# UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN THE REAL-WORLD CHALLENGE

Understanding and Applying Social Influence in The Real-World Challenge
*Sponsored by IE University*

Social influence tactics are persuasive strategies used by communication experts in marketing, advertising, and negotiation to effectively shape behavior and decision-making in various real-world situations. Each of these tactics demonstrates the power of strategic communication in influencing choices and behavior, highlighting their relevance in marketing, negotiation, and interpersonal relationships.

This challenge is the perfect opportunity to develop and apply your knowledge on these fascinating topics that are relevant to nearly every dimension of our daily lives.

**Driving Question or Challenge:**
How can you identify the social influence tactics used in real-world advertising and apply them to create an original advertisement that effectively shapes audience behavior and decision-making?

**Real-World Context:**
This challenge mirrors the work of marketing strategists, advertising executives, and negotiators who rely on influence to shape consumer and stakeholder decisions every day. By analyzing real advertising campaign strategies and grounding an original ad in a specific influence tactic, DECA members will explore how persuasive communication and consumer psychology intersect the same skills professionals use to design campaigns, close deals, and understand what truly drives people to act. This experience encourages students to look past the surface of the marketing they encounter daily and consider how ideas, messaging, and decision-making shape outcomes in business and everyday life.

## CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

- The event consists of **two** major parts: research and analysis and a video presentation that is a maximum of **3-5 minutes** in length.
- Each event entry will be composed of **two to three members** of a DECA chapter only. Chapters may submit multiple entries for consideration.
- Participants will present their results in a video that is a maximum of **five minutes.** Videos longer than **five minutes** in length will not be evaluated and will not be eligible for awards.
- The participants must fully complete and submit the online registration form at www.deca.org/challenges no later than **November 30, 2026** to be eligible for awards. Late entries and entries over five minutes will not be accepted.
- Representatives from the IE University will evaluate all submitted video presentations and select the top three overall teams.
- DECA Inc., and IE University are not responsible for lost, damaged, mislabeled or misdirected entries.

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPED

Participants will demonstrate knowledge and skills needed to address the components of the project as described in the content outline and evaluation forms.

Participants will also develop Career Competencies, in the following categories, desired by today's employers:

- **Critical Thinking -** Thinks critically to understand and solve problems.
- **Communication -** Communicates clearly, effectively, and with reason.
- **Decision Making -** Considers the impacts of decisions.
- **Collaboration -** Participates and advocates in groups of all sizes to achieve common goals.
- **Innovation -** Demonstrates a creative and innovative mindset.
- **Technology -** Ethically leverages technologies to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

## PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

The participants will present a real-world design challenge to ie University judges in a video that is a maximum of three to five minutes in length. All videos must include the following components:

**I. Analysis of Real-World Social Influence Tactics**

a. Present the real-world advertising, marketing, or negotiation example(s) analyzed.

b. Identify the social influence tactic(s) used (e.g., scarcity, social proof, authority, reciprocity, liking, commitment/consistency)

c. Explain how and why each tactic is designed to shape consumer or audience behavior and decision-making

**II. Research**

a. Identify credible research findings that support the effectiveness of the selected social influence tactic(s)

b. Explain why these tactics are appropriate for the intended target audience

c. Describe how the research informed the design of the team's original advertisement

d. Briefly discuss how the advertisement balances persuasive communication with ethical marketing practices

**III. Original Advertisement**

a. Present the original advertisement created, applying the tactic(s) identified in Part I, in billboard or video format

b. Explicitly point out within the video where and how the chosen tactic(s) are being used to influence the target audience

c. Explain the connection between the tactic(s) studied in the research and the creative choices made in the advertisement

## PRESENTATION JUDGING

Judges will select the top three overall teams.

## AWARDS

- 1st Place Team - $1,500
- 2nd Place Team - $1,000
- 3rd Place Team - $500

In addition, the top three teams will be recognized on stage during DECA's International Career Development Conference in Anaheim, California. Eligibility to attend DECA ICDC is determined by the chartered association advisor based on their policies. Finalists should consult with their chartered association advisor for eligibility guidelines and gain approval from their school advisor to attend the conference.

## TIMELINE

| | |
|---|---|
| Challenge announced | September 2026 |
| Challenge submission/video posted deadline | November 30, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET |
| Top 3 teams announced | January 26, 2027 |
| Top 3 teams travel to ICDC (Anaheim, CA) | April 17-20, 2027 |



2-3 PARTICIPANTS



**3-5 MINUTES**
PRESENTATION TIME



1 VIDEO
ENTRY

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## PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM

Name of School: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Team Member Names: _____

| Did the participating team... | | Novice | Developing | Proficient | Exemplary | Judged Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS** | | | | | | |
| 1. | Explain the factors that influence customer/client/business buying behavior and connect them to the social influence tactic(s) selected. | 0-1-2-3-4-5 | 6-7-8-9-10 | 11-12-13-14 | 15 | |
| 2. | Explain the components of the advertisement and how each supports the influence strategy. | 0-1-2-3-4-5 | 6-7-8-9-10 | 11-12-13-14 | 15 | |
| 3. | Write clear, persuasive ad copy for the original advertisement. | 0-1-2-3-4-5 | 6-7-8-9-10 | 11-12-13-14 | 15 | |
| 4. | Explain the marketing strategy concept(s) underlying the campaign approach. | 0-1-2-3-4-5 | 6-7-8-9-10 | 11-12-13-14 | 15 | |
| 5. | Explain the type of advertising media chosen and why it fits the tactic and target audience. | 0-1-2-3-4-5 | 6-7-8-9-10 | 11-12-13-14 | 15 | |
| **VIDEO PRESENTATION** | | | | | | |
| 6. | Present the original advertisement clearly within the video. | 0-1 | 2-3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 7. | Explicitly identify and explain where the social influence tactic(s) appear in the advertisement. | 0-1 | 2-3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 8. | Demonstrate creativity and innovation in tactic application, ad design, and presentation. | 0-1 | 2-3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 9. | Overall impression of the video. | 0-1-2-3 | 4-5-6 | 7-8-9 | 10 | |
| TOTAL SCORE (100 points) | | | | | | |