with policymakers on targeted, common-sense reforms, SSDA-AT aims to streamline regulations while maintaining strong standards.

The goal is a balanced framework that reduces red tape, supports small business operations, and ensures service stations and repair shops can continue to invest, grow, and serve their communities effectively.

The Online Edge – What Your Business Needs to Thrive

Does your business have an online presence? If so, are you doing all you can to ensure its virtual success? If not, what are you waiting for? Let's take a sneak peek at some statistical findings from the Pew Research Center. According to their most recent studies on the use of internet and technology it was found that:

Roughly three-quarters of Americans, or 77%, now own a smartphone, which nearly doubles the former findings since the Center began its research in 2011.

As of November 2016, nearly three-quarters, or 73% of Americans indicate that they have broadband service at home.

Nearly seven-in-ten Americans now use social media. When the Center started tracking social media adoption in 2005, just 5% of Americans said they used these platforms. Today, 69% of U.S. adults are social media users.

Half the public now owns a tablet computer. When the Center first began tracking tablet ownership in 2010, just 3% of Americans owned a tablet of some kind.

As you can see, now more than ever before, an online presence for your business is significant. And not just any online presence, but a quality one that provides a sense of credibility and legitimacy, turning its visitors into leads and sales, and contributing to the success of your business.

First impressions matter. If your business has a website, rest assured that internet users are navigating to it to formulate their opinion, to see what other people have to say about you, and to "screen" shop your services and products, which is much like window shopping, but with the ease of never having to actually visit your business's location.

Your business can now be accessible to the masses thanks to technology. Therefore, it's vital to have a way for potential clients to find you with the swipe of their fingertip and also to ensure you have a website that makes a good impression.

So, how do you go about trying to meet your customers' needs online?

Let's Talk Internet Marketing Best Practices

There are several factors that play into the creation of a well-made website that will help your business's online presence generate traffic and rank effectively:

Design & Layout

Visual presentation plays an important role in the functionality of a website. A high-performing website will provide a positive user experience. It helps to have a responsive web design. What makes a website responsive? Responsive design helps to generate leads and sales without any limitations based on user devices. So, customers can find your automotive service site on their tablet, smartphone, smart watch, etc., viewing your website efficiently from any screen size.

Content

Content is the reason why visitors come to a site. They are seeking information about your business and its services. The key is to

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NET DRIVEN

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provide relevant content that is easy for visitors to digest. Too much or too little and your visitors might go elsewhere to find what they're looking for. Check out what Moz has to say about content regarding search engine ranking. By providing unique content that moves beyond self- promotion and is easily digestible to the user, your website offers valuable information.

Calls to Action

Calls to action within a site's content and design come in the form of clickable links or custom buttons. It entices a visitor to take action beyond the page they are on, an action like submitting a form, requesting a quote, purchasing a product, or even just clicking a link that leads to another page with relevant information. Through a CTA, a user moves to take a specific action that will benefit your business. And action is what it's all about.

Credibility

A business with an online footprint is a business that can be found, recognized, and confided in. From building a solid and consistent brand across all channels, to maintaining an active social media presence, gaining positive reviews, managing your online reputation with products like Net Driven's Reputation Management.

Mobile Viewability

More and more people are looking at your site from a mobile phone or web enabled device. It seems like anything with a screen and a microchip in it is capable of getting on the internet these days. Make sure your site is viewable on a mobile internet enabled device.

Search Engine Optimization

At Net Driven, we drive the traffic that drives your business! It begins with a website that keeps local search in mind. A strong SEO foundation puts proven strategies to work and improves your ability to get found.

From understanding searcher behavior to using tested best practices, the SEO team at Net Driven works hard to ensure that your site has all of the key ingredients for SEO success. Look to us for:

Keyword research performed for your business and target geographic

Optimized meta tags for click through success

Relevant industry content

Local directory management

SEO-friendly site architecture

and more!

Don't have a website yet? What are you waiting for?! Talk to a representative from Net Driven today and ask about how we can help you create a website that not only generates traffic, but turns your traffic into leads and sales! Net Driven should be your choice for all your automotive internet marketing needs. Contact us today!

