

COMMUNICATION TO INFORM AND PERSUADE



Principles of Persuasion

by Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D.

There are seven well-established and researched principles we can use to effectively communicate for the purpose of informing or persuading others. Most of us are frequent targets of these principles from individuals and organizations seeking our compliance, attention, or money. By ethically leveraging these principles, we can increase the persuasion power of our communication with others.

Persuasion Principle	Explanation	Tagline
Reciprocation	Create a sense of future obligation in the target by first giving them something.	Give now; ask later.
Liking	Use compliments, common ground, and frequent contact to increase your likeability to the target.	We prefer to say “yes” to people we like.
Social Proof	Point out how multitudes of “comparable others” are already doing what you want the target to do.	When they are uncertain, people will likely follow the crowd.
Authority	Use symbols of legitimate and highly-informed authority (e.g., titles, clothing) to convince others.	Rational humans may act contrary to their own preferences in order to comply with an authority.
Scarcity	Use a target’s tendency for loss aversion against them by pointing out deadlines and/or limited quantities.	Humans hate losing more than they love winning.
Commitment & Consistency	Use a target’s prior, public, and effortful commitments (e.g., action, position) to encourage them to make future and consistent commitments.	Humans’ past commitments prejudice their future actions.
Unity	Show the target “you” and “they” are really “we” via shared identify aspects like race, ethnicity, nationality, politics, and religion	We prefer to say “yes” to people in our tribe

Persuasion Principles x CORE Motives Model for Social Influence

By Gregory Niedert, Ph.D

Deciding which persuasion principle or combination of principles to use in a given situation can be a challenge. One way to simplify that challenge is to get clear on why you desire to exert social influence in the first place. Dr. Neidert described three major motives for social influence (1) cultivating positive relationships, (2) reducing uncertainty, and (3) to motivate action. Once you have identified your core motive, use the table below to determine which persuasion principles are best aligned with your goal.

Persuasion Principle	Your core motive is...		
	...to cultivate a positive relationship with the target	...to reduce the target’s mental-emotional uncertainty	...to motivate the target to take action
Reciprocation	X		
Liking	X		
Social Proof		X	
Authority		X	
Scarcity			X
Commitment and Consistency			X
Unity	X		

SOAR Storytelling Framework

While there are many useful storytelling frameworks, at Break the Norm Leadership we prefer the SOAR framework for two reasons. First, it’s easy to remember and apply. Second, it works for both short-form stories (e.g., responses to job interview questions), and long-form stories (e.g., keynote addresses).

Situation	Briefly describe the main character’s situation/scene (e.g., “Picture it:...)
Obstacle or Opportunity	Describe the challenge or favorable circumstance facing the main character
Action	Describe the action(s) the main character took
Result	Describe the result(s) produced by the action(s)

Ask Yourself These Questions to Get Started

- 1.What is my why? What is the motive for your communication?
- 2.Which is the best persuasion principle or combination of persuasion principles to use in your my communication?
- 3.Am I communicating ethically (i.e., if my target knew what I was trying to do and why, would they be okay with it)?

REFERENCE:

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion by Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D. Collins Business Essentials, 2006.