

How to Persuade Well

Lessons on the Power of Persuasion

Undoubtedly, the art of persuasion is one of the most critical traits in demand today. Nicholas Boothman is an expert at getting people to say “yes.” “You can do it in less than 90 seconds,” Boothman said. “TV commercials do it in 30 seconds. Magazine ads take three or four seconds. If convincing takes us -- if we get to five minutes or so, we’ve lost them -- five minutes or more to convince somebody. Because we make decisions very quickly. Especially emotional decisions.”

#1 Framing

Framing is simply a way to alter how we will sort, categorize, associate, and ultimately give meaning to events, objects or behaviors.

The headline “World Heads for a Disaster” creates a mental picture vastly different than “Scientist Release New Study on Climate Change.” Both headlines might be accurate but the words used alter the associated internal images and feelings.

To frame a persuasive argument, select words that conjure images (positive, negative, or neutral) in the minds of our audience. Even with other words nearby, a single framing word can still be effective.

2 Mirroring

Mirroring is the practice of mimicking the movements and body language of the person we are trying to persuade. By acting as the person listening does, we create a sense of empathy. You can mirror hand

gestures, leaning forward or away, or various head and arm movements. We all do this subconsciously, and if we pay attention we’ll probably notice ourselves doing it. Be subtle about it and delay 2-4 seconds between the other person’s movement and our mirroring. Mirroring is also known as “the chameleon effect” or “congruence.”

#3 Scarcity

Scarcity is frequently used by advertisers to make opportunities seem more appealing because they have limited availability. The assumption is that if a product is scarce, there must be a ton of demand for it! (Buy one now because they’re selling out fast). Be aware that this is a technique of persuasion to which we are frequently exposed and take it into account when we make our purchase decision.

#4 Reciprocation

When someone does something for us, we feel compelled to return the favor. So, if we want someone to do something nice for us, why not do something nice for them first?

5 Timing

People are more likely to be agreeable and submissive when they’re mentally fatigued. Before we ask someone for something they might not readily agree to, consider waiting until they’ve just

done something mentally taxing. Whatever we ask, a likely response is, “I’ll take care of it tomorrow.”

#6 Fluid Speech

When we talk, we often use hesitant phrases such as “ummm” or “I mean” and of course, there is the ubiquitous “like.” These little conversation fillers have the unintended effect of making us seem less confident, and thus less persuasive. If we’re confident in our speech, others will be more easily persuaded by what we have to say.

7 Make them feel powerful.

Give the power to the person we are trying to persuade. We like following the advice of people who admire what we have to say as well.

#8 Ask “Yes” Questions

Begin the conversation with questions that generate a “Yes” response. “Nice day today, isn’t?” “Your wife looks great, doesn’t she?” “You’re looking for a great deal on a car, aren’t we?” Once we get someone saying yes, it’s easy to get them to continue, up to and including “Yes, I’ll buy it.” The best counter to this is to make non-committal answers, but make sure wer wife knows WHY we don’t think she looks all that nice today.

9 Break the touch barrier.

Whether we’re closing a deal or asking someone on a date, touching them (in a subtle and appropriate way) can improve wer chances by subconsciously activating the human desire to bond.

#10 Speak in the positive (in all aspects).

Boothman says, “It’s no good saying to my daughter, ‘Don’t mess up wer room,’ when I mean, ‘Tidy wer room.’ If we say to a customer, ‘Don’t hesitate to contact me,’ they don’t know what we mean. What we really mean is, ‘Phone me Friday,’ or, ‘Call me if we need some help.’”