Sources:

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Hope Gas Invests $250M in W.Va. Natural Gas Pipeline

Hope Gas has announced a $250 million investment in a natural gas pipeline in West Virginia to enhance system reliability and expand capacity for manufacturers and residential customers in Mason County.

The project is expected to create over 600 construction jobs and support industrial growth, and is part of a broader wave of private-sector development in the state.

EPA Issues Layoff Notices to Environmental Justice Staff

The Environmental Protection Agency has issued layoff notices to 22 employees focused on environmental justice.

The EPA says the move is part of a structural transformation to better fulfill its obligations.

Permian Basin Bottlenecks Limit Oil Output Despite Recent High Prices, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Takeaway capacity to move natural gas out of the Permian Basin is also limiting the region's operators from responding to the current spike in oil prices. The market is calling for more oil, but as analysts at East Daley Analytics note, the restrictions on moving associated natural gas are also limiting the ability to move crude oil out of the Permian. Until new pipelines such as Blackcomb and Hugh Brinson add a combined 4.7 billion cubic feet a day of capacity by the end of the year, producers will struggle to move associated gas - and therefore crude - out of the basin. "This dynamic matters because the Permian is the largest oil-producing region in the U.S. In previous cycles, higher oil prices typically trigger increased drilling activity and supply growth from the basin. However, producers today face a structural bottleneck that limits their ability to respond to price signals," analysts pointed out.

Julian Renton of East Daley Analytics observed that this is not the first time producers have been unable to respond to market signals. "A key historical parallel is the early 1970s, when U.S. production reached physical capacity, limiting the ability to increase supply despite rising prices. More recently, during the 2014 oil price collapse, production declined more slowly than prices would have suggested due to hedging and operational inertia," he told the Reporter-Telegram.

What is different today is multiple constraints are occurring simultaneously, he continued. Not only are there infrastructure limitations, but capital discipline continues to limit the willingness of operators to increase activity, especially in response to what the forward curve signals current high prices may not persist, Renton added. "Finally, inventory management is becoming more important as Tier 1 acreage is developed more deliberately," he wrote. "In that sense, producers are not just unwilling to respond, they are, in some cases, physically constrained from doing so, which is a meaningful shift from earlier shale cycles," he wrote. The markets may turn to other liquids-rich basins like the Bakken, Rockies, Anadarko and Eagle Ford, which have historically ramped up drilling activity when prices rise. "Historically, these regions have responded to higher oil prices, typically with a lag," wrote Renton. "However, two factors are likely to blunt that response. First, the backwardated forward curve signals current high prices may not persist, reducing the incentive for producers to materially increase capital spending. Second, capital allocation flexibility across portfolios - particularly for operators with exposure to both the Permian and other basins - means companies may prefer to wait for improved Permian takeaway capacity rather than shift capital for a potentially short-lived opportunity."

That said, he wrote private operators are likely to be the most responsive in the near term. These companies tend to have fewer capital return constraints and greater operational flexibility, allowing them to opportunistically increase activity where infrastructure is available. "Even so, the overall pool of producers positioned to respond remains relatively limited. Incremental supply will likely come from a combination of privates and select public operators with existing capacity, minimal hedge exposure, and the ability to act without committing to long-term capital increases," Renton wrote. He concluded: "If the disruption is short-lived, the market may remain tight without a meaningful supply response. If it persists longer, the risk of a broader supply shortfall increases, as the traditional shale response mechanism is currently constrained."

Trump Invokes Defense Production Act as War with Iran Disrupts Oil Markets, Fox45

The Trump administration invoked the Defense Production Act to restore oil production off the coast of California as the war with Iran has disrupted the flow of oil to global markets.

The Department of Energy is directing Sable Offshore Corp., a Texas-based oil and gas company, to restart operations that have been shuttered for years. Sable Offshore's unit includes three rigs, pipelines and a processing facility that California officials have kept offline since a 2015 oil spill.

The move utilizes the Defense Production Act, a Cold War-era law giving the president emergency authority to control domestic industries to meet national defense needs.

Presidents have used it for decades across multiple federal agencies to support a range of government priorities. It is regularly invoked by the Defense Department to prioritize the fulfillment of its contracts for military equipment and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in response to disasters to supply food, water and other necessities.

The definition of what constitutes national security has expanded over the years as Congress has reauthorized the law, giving the president more flexibility and authority.

In recent history, Trump and former President Joe Biden invoked the Defense Production Act to boost domestic production of critical minerals.

Biden and Trump also used it during the coronavirus pandemic to address shortages of medical supplies, bolster supply chains for essential goods and accelerate vaccine production.

The law gives the president the authority to direct private companies to prioritize orders from the federal government that are deemed necessary for national defense.

It also gives the president authority to use loans or other incentives to increase production of critical goods and authorizes the government to establish voluntary agreements with private industry.

The Defense Production Act gives the president more maneuverability to quickly address the country's needs in times of crisis. It is a powerful tool for the executive branch to ensure laws and markets can deal with unexpected crises in a timely manner.

The Trump administration has also threatened to use the law against Anthropic in a dispute with the Pentagon

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Trump Invokes Defense Production Act as War with Iran Disrupts Oil Markets, Fox45

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over its restrictions on its artificial intelligence tools. NBC also reported the White House has considered using the Defense Production Act to accelerate the production of munitions as the U.S. continues the conflict with Iran and will need to replenish stockpiles of offensive and defensive munitions.

Officials said using the emergency authority aims to address supply disruption risks, which comes as oil prices have jumped significantly due to the war with Iran. Oil has climbed over $100 a barrel since the war started on Feb. 28, bringing a quick increase to prices at the pump that will ripple into other parts of the economy if it lingers.

Energy prices have climbed because traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway where roughly 20% of the world's oil supply passes through, has effectively been shut down due to the war.

Trump has called on NATO allies to help the U.S. secure the strait of Hormuz and restore the flow of tankers transporting oil, but no countries have committed to sending warships he has requested.

The Energy Department said Sable Offshore Corp.'s facility off California's coast can produce about 50,000 barrels of oil per day, or about 1.5 million barrels each month.

By comparison, some 20 million barrels pass through the Strait of Hormuz each day. The U.S. is already a net exporter of oil and refined products, but its products are still subject to global markets that set prices.

"The Trump Administration remains committed to putting all Americans and their energy security first," Energy Secretary Chris Wright said in a statement. "Unfortunately, some state leaders have not adhered to those same principles, with potentially disastrous consequences not just for their residents, but also our national security."

California officials railed against the decision to invoke the Defense Production Act and have fought the Sable project for years after a 2015 oil spill that released more than 100,000 gallons.

"This wouldn't lower prices by a cent. This is an attempt to illegally restart a pipeline whose operators are facing criminal charges and prohibited by multiple court orders from restarting," California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement.

Restarting the Sable facility is one of several measures the U.S. is taking to stabilize oil markets. The U.S. and other member countries of the International Energy Agency are also planning to release 400 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves over the coming weeks to minimize the effects of the war on the oil market. Some sanctions on Russian oil shipments have also been temporarily eased due to supply shortages.

White House to Pay TotalEnergies $1 Billion to Kill Off East Coast Wind Farm Projects, CNBC

The White House has agreed to pay TotalEnergies $1 billion to shelve East Coast wind farm projects that it condemned as "costly," with the French energy giant's investment set to be diverted into U.S. LNG production instead.

The U.S.′ Department of the Interior (DOI) announced what it said was "a landmark agreement" with TotalEnergies for the company "to redirect capital from expensive, unreliable offshore wind leases toward affordable, reliable natural gas projects that will provide secure energy for hardworking Americans."

TotalEnergies has committed to invest approximately $1 billion — the value of its renounced offshore wind leases — in oil and natural gas and LNG production in the U.S., the DOI said in a statement.

Following the new investment, the department said the U.S. will reimburse the company dollar-for-dollar, up to the amount they paid in lease purchases for offshore wind.

The agreement will see TotalEnergies shelve its offshore wind developments in New York and Carolina. It will invest instead in the development of four trains at the Rio Grande LNG plant in Texas, as well as upstream conventional oil in the U.S. Gulf and shale gas production.

U.S. President Donald Trump has made no secret of his loathing for offshore wind developments, frequently lambasting such projects as expensive and ugly.

The announcement comes as the Iran conflict continues to disrupt global oil and gas supplies, making the U.S. — the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world — an even more critical supplier for markets in Asia and Europe.

The DOI stated that, "in light of the national security concerns," TotalEnergies had pledged not to develop any new offshore wind pro-

White House to Pay TotalEnergies $1 Billion to Kill Off East Coast Wind Farm Projects, CNBC

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jects in the U.S. CNBC has contacted TotalEnergies for comment and is awaiting a response.

Patrick Pouyanné, chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of TotalEnergies, was quoted in the DOI's statement as saying the company was pleased to sign the settlement agreement "and to support the Administration's Energy Policy."

"Considering that the development of offshore wind projects is not in the country's interest, we have decided to renounce offshore wind development in the United States, in exchange for the reimbursement of the lease fees," he was quoted as saying.

Pouyanné said the agreement would allow the group to "support the development of U.S. gas production and export."

"These investments will contribute to supplying Europe with much-needed LNG from the U.S. and provide gas for U.S. data center development. We believe this is a more efficient use of capital in the United States," he added.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum described the agreement with the French energy major as "yet another win for President Trump's commitment to affordable and reliable energy for all Americans."

"Offshore wind is one of the most expensive, unreliable, environmentally disruptive, and subsidy-dependent schemes ever forced on American ratepayers and taxpayers.

We welcome TotalEnergies' commitment to developing projects that produce dependable, affordable power to lower Americans' monthly bills," he added.

Lanxess Raises Chemical Prices to Counter Effects of Iran War, Reuters

Lanxess (LXSG.DE), opens new tab said it was raising chemical prices to counter the effects of the Middle East conflict, after the specialty chemicals maker reported annual results and announced job cuts earlier.

The U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, continuing into its third week, has pushed up prices in the chemicals sector and disrupted markets, sparking fears that the widening conflict will create an oil price shock, raise inflation and dampen consumer demand.

Chemical companies have been hit particularly hard, as many raw materials for the industry are produced in the Middle East.

Lanxess CEO Matthias Zachert told reporters that the prices the company pays for energy and materials had been going up since the war started.

"We have to do something about it and pass on these price increases, so that we do not have to foot the bill," Zachert said.

"If you have a look at the situation, our competitors are doing the same thing, but we started early in order to counteract as early as possible."

Some other chemicals companies, including Brenntag (BNRGn.DE), opens new tab, Wacker Chemie (WCHG.DE), opens new tab and BASF (BASFn.DE), opens new tab, have also started raising prices due to surging energy costs.

If the Middle East conflict continues, the chemical industry will see a further and lasting increase in product prices, Zachert said.

In a separate statement, German chemicals association VCI said the war significantly increased the risks to the global economy, particularly due to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

"Consequently, strong price increases are expected, especially for products where the region plays a central role in the global trade," the industry lobby said.

LANXESS
Energizing Chemistry

EPA Extends Compliance Dates for Perchloroethylene and Carbon Tetrachloride TSCA Rules

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is releasing a proposal that would extend certain compliance dates in the final risk management rules for perchloroethylene (PCE) and carbon tetrachloride (CTC) under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) while the agency works to revise these rules to ensure they are practical and implementable to protect human health and the environment and maintain uses that power the U.S. economy. The proposed timeline adjustment does not weaken any existing protections and does not change the ultimate level of protection required.

While we will be extending compliance dates through this action, the current deadlines remain effective until modified through this rulemaking. EPA intends to focus its resources on compliance with the new compliance dates that will be established by this rulemaking. However, EPA may take any action necessary to protect human health and the environment. Consistent with the March 12, 2025, memo entitled "Implementing National Enforcement and Compliance Initiatives Consistently with Executive Orders and Agency Priorities," concurrence from the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance or his/her delegee shall be sought before any enforcement or compliance assurance actions regarding elements of this rule subject to reconsideration are taken.

PCE is a solvent used in applications such as metal degreasing, and certain manufacturing processes. CTC is a solvent used in commercial settings as a raw material for producing other chemicals like refrigerants, chlorinated compounds, and agricultural products in accordance with the Clean Air Act and Montreal Protocol.

The underlying finding that these chemicals present unreasonable risk is not being revisited. We remain committed to fully implementing TSCA's mandate to reduce those risks as quickly as we can in a way that will last. This proposal would extend some Workplace Chemical Protection Program compliance dates for non-federal entities that use PCE and CTC to match the compliance dates for federal agencies and their contractors, providing much needed relief for the companies that drive our country's economy. This action does not impact or diminish any current worker protections that are already in place for these chemicals.

Today's action responds to stakeholder feedback that these compliance dates are unworkable and helps ensure that companies can implement strong protections effectively without disrupting operations, economic activity, or innovation. When we say some dates are 'unworkable,' we mean that, as written, they could lead to rushed, incomplete, or box-checking compliance, which is not protective in practice. Our goal is to set deadlines that ensure protective controls are installed correctly, maintained, and actually used. Additionally, by aligning compliance timelines where appropriate, EPA is helping to create a level playing field for both federal and non-federal entities subject to the rules' requirements, ensuring that all facilities operate under comparable expectations as they transition to the new worker protection standards.

Both rules are being challenged in court. Our intention is to ensure that, once in effect, these protections are durable, enforceable, and not easily rolled back in court or by future administrations. We remain committed to reducing exposure to these solvents, and we welcome continued input as we revise and strengthen the rules. Last year, EPA took public comments on these 2024 final rules as a first step to reconsider and revise these rules. The agency intends to publish proposed rules in or around summer 2026 to amend various aspects of those rules.

Upon publication of the Federal Register notice, EPA will accept comments on today's proposal for 30 in docket EPA-HQ-OPPT-2026-0992 on www.regulations.gov.

WACKER Expands India Footprint with Panagarh Silicone Plant, AlchemPro

WACKER has achieved yet another milestone in the expansion of its silicone capacities in India. A new production complex for manufacturing silicone emulsions went into operation at WACKER's Panagarh site. The facility produces GMP-certified silicones for the cosmetics and personal care industries. The new plant will increase the Group's silicone emulsion production capacities in India significantly. The expansion will create 60 new jobs at the site.

The goods manufactured at the 15,000-square-meter complex fully comply with the good manufacturing practice (GMP) guidelines of the European Federation for Cosmetic Ingredients EFfCI. "Our facilities in Panagarh are truly world-class and will produce top-quality, high-purity products which are in great demand, in particular in the cosmetics and personal care industries," announced WACKER Executive Board member Christian Kirsten at the commissioning ceremony.

For WACKER, the personal care industry is one of the main pillars of its silicone business in India. WACKER's fully consolidated joint venture Wacker Metroark Chemicals (WMC) is a leading supplier of silicone raw materials for cosmetic products, shampoos, and personal-care applications. In addition to local manufacturers, the company's customer base also includes international consumer goods companies. "The demand for our silicone products remains unabated, and we expect to see further significant growth in India," said Tom Koini, head of WACKER's Silicones division. "By expanding our production in Panagarh, we are ideally positioned to meet this rising demand and to support the growth of our customers."

WACKER began its silicones production in India in 1999. At the Amtala site near Kolkata, the company has been manufacturing silicone fluids, emulsions, and silicone rubber compounds among other silicone products. In 2022, WACKER began operations at its 165,000 square meter site in Panagarh. Here, the company has been producing silicone rubber and ready-to-use silicone compounds for the electromobility, medical technology, and electrical power supply industries.

Following the commissioning of the second expansion phase, WACKER's Panagarh site now represents a second mainstay for producing silicone emulsions in India. Through further expansion measures, WACKER aims at making the site assume a leading role in the regional silicones supply chain. In future, Amtala – hitherto the hub of silicone fluids and emulsion production in India – will increasingly focus on product and process development. "The successful completion of the expansion work in Panagarh is key to our future success in India," declared Sascha Büchel, Managing Director Wacker Metroark during the opening ceremony. "Our main site in Amtala has played an outstanding role. But Amtala is increasingly being stretched to its limits. Panagarh provides us the space, infrastructure, and flexibility we need to continue our success story in India."

