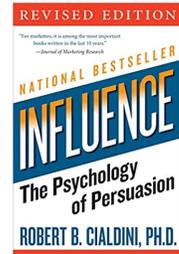


# Influence, the Psychology of Persuasion

Robert B. Cialdini (1984, 1994, 2007)



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Wilmore, Kentucky; 2020.

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Just what are the factors that cause one person to say yes to another person? And which techniques most effectively use these factors to bring about such compliance? (Introduction)

*[Note: We make thousands of decisions every day. And there are multitudes of factors that influence us and that lead to the decisions we make. This is intriguing to think about. Every time we face a new decision our brain considers all of the various data we have accumulated, and the goals we seek to accomplish – and then we make the decision. In Sales this is important to consider. As we interact with a prospective customer, and all of the individuals that collaborate in making a decision to buy, what is the data they are considering and the dynamics in each of their lives that will lead to their decision to buy? The more we know (i.e. the data they are considering, and the dynamics involved as to how they evaluate the data) the better position we are in as we seek to make the sale.]*

## **Provide a reason**

A well-known principle of human behavior says that when we ask someone to do us a favor, we will be more successful if we provide a reason. People like to have reasons for what they do. The word “because” can make a difference. It triggers an automatic compliance response. (4-5)

## **Shortcuts**

We live in an extraordinarily complicated stimulus environment; rapidly moving and complex. We need shortcuts. We can't be expected to recognize and analyze all the aspects in each person, event, and situation we encounter in even one day. We must very often use our stereotypes and rules of thumb to classify things according to a few key features, and then to respond mindlessly when one or another of these trigger features is present. (7) One example of a shortcut based on a stereotype is “expensive = good.” (10)

## **The contrast principle**

The contrast principle affects the way we see the difference between two things that are presented one after another. If the second item is *fairly* different from the first, we will tend to see it as *more* different than it actually is. So if we lift a light object first and then lift a heavy object, we will estimate the second object to be heavier than if we had lifted it without first trying the light one. (12)

Presenting an inexpensive product first and following it with an expensive one will cause the expensive item to seem even more costly as a result. (13)

Realtors will sometimes show a couple of undesirable houses first (“setup” properties).

Auto dealers will wait until the price for a new car has been negotiated before suggesting one option after another that might be added. In the wake of a \$15,000 deal, the hundred or so dollars required for a nicety seems almost trivial in comparison. The trick is to bring up the extras independently of one another, so that each small price will seem petty. (14)

## **Reciprocation**

The rule for reciprocation says that we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us. If someone does us a favor, we should do them one in return. If someone gives us a birthday gift, we should remember their birthday with a gift of our own. (17)

Those not observing this rule are often referred to as moocher, ingrate, or welsher. Because there is general distaste for those who take and make no effort to give in return, we will often go to great lengths to avoid being considered one of their number. (20)

The Krishnas were brilliant at this. They began to employ a donation-request procedure that engaged the rule for reciprocation. Before a donation is requested the target person is given a "gift" – a book, magazine, or flower. (23)

Supermarkets employ this rule with always-smiling attendants giving away free samples, often resulting in a purchase the recipient feels obligated to make. (27)

The Disabled American Veterans organization provides an unsolicited gift in a mailing; gummed, individualized address labels. When they began doing this their success rate doubled. (30)

Influential French anthropologist Marcel Mauss described the social pressures surrounding the gift-giving process in human culture. "There is an obligation to give, an obligation to receive, and an obligation to repay." (31)

### **Reciprocal concessions**

A Boy Scout asked if I would buy a circus ticket for \$5. I declined. The Scout replied that if I didn't want any tickets, how about buying some big chocolate bars for \$1 each. I bought two, even though I don't like chocolate bars.

