



More 1-on-1: Robert Cialdini

Robert explains more on the effects of influence in our business relationships

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Author Robert Cialdini's knowledge of the subject has earned him the title of "The Godfather of Influence," and he is one of the most cited living social psychologists in the world. Cialdini is currently regents' professor emeritus of psychology and marketing at Arizona State University and president of Influence at Work, an international consulting, strategic planning and training organization.

SUCCESS: What is an effective way to use influence while using electronic communication?

Robert Cialdini: Messages you want others to see must stay front and center, either in an email or on a website. Placement of information is critical—important information first. It is also imperative to keep testimonials highly visible. They are a powerful selling tool due to the principle of social validation.

A powerful example of the effectiveness of social validation is echoed in the results of a study conducted by Brown University to determine why teenagers choose to smoke. The results showed the four main factors that led to their decision were:

1. A history of delinquency—14% more likely to smoke
2. A history of depression—14% more likely to smoke
3. One or two parents who smoke—23% more likely to smoke
4. Two or more friends who smoke—**1000% more likely to smoