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The Psychology Of Influencing – Why People Say Yes

By pongsak2



Overseas flights offer a great opportunity to polish off a book or two. Whilst travelling a couple of weeks ago, I read “Influence: The **Psychology** Of Persuasion” by Robert Cialdini. What a great read. It certainly brought back a few memories of my social **psychology** lectures. This book is a must read for any manager, supervisor, marketer or sales person.

Most people will probably associate the words ‘influence’ or ‘persuasion’ to the sales process. However influencing is at the core of most workplace functions. Whether it is managing others, selling, marketing, administration etc – all of these functions require us, at some stage, to influence others. It may be influencing customers, colleagues or friends to buy, to do, to accept or to believe in something or someone. The ability to influence others – in an ethical manner – is a greatly under-rated competency.

If you want to sell anything, influence anybody or motivation action, Cialdini outlines six key methods. These are: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, likeability, authority and scarcity.

Let’s have a brief look at each.

Reciprocity

People are more willing to comply with requests (for favors, services, information, concessions, etc.) from those who have provided such things first. This is the old 'give and take' scenario – if I do this for you, will you do something for me? This form of influencing is used in many ways. One place you see this tactic used is in supermarkets; merchandisers offer you free food to taste, you reciprocate by purchasing.

Commitment/Consistency

People are more willing to be moved in a particular direction if they see it as consistent with an existing commitment. A good example of the commitment principle is used in retail sales – notice how a good sales person will try to get you to try something on – once you are committed to try, you are closer to buy.

Authority

People are more willing to follow the directions or recommendations of a communicator to whom they attribute relevant authority or expertise. For example, an expert witness talking in technical terms has more persuasive powers with juries than a lay eyewitness. A tactic used a lot in advertising is to have recognized experts endorse products. Having Dr or PhD linked to a name adds persuasive power. Dan Carter sells a lot of men's underwear to women who are buying on behalf of men. A double whammy here, Dan has authority and attractiveness (see below).

Social Validation

People are more willing to take a recommended action if they see evidence that many others, especially similar others, are taking it. Have you ever noticed how a small group will attract a crowd and a crowd attracts a mob – If a street performer can get 4 or 5 people to stand and watch, I guarantee there will be 20 people there within a minute or two. If two or three people throw money into the hat, many other coins will follow – that's why busters always "seed" their violin case with notes and coins.

Scarcity

I love this one; it sucks me in all the time. People find objects and opportunities more attractive to the degree that they are scarce, rare, or dwindling in availability. Air New Zealand's current 'grab a seat' campaign plays on this scarcity principle. Think about the one-day sale or tickets to a popular concert/event that last sold out in 30 minutes.

Liking/Friendship/Attractiveness

Yes folks, beauty does sell. People prefer to say yes to those they know, like and find attractive. It's a proven fact that voters will be more swayed by an attractive, friendly candidate than policy. I'll tell you one thing, there are many local election billboards littering out streets at present that are helping people to vote against a candidate!

Measuring And Predicting Influence

A person's influencing and persuasion ability is heavily driven by their personality, and as such can be measured. Influencing and Persuading is a competency measured in the ASSESS profile.

There are also several attributes measured in the Rembrandt Portrait that points to one's influencing ability. These are; Motivation To Influence, Assertion, Willingness To Confront Opposition, Empathy and Resilience.

If you are hiring or developing staff that need influencing and persuading ability (sales persons, outbound call centre operators, leaders, managers etc) it's important to ensure they have the innate personality characteristics to drive this competency. Assessing them through a valid personality profile will give you this important information.

The science of influencing is very powerful. Those who can understand the theories will be more equipped to generate change and growth in their businesses.