This rule states that we have an obligation to make a concession to someone who has made a concession to us. (37)

The truly gifted negotiator is one whose initial position is exaggerated enough to allow for a series of reciprocal concessions that will yield a desirable final offer, yet not so outlandish as to be seen as illegitimate from the start. (40)

Another example is an encyclopedia salesperson. Upon being declined they might say, "Well, if it's your feeling that a fine set of encyclopedias is not right for you at this time, perhaps you could help me by giving me the names of some others who might wish to take advantage of our company's great offer." (42)

If we start requesting \$10 and then retreat to \$5, not only will the \$5 request be a concession to be reciprocated – it will also look like a smaller request than if we had just asked for it straightaway; thereby also employing the contrast principle. (42)

As long as it is not viewed to be a transparent trick, the concession will likely stimulate a return concession. (49)

It often appears to the buyer that *they* had made the opponent change, that *they* had produced the concessions. The result is that they felt more responsible for the final outcome of the negotiations. And a person who feels responsible for the terms of a contract will be more likely to live up to that contract. (50)

### **Consistency and commitment**

"It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end." (Leonardo Da Vinci) (57)

Psychologists have long understood the power of the consistency principle to direct human action. Theorists have viewed the desire for consistency as a central motivator of our behavior. The drive to be (and look) consistent constitutes a highly potent weapon of social influence. (59)

Without consistency our lives would be difficult, erratic, and disjointed. (60)

Commitment is the key. If I can get you to make a commitment (to take a stand or to go on record) I will have set the stage for your automatic and ill-considered consistency with that earlier commitment. (67)

For the salesperson the strategy is to obtain a large purchase by starting with a small one. The purpose of the small transaction is not profit; it's commitment. Even though the profit is so small it hardly compensates for the time and effort of making the call, the other party is no longer a prospect but a customer. This is sometimes called the foot-in-the-door technique. (72)

One study found that after hearing they were considered "charitable," women gave much more money to a canvasser from the Multiple Sclerosis Association. Apparently, the mere knowledge that someone viewed them as charitable caused them to act consistent with another's perception of them. There is a tendency to adjust our image according to the way others perceive us. (77)

As for the power of commitment, we are often advised to set individual sales goals and commit ourselves to those goals by personally recording them on paper. There is something magical about writing things down. Set a goal and write it down. (79)

Whenever one takes a stand that is visible to others, there arises a drive to maintain that stand in order to *look* like a consistent person. We strive for personal consistency. Without it we're judged as fickle, uncertain, pliant, scatterbrained, or unstable. With consistency we're viewed as rational, assured, trustworthy, and sound. It's hardly surprising, then, that people try to avoid the look of inconsistency. For appearances' sake, then, the more public a stand, the more reluctant we will be to change it. (82)

Diet organizations require their clients to write down an immediate weight-loss goal and show that goal to as many friends, relatives, and neighbors as possible. (84)

The more effort that goes into a commitment, the greater is its ability to influence the attitudes of the person who made it. (85)

Once small commitments have been made, people tend to add justifications to support the commitment and then are willing to commit themselves further. (113)

### **Social proof**

Why is canned laughter so effective? (And it has been proven to be very effective.) One means we use to determine what is correct is to find out what other people think is correct. This is especially true in terms of determining correct behavior. As a rule, we will make fewer mistakes by acting in accord with social evidence than contrary to it. (116)

As for the use of laugh tracks – we have become so accustomed to taking the humorous reactions of others as evidence of what deserves laughter that we, too, can be made to respond to the sound and not to the substance of the real thing. (117)

Other examples of the use of social proof? Bartenders often "salt" their tip jars with a few dollar bills. Advertisers love to inform us when a product is the *fastest growing* or *largest selling*. (117)

The power of social proof operates most powerfully when we are observing the behavior of people just like us. Advertisers know that one successful way to sell a product to ordinary viewers (which compose the largest potential market) is to demonstrate other "ordinary" people liking and using it. (140)

### **Liking**

We most prefer to say yes to the requests of someone we know and like. (167) What are some of the factors that cause us to like someone? Physical attractiveness. Similarity. Compliments. We are helpless in the face of praise. (170-6)

### **Contact and cooperation**

In an election booth, voters often choose a candidate merely because the name seems familiar. Often we don't realize that our attitude toward something has been influenced by the number of times we have been exposed to it in the past. (177)

Using the "contact" approach, the more exposure we have to one another as equals, the more we come to like each other better. (177) But contact has the opposite effect if a contact carries distasteful experiences with it. (185)

### **Association**

A weatherperson associated with bad weather experiences is perceived negatively. But being associated with sunshine does wonders for popularity. An innocent association with either bad things or good things will influence how people feel about us. (189)

Advertisers incessantly try to connect their products with the things we like. They are betting we will respond to the product in the same ways we respond to the attractive models merely associated with it. This association appears to be subconscious. In a study, men refused to believe that the presence of young women had influenced their judgments. But it had.