'Gray-box' AI Reveals Why Catalysts Work While Speeding Discovery, Phys.org

Self-driving laboratories (SDLs) powered by artificial intelligence (AI) are rapidly accelerating materials discovery, but can they also explain their results? Researchers from the Theory Department of the Fritz Haber Institute, in collaboration with BASF, and BasCat—UniCat BASF JointLab, show that they can.

Their new AI-driven strategy works hand-in-hand with SDLs to identify better catalysts while revealing the chemistry behind their performance. The approach was validated on the industrially crucial conversion of propane into propylene.

An SDL integrates an AI doing the experiment planning with lab automation and robotics. In the race to develop better materials, AI and SDLs are often celebrated for one main reason: speed.

These systems can rapidly test and optimize new materials, helping researchers find improved solutions in a fraction of the usual time. But critics have raised important concerns: If AI simply delivers better results without explaining why they work, is this still true scientific progress, and how can we control reliability?

A new study published in ACS Catalysis by the Institute's Theory Department, in collaboration with BASF and BasCat—UniCat BASF JointLab, shows that speed does not need to compromise understanding.

The team developed an advanced AI-driven strategy that not only accelerates catalyst discovery, but also reveals why the identified materials perform better.

This approach was successfully demonstrated on a key industrial reaction: the conversion of propane into propylene, an essential building block of the chemical industry and starting material for a wide range of everyday products, including plastics and synthetic fibers.

From 'black-box' to 'gray-box' AI

Most current AI-driven discovery approaches focus on identifying the single best material as quickly as possible. In doing so, they often act as "black boxes," producing answers without explanations. While this can be useful for optimization, it leaves scientists with limited understanding of the underlying chemistry.

Here, a different approach was taken: by carefully designing how AI explores possible material combinations, improved performance was achieved while simultaneously providing meaningful insights: a strategy referred to as "gray-box," making the process more transparent and controllable.

Understanding and efficiency combined

Beyond rapidly identifying a catalyst superior to the current industry reference, the approach translated the improved performance into a language understandable to chemists. It highlighted the effect of individual promoters contained in the identified catalyst, and especially synergistic interactions between them that were missed in previous traditional studies.

At the same time, the method remained highly efficient: fewer than 50 experiments were needed to search a design space containing more than 1013, or 10,000,000,000,000 possible promoter combinations.

Overall, the study demonstrates that AI and automation in chemistry do not have to come at the expense of understanding. Thoughtfully designed, these technologies are capable of transforming materials development—moving from simply finding better solutions to truly understanding them.

Ultimately, this will position AI as an agentic partner in scientific discovery rather than just an efficient, but barely assessable tool.

US Warns EU to Pass Trade Deal or Risk Losing 'Favorable' Access to LNG, Financial Times

The EU must implement its trade deal with the US without amendments or risk losing "favorable" access to liquefied natural gas shipments from American exporters, Donald Trump's ambassador to the bloc has warned. EU ratification of last year's agreement between the US president and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has been delayed by several issues, including Trump's threats to invade Greenland. The European parliament is set to vote on the pact, which includes an agreement for the EU to buy $750bn worth of US energy by 2028, including LNG, oil and civil nuclear technologies. Andrew Puzder, the US ambassador to the EU, told the FT that the energy aspect of the trade agreement, signed at Trump's Turnberry golf resort in Scotland, was at risk if the bloc attempted to modify any of the other terms. "I don't know what will happen with respect to energy if they don't go forward with the agreement," Puzder said. "If Turnberry isn't implemented, I mean, we're back to square one. I'm not sure where we go. "I think the United States will continue to want to do business with Europe, but just the terms may not be as favourable. The environment certainly won't be as favourable. And . . . there are other buyers out there." Any change to the EU's energy agreement with the US would come at a time when global competition for LNG cargoes from suppliers outside the Gulf is stepping up. Qatar, which produces a fifth of the world's LNG, had to stop exports after Iran blockaded the Strait of Hormuz waterway. Strikes recently on Qatar's vast Ras Laffan LNG complex have raised fears that global supply will remain tight for some time. Although only about 10 per cent of the LNG that flowed through the Strait of Hormuz before the war is routed into Europe, the continent is vulnerable to global competition for supplies because of its dependence on gas imports. Some EU member states, such as Italy, sourced as much as a third of their LNG from Qatar. "Personally . . . I thought the Europeans should have committed to a trillion dollars' worth of energy because it wasn't just a promise that they would buy this energy, it was a commitment that we would sell them the energy," Puzder added. "If they're [EU member states] going to survive economically, they need energy, and we can supply it," he said. "We'd like to have the kind of relationship where we're encouraged to do that." Puzder also said an EU rule that exporters to the bloc should declare methane emissions by January 1 2027 should be amended because it would be impossible for most US producers to comply. The Commission has promised to ensure that the methane regulation will not damage imports. Puzder said he was "hopeful" that the rule would be changed because it "has the potential to drive up fuel costs that Europe will realize it needs to reduce some of these trade barriers". Under the deal reached in Turnberry last year, a 15 per cent tariff was applied to most EU exports, while the bloc agreed to slash its own levies on US industrial goods and some agricultural products to zero. But after the US Supreme Court struck down Trump's levies, he hastily introduced a global tariff using a different law that can last until July 24, which results in an overall charge of 15.8 per cent on average. In the legislation to be voted on, MEPs have included safeguards that would suspend the Turnberry agreement if Trump followed through on any new tariff threats and did not restore exemptions originally agreed in Scotland, including for diamonds and cork.

