

## Principles of Persuasion

Research by Dr. R. Cialdini has identified that we humans are hard-wired for automatic responses to certain approaches to persuade us. If you use these approaches judiciously, you are almost guaranteed success. These notes summarise his findings.

### Contrast and Context

## CONTRAST

- The context you create *before* making a request is more important to successful persuasion than the wording of the request
- The contrast principle states that when unique items are presented in succession, they will seem to be more different than they really are.
- By presenting an unacceptable position first, you will make it more likely that the person chooses your 'acceptable position'.
- When making a decision, people ask the question, "Compared to what?"
- To cope with today's complex world, people 'satisfice' in their decision-making. (take the first satisfactory solution that suffices)
- Decision triggers allow us to employ mental shortcuts
- The six principles are based on these decision triggers



### Principle of Reciprocity

- General rule: *a person who acts in a certain way towards us is entitled to a similar return action*
- Reciprocity works, even when people don't know each other
- Gifts don't need to be physical objects. Some of the most valuable gifts are intangible: information, trust, cooperation, listening, affection, cheerfulness, attention ...
- The reciprocity rule applies, even if the recipient doesn't like the person who gave the gift
- Reciprocity applies to concessions too – give them a chance to say 'yes', if they say 'no', you are in a Moment of Power, offer a concession immediately, they are likely to say 'yes'

### Principle of Scarcity

- Opportunities that have limited availability are more attractive
- People are more motivated by the thought of *losing* something than by the thought of gaining something

## Influence and Persuasion

- Identify and present the unique and uncommon in your offer
- Scarcity also makes intangible items more valuable, eg information
- Scarcity can make you feel emotional about a decision
- Competition for scarce resources amplifies the effect
- Use scarcity ethically, do not artificially manufacture it



## Principle of Authority

- People in authority usually have superior experience, skill or wisdom, so following their lead makes sense
- Titles and trappings of authority can cause people to defer without thinking
- Credible authority possesses both expertise and trustworthiness
- We can *inform* people into compliance: people are most likely to follow authority on matters of fact . (similarity works in matters of opinion)
- If you admit to situations that are not in your interest, it shows you as both *knowledgeable* (knowing both strengths and weaknesses) and *trustworthy* (presenting information in an unbiased way)



## Principle of Consistency

Leonardo da Vinci, *"It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end"*

- People strive to be consistent with their prior attitudes, beliefs, deeds and words
- The *consistency heuristic* states: *"It worked for me before, so I can relax and trust that it'll work for me again."*
- Get them to say 'yes' to the small things and this can lead to larger 'yeses'
- Lasting commitments are:
  - Voluntary** - coercion doesn't work
  - Active** - spoken or written
  - Public** - others will look for demonstration of this commitment
- Look for commitments people have already made and align your argument to these

## Principle of Consensus

Walter Lippman *"Where all think alike, no-one thinks very much"*

- People often decide what is appropriate to think, feel and do, based on what others are thinking, feeling and doing
- Consensus allows quick and efficient decisions that are often correct, it can also lead to a consensus trap
- 3 conditions amplify the consensus principle:
  1. **Lots of others**
  2. **Similar to us**
  3. **Uncertainty**



## Principle of Liking

- People say 'yes' to people they like
- 3 important factors determine who likes whom:
  1. **Similarity** - attitudes in agreement, background, experiences, appearance
  2. **Praise** - say the praise, pay a compliment, seek something to like
  3. **Co-operation** - common goal, shared issues



## Application

When preparing to discuss an issue with a client, consider which of these principles may apply to the situation and prepare how you can bring the principle into your presentation. Where more than one applies, use as many as appropriate – don't overdo the persuading once the client has agreed.

*Reference:*

Dr. R. Cialdini: Influence: Science and Practice.