The linking of celebrities to products is another way advertisers cash-in on the association principle. (191)

Pavlov showed that he could get an animal's typical response to food (salivation) to be directed toward something irrelevant to food (a bell) merely by connecting the two things in the animal's mind. In advertising, all kinds of desirable things can substitute for food in lending their likeable qualities to the ideas, products, and people artificially linked to them. This is why those good-looking models are standing around in the magazine ads. (194)

### **Authority**

A multi-layered and widely accepted system of authority confers an immense advantage upon a society. (216)

Information coming from a recognized authority can provide us a valuable shortcut for deciding how to act in a situation. (218)

A TV commercial featuring actor Robert Young counseled people against the dangers of caffeine, recommending caffeine-free Sanka brand coffee. The commercial was highly successful. Why on earth would we take Robert Young's word for the health consequences of decaffeinated coffee? Because, as the advertising agency that hired him knew perfectly well, he is associated in the minds of the American public with Marcus Welby, M.D.; the role he played in an earlier long-running TV series. Objectively it doesn't make sense; but as a practical matter – that man moved the Sanka. (220)

### **Titles**

It's possible for somebody who has put in no effort to adopt a mere label and receive a kind of automatic deference. (222)

### **Clothes**

Another kind of authority symbol that can trigger our mechanical compliance is clothing. Hospital white, priestly black, army green, police blue. Another kind of attire that has traditionally bespoken authority is the well-tailored business suit. (226-7) Similarly, trappings such as jewelry and cars can carry an aura of status and position. (229)

### **Arguing against one’s own interests**

A tactic sometimes used to assure us of sincerity is for one to argue to a degree against their own interests. Correctly done, this can be a subtly effective device for proving honesty. A small shortcoming is used that is easily overcome by more significant advantages. “Listerine; the taste you hate three times a day.” “Avis; we’re number two but we try harder.” (232)

### **Scarcity**

With the scarcity principle, an opportunity seems more valuable to us when its availability is limited. People seem to be more motivated by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining something of equal value. (238)

Forms of the scarcity principle include the “limited number” tactic and the “deadline” tactic. People frequently find themselves doing what they wouldn’t particularly care to do simply because the time to do so is shrinking. (239-242)

When our freedom to have something is limited, the item becomes less available, and we experience an increased desire for it. However, we rarely recognize that psychological reactance has caused us to want the item more; all we know is that we *want* it. (251)

The *drop* from abundance to scarcity produces a decidedly more positive reaction than *constant* scarcity. Newly experienced scarcity is the more powerful kind. (257)

The highest rated of all forms of scarcity – those that became less available because of a *demand* for them. Not only do we want the same item more when it is scarce, we want it most when we are in competition for it. (261-2)

### **Shortcuts – instant influence**

Despite the susceptibility to stupid decisions that accompanies a reliance upon a single feature of the available data, the pace of modern life demands that we frequently use shortcuts. This is likened to the automatic response of lower animals – behavior patterns triggered by the presence of a lone stimulus feature.

We have the ability to take into account a multitude of relevant facts when making good decisions. But we have capacity limitations. And for the sake of efficiency, we must sometimes retreat from the time-consuming, sophisticated, fully informed brand of decision making to a more automatic, primitive, single-feature type of responding.

We are likely to use these lone cues when we don’t have the inclination, time, energy, or cognitive resources to undertake a complete analysis of the situation. Where we are rushed, stressed, uncertain, indifferent, distracted, or fatigued – we tend to focus on less of the information available to us. (274-5)

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