



Weekend Media: Robert Cialdini and the Dangerously Powerful Art of Persuasion



Robert Cialdini is an influential social psychologist who is an expert in the systematic study of persuasion, compliance and negotiation.

He is most famous for his book, [Influence: the Psychology of Persuasion](#), which outlines the six weapons of influence: *reciprocation, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking and scarcity*.

I've read Cialdini's work a long time ago and his writings on the practice of persuasion are universally useful for people of all professions and backgrounds, especially business people, marketers and even politicians.

It's interesting to know that Cialdini compiled his conclusions after going undercover and examining the professions whose economic livelihood depends on the goal of getting others to say yes to them. As mentioned in an [interview with Cialdini](#):

So I began to infiltrate as many of the training programs of these professions as I could possibly get access to. I learned how to sell automobiles from a lot, I learned how to sell insurance from an office, I learned how to sell portrait photography over the phone, I was the guy from Olan Mills, I was that guy, and I didn't stop there.

I interviewed charity organizations to see what the fund raisers did to get people to say yes. I even interviewed recruiters, armed service recruiters. I even interviewed cult recruiters - what do the cults do that so powerfully brings people in and holds them there?

He distilled everything he learned into the six key elements of influence and explained them using many real-life examples, showing how you can use these tactics to obtain compliance from others. Cialdini also wrote about how you can defend yourself against these strategies, should they be used against you.

[Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion](#) is **an incredible book** and I highly recommend borrowing it from your local library or buying it for a good read (*better for reference*). The concepts contained within will pay for itself a million times over, if you study them and put them into practice immediately when relating with others.

If you're in the business of selling or am interested in gaining influence in your field, there aren't many books that are more effective, powerful or easier to read than this one. For a good introduction to his work, check out this [Cialdini lecture on Youtube](#).

Robert Cialdini's Podcasts: How to be Persuasive on Email (and More)

Times Online recently published a series of recent [podcasts by Cialdini](#) on several topics. Released in Nov 2007, these mini podcasts coincide with the publication of a new book and I thought they might be new to most longtime Cialdini readers or fans.

The podcast links are below, click on them to download the mp3:

1. [How to be persuasive by email](#): Professor Robert Cialdini explains how to be persuasive on email. How a little research can help you get what you want, and why you should always use the Bcc field when asking for help.
2. [How to persuade on eBay](#): For researchers, eBay is a huge test-case, and the results they're finding are startling. Professor Cialdini reveals what their research tells us about eBay auction start prices, and how this is transforming how businesses try to change behaviour.
3. [The power of favours \(why businesses send Christmas cards\)](#): Robert Cialdini explains the science of gifts and favours, and how to harness them to your own advantage.