

Effective Persuasion – The Secret of Success

Do you like being sold to? Are you like most people in this world, somebody who basically doesn't like being sold to? Who avoids browsing in shops simply to escape over-attentive salespeople? Then probably like most people when making decisions, especially buying ones, you prefer to make up your own mind.

How do we like to make choices? To fully understand why this is and how we can learn from it to become effective persuaders, let's turn things around. Let's look at how we actually go about making decisions, and closely examine Needs, Wants, Beliefs and Values. We all face everyday choices and decisions in life. Like buying a new TV or car; choosing a holiday; carrying out home improvements or moving house; investing in our financial future; changing jobs, career, or our total lifestyle. Whatever the issue at hand, we apply a similar decision making process, contemplating a mix of logical needs and emotional wants or desires.

Needs We usually start by thinking about the logical needs. So for instance, when choosing a new car, we consider the functional benefits such as its price, seating capacity, accessibility, economy, reliability, maneuverability, service and warranty. We'll give some thought as to which of these needs are more important. Some of the more methodical and objective amongst us may consciously weight and list these into a prioritized ranking. But that's just the half of it because next we bring emotionally based wants into play. We're now a lot less considered in approach, as well as being rather less open to others with our thoughts.

This isn't surprising. After all, we are dealing with very personal and emotive issues. Issues which in the case of our new car could be about status, prestige, social aspiration, peer approval, individuality, 3rd party perceptions of success, age, even virility; as well as altruistic factors like safety of others and the environment.

Motivations Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of needs" Theory, which defines our basic motivations, offers a highly relevant model for understanding these emotional wants. He says that we all acknowledge in varying degrees of importance the following five needs which we encounter as a progression of:

Survival - satisfaction of the essential "food and shelter" requirements of life.

Security – safeguarding against external and environmental threats.

Social-acceptance – gaining approval, trust, and friendship of our peer group.

Recognition – respect, appreciation, admiration, acclaim by others;

Self-fulfillment – achievement of our full potential and goals, doing our ultimate best!

Survival and Security are the initial and essential motivators. *We may like to own a Ferrari, but can we afford the payments?*

After Survival and Security, whether it is Social acceptance, Recognition or Self-fulfillment that really motivates us, is determined by the people we became as a result of our early life influences.

Personal values We each ultimately form personal beliefs and values; deeply held beliefs and values that in very early life are taught by those close to us, and instilled by environment and

experience. Can you remember granny teaching you such beliefs as “you’ve got to make your own way in this world!” or maybe “manners make the man.” Such early beliefs shape how we value things now. They underpin our decision making criteria. So when making choices, as well as asking ourselves “Do I think this is right?” we will sooner or later also ask the question “Does it feel right?” Only when decisions **ultimately feel right** do they get made with certainty and stick. And our minds work differently too! Genetics as well as early external influence also program how our minds work when making decisions, and we are not all the same.

Weighing things up Some of us need supporting evidence from others, some of us don’t. Some of us are cautious; some of us enjoy a risk or two. Some of us need to listen as we decide some of us need to look. We each develop our own decision-making software, with its individual “palette” of values and operating program, and even language.

No wonder therefore that we dismiss most persuasion as unwanted pressure that only leaves us confused and indecisive. Why we feel irritated when salespeople claim to know what we are thinking! And why we just switch off when they show no regard for how we feel inside about things. Because they just don’t see things in the same way! And that is the secret that we already know ...just see it my way!

Seeing it my way If people feel that we see things in the same way, share the same values, and are therefore pretty certain to come to the same conclusions. Then it seems like they’re agreeing with themselves; or put another way – they are making their own minds up! That state of mind is true rapport, and that has to be the constant focus of great persuaders that determines their persuasion style and strategy.

Creating Rapport The key habits or tactics as you apply this persuasion strategy are:

- Maintain harmony with their body language, voice manner and their behavior.
- Be an active and encouraging listener. Develop patience, interest and sincerity in your questioning and listening skills. Probe and qualify until you fully understand how they think and value things.
- Feedback this understanding and show agreement over the issues that are important, and why they are important.
- Observe their words and phrases and the ways in which they habitually weigh things up and use these preferences when discussing ideas.
- Discuss your ideas so that they are seen to be mutual and to correspond with their important issues.
- And finally, because you now feel the rapport and consensus that exists, confirm their agreement and commitment to ideas.

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