However, the final deal will be negotiated with member states, which are likely to resist the provisions. Puzder said if there were any changes in the final agreement, "we're going to have to make a decision as to whether or not that works for us". EU trade commissioner Maroš Šefčovič warned MEPs in a separate interview with the FT that "a deal is a deal and we should stick to the Turnberry joint statement". He said that the US administration had made clear it would honor the 15 per cent overall tariff level in that case.

OPINION: How the skill of influencing others helps you be an effective leader, Smart Brief

As an FBI counterintelligence agent tasked with recruiting foreign spies to work for the US Government, I understood my role was to influence and convert others to my way of thinking. I didn't deceive myself into thinking I was a master of persuasion, so I observed how successful colleagues approached not only foreign spies but also other agents on our squad. I felt like I was back in elementary school, learning how to develop the vital skill of influencing others. Some of my colleagues relied on charisma and eloquence to make their case without it seeming like effort. How could I learn their skills and apply them myself, since their wisdom didn't come from manuals or cheat sheets?

When I hung out with them in the office, they didn't seem impressive at all, yet they were the ones who got things done through others, including me! I can count more than once when I was pulled into their orbit. I never saw myself as a pushover, but I still took on a crappy assignment more than once just to please them.

What sort of magic did they possess? Even better, how can I learn to influence others?

Leadership is often described as a social influence process where one person gains the cooperation and support of others to achieve a shared goal. Effective leaders depend more on influence than authority because trust fosters commitment, while authority merely forces compliance.

While barking out assignments and orders can achieve high compliance, the actions may lack enthusiasm. Hard-nosed tactics are most effective for straightforward, clear and urgent tasks.

However, in complex, ambiguous situations, soft influence tactics that rely on trust, empathy and rational persuasion are more effective for gaining team members' buy-in.

The softer influence tactics showed how agents on my squad captured an audience, persuaded the undecided and converted the doubtful. I learned that effective leadership draws on inspirational appeals.

Here are tips on how the skill of influencing others helps you be an effective leader:

1. Start with trust

One of the first things I noticed about effective leaders was that they keep their word. They make fewer promises but treat those promises as sacred. They meet deadlines, arrive on time and speak as truthfully as possible.

I learned that even when trying to persuade a foreign spy to betray their country, the barriers between us only came down once trust was established. My role was to demonstrate competence and reliability; their trust followed naturally.

Research shows that who delivers the message often matters just as much as what is said. If you are seen as both credible and an expert, you're much more likely to persuade others. Expertise and trustworthiness boost how people perceive you, making them more confident in you and more willing to accept what you say.

Studies have shown it's important to consider how you frame your message if you want to build trust. The brain values options, not just logical arguments. A 2025 meta-analysis confirmed that using both emotional and logical appeals is crucial when talking with team members. Winning hearts and minds is key to persuasion strategies.

