



HOWTO.

MARKETING

The Principles of Persuasion

PERSUASION TECHNIQUES

For over 60 years, experts have been studying the core factors which influence most humans to say “yes” to the requests of others. Be in no doubt, there is an art and a science to how humans are persuaded, some of which you might find surprising...

Autonomy is an important factor in human life, the feeling of control and cognitive reasoning behind each decision you make. You made it because *you* wanted to. You considered all the available information in order to guide your decision. But actually, this isn't the case...In the increasingly busy lives we lead, overloading ourselves with information from TV, social media, messaging and more, it's become apparent we need / use shortcuts or rules of thumb to help guide our decision making, largely without realising...

Dr. Robert Cialdini is the expert in the field of influence and persuasion. He's spent over thirty-five years on rigorous, evidence-based research along with a three-year program of study on what moves people to change behaviour resulting in a highly acclaimed book, which has become a very valuable book to marketers, ecommerce and the wider business community. Dr Robert Cialdini released his book, *Influence: The psychology of persuasion* and it became an instant hit, covering these 5 pillars of influence.

- ✓ Reciprocation
- ✓ Scarcity
- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Authority
- ✓ Liking
- ✓ Consensus

Understanding these shortcuts and employing them in an ethical manner can significantly increase the chances that someone will be persuaded by your request. Through this paper we'll cover each of those in detail and help you understand how to apply them correctly.

RECIPROCATION

I like to think about Reciprocation as the in-built polite factor that's inside every human being. Some less so than others...but it's there. Putting it bluntly, people feel obligated to give something back to others in return for something (behaviour or service etc) that they have received first.

If your friend invites you round to their home for a meal, there's an obligation (unwritten) for you to return the favour and invite them to a meal you'll host in the future. If your colleague buys you a morning coffee, you owe them back. In the context of a social obligation people are more likely to say yes to those that they owe.

One of the best applications of Reciprocation can be seen from studies conducted in restaurants. Think of when you last visited a restaurant, it's very likely that the waiter/waitress will have given you a gift, typically when delivering your bill...maybe some mints or small chocolates you know the type. This isn't just a nice gesture, this creates reciprocation, right when they need it most...as you're deciding the tip.

Does giving you this small gift *actually* influence you and the tip you leave? Science says yes, of those studied, being gifted a single mint increased the tip on average 3%, however, if the gift was doubled and two mints were given, the tip increase jumped to 14%. The most fascinating structure however comes when the waiter/waitress gifted one mint, began to walk away and returned to the table and said "for you nice people, here's an extra mint" the tips increased by a whopping 23%.

So the key to using the Principle of Reciprocity is to be the first to give and to ensure that what you give is personalised and unexpected. We term this as surprise and delight.

SCARCITY

Simply put, people want more of those things they can have less of. At the core of commerce is the principle of Scarcity, supply and demand. Stock markets are built and destroyed on Scarcity.

Brands like Supreme can command legions of dedicated followers eager to throw their money at limited edition, small volume products. Their scarcity drives up the perceived value, which increases the actual value. Something is only worth what people are willing to pay for it.

In 2019 Popeyes entered the chicken wars in the US and after driving huge awareness on social media, announced the return of their chicken sandwich. The campaign was so successful they sold out of chicken sandwiches everywhere. Which in turn led to another social media movement that it was SO popular they were selling out, driving scarcity and even more people to rush out and try get their hands on some of the scarce Popeyes chicken sandwiches.

In 2020 with the rise of the deadly covid-19 virus, in the UK and globally we saw queues of panic buying maniacs stocking up on toilet rolls. Weird right? Well not really, news got out that toilet rolls (for some reason) were running out and supplies were limited, with a scarce product the panic sets in and thousands of shoppers rushed out to stock up.

So when it comes to effectively persuading others using the Scarcity Principle, the science is clear. It's not enough simply to tell people about the benefits they'll gain if they choose your products and services. You'll also need to point out what is unique about your proposition and what they stand to lose if they fail to consider your proposal.

CONSISTENCY

People like to be consistent with the things they have previously said or done.

Consistency is all founded on small commitments that can be generated to build upon and scale in order to drive true influence and persuasion. In a famous set of studies, it was discovered that very few residents of a neighbourhood would be willing to stick a wooden sign in their garden to support a Driving Safety initiative in the area.

But, in a mirroring nearby neighbourhood, a second group of test residents had shown that they would be very willing to place the signs in their gardens to help the Driving Safety initiative...why? What was the difference?

Well in this second neighbourhood, the residents had been placed through a series of micro commitment requests in the days prior to this final ask. They had agreed to place a small postcard in their front windows to support the initiative. Seemingly unoffensive, low impact and low effort. A high number of residents agreed to this small commitment.

They were then asked 10 days later if they'd be willing to place a larger wooden sign in their front garden, the leap from small postcard to lawn board was contextually smaller for these residents than their counterparts who had no warmup activity, no micro commitment to set the scene and were being asked to commit to a large imposition. This was evidenced in the results, 400% more residents agreed to the lawn sign in the second neighbourhood because they had already made a small commitment to the initiative and the lawn sign was simply another step from this commitment.

So, when seeking to influence using the consistency principle, the detective of influence looks for voluntary, active, and public commitments and ideally gets those commitments in writing.

For example, one recent study reduced missed appointments at health centres by 18% simply by asking the patients rather than the staff to write down appointment details on the future appointment card.

AUTHORITY

This is the idea that people follow the lead of credible, knowledgeable experts. Widely known now as Influencer. However, in this current digital landscape it's crucial you understand who is *actually* an influencer (i.e. has true influence over their audience) and those who just have lots of followers, crave the likes and attention this brings but hold no true respect or influence over their audience. That is a key distinction when using authority and influencer marketing.

Physiotherapists, for example, are able to persuade more of their patients to comply with recommended exercise programs if they display their medical diplomas on the walls of their consulting rooms. People are more likely to give change for a parking meter to a complete stranger if that requester wears a uniform rather than casual clothes.

What the science is telling us is that it's important to signal to others what makes you a credible, knowledgeable authority before you make your influence attempt. Of course this can present problems; you can hardly go around telling potential customers how brilliant you are, but you can certainly arrange for someone to do it for you. And surprisingly, the science tells us that it doesn't seem to matter if the person who introduces you is not only connected to you but also likely to prosper from the introduction themselves.

Becoming an authoritative figure in your chosen industry takes time, experience, and a carefully crafted narrative to ensure you instil the correct confidence in your business/abilities/capability to successfully leverage it and drive persuasion as a result.

The most important element to capture when becoming or utilising authority as a persuasion technique, is respect. You cannot consider yourself or others an authority if they do not command the respect of their audience. Promoted posts, advertisement or any other online promotion you do using Authority only works if the figure has a true influence on their audience and for that to happen, they must have their respect.

LIKING

People prefer to say yes to those that they like. Like follows like and people buy from people. That's been true since the dawn of commerce.

But what causes one person to like another? Persuasion science tells us that there are three important factors.

1. We like people who are similar to us
2. We like people who pay us compliments
3. We like people who cooperate with us towards mutual goals.

These days, most interactions we have are largely completed online, so on this basis, how do we effectively deploy these tactics and techniques in negotiations where we aren't face to face?

There was once a study completed between MBA students at two leading business schools. Some groups were advised, "Time is money. Get straight down to business." In this test pot, around 55% of those participating were able to come to an agreement, so just over half.

In the second group however, they were told, "Before you start negotiations, exchange some personal information with each other. Identify something between you which is a shared commonality, *then* begin negotiations". In this test group, 90% were able to come to a successful agreement. Which were actually worth roughly 18% more to each party. So not only did this result in a massively increased successful negotiation completion rate, but the results were better for more of those participants too.

So to harness this powerful principle of liking, be sure to look for areas of similarity that you share with others and genuine compliments you can give before you get down to business.

CONSENSUS

When making decisions, it's common for people to look around them at their peers and using social proof, decide to do what seems to be the most common path. There is comfort in numbers.

You may have noticed that hotels often place a small card in bathrooms that attempt to persuade guests to reuse their towels and linens. Most do this by drawing a guest's attention to the benefits that reuse can have on environmental protection. It turns out that this is a pretty effective strategy, leading to around 35% compliance. But could there be an even more effective way?

Well, it turns out that about 75% of people who check into a hotel for four nights or longer will reuse their towels at some point during their stay. So what would happen if we took a lesson from the Principle of Consensus and simply included that information on the cards and said that 75% of our guests reuse their towels at some time during their stay, so please do so as well. It turns out that when we do this, towel reuse rises by 26%.

Now imagine the next time you stay in a hotel you saw one of these signs. You picked it up and you read the following message: "75% percent of people who have stayed in this room have reused their towel." What would you think? Well here's what you might think: "I hope they're not the same towels." And like most people, you'd probably think that this sign will have no influence on your behaviour whatsoever.

But it turns out that changing just a few words on a sign to honestly point out what comparable previous guests have done was the single most effective message, leading to a 33% increase in reuse. The science is telling us that rather than relying on our own ability to persuade others, we can point to what many others are already doing, especially many *similar* others.