My tips:

Start with small, simple steps that align with your audience's self-image.

Build unity by sharing goals, emphasizing similarities and using respectful language.

Frame your conversation around what matters to your audience — like purpose, faith, growth and status.

Make commitments you can keep, not empty promises or platitudes.

2. Listen to connect, not correct

We know that active listening is a powerful influence tactic, but a 2025 field experiment involving nearly 1,500 conversations reached an interesting conclusion. It found that high-quality, nonjudgmental listening increased participants' liking and trust of the persuader and reduced defensiveness, but it did not produce an attitude change.

The purpose of active listening is to engage in one-on-one conversations that focus on people's goals, stress, aspirations and frustrations. It helps leaders understand their people as individuals, so they can ask open-ended questions, paraphrase what they've heard and seek different points of view.

OPINION: How the skill of influencing others helps you be an effective leader, Smart Brief

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Listening is best understood as the foundation that makes other influence tools more ethical and effective, rather than a stand-alone silver bullet. This is a crucial first step because it fosters psychological safety and trust.

This, in turn, fosters a willingness to follow a leader's direction. Active listening reduces resistance and makes people more open to considering a leader's perspective or trying their suggestions.

When we listen deeply, others are more likely to share when we ask follow-up questions. We reflect on what they say and observe their body language. This helps us understand their true motives, fears and values. As leaders, we can use this to frame requests in ways that align with their identities and goals.

When we choose to connect rather than correct, it's an effective way to take the first step in influencing others.

My tips:

Make sure follow-ups are:

Honest, value-driven conversations

Offer clear requests and small commitments

Remain emotionally authentic and consistent with your team

Align with their values: Frame the request in terms of what they care about (purpose, team, faith, growth, security, status)

3. Dare to inspire others

Rational persuasion is a simple, commonly used influence tactic among leaders. It depends on logic, reasoning or evidence to explain or justify a position and to show that the leader's perspective is the most logical choice. A study examined 504 incidents reported by MBA students and found that rational persuasion was used in over half of all influence attempts, more than any other tactic.

While rational persuasion was the most commonly used, other studies have shown it is not the most effective. Instead, inspirational approaches are better for understanding someone else's perspective because they focus on their emotions and values.

As a leader, you can more effectively gain commitment by using inspirational appeals. For example: "You're the best one to handle this negotiation because you care about both the environment and the business."

A meta-analysis concludes that rational persuasion is the best influence tactic for consistently producing positive effects across many conditions. However, inspirational tactics perform best when both values and emotions are central.

Recent findings demonstrated that inspirational appeal, consultation and rational appeal are the most effective influence methods, with inspirational appeal the most effective of the three, whereas pressure and coalition tactics are the least effective.

You become more inspiring by avoiding drama, consistently connecting people's work to a meaningful future, living your values openly and showing genuine belief in the people you lead.

My tips:

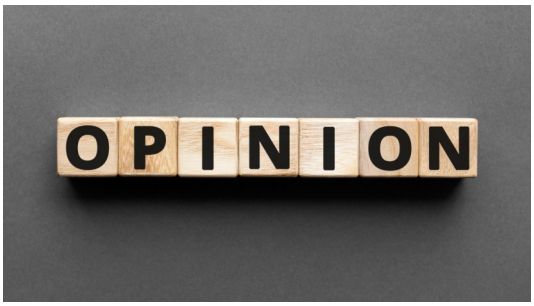
Articulate a clear, optimistic vision of the future and explain why the work matters beyond just metrics; connect tasks to a meaningful purpose that resonates with people.

Ask for feedback — "What helps you feel most energized at work?" Effective leaders see inspiration as a skill to develop and practice.

Identify the core value behind your request (such as service, excellence, growth, faith or stewardship) and describe what it will look like in action when that value is demonstrated.

Provide regular, specific recognition for effort and growth, not just results; genuine appreciation is one of the most powerful (and often overlooked) motivators.

Influential and effective leadership depends on a sequence: earn trust, listen deeply to understand values and then use inspirational appeals (backed by logic) to invite people into a meaningful, shared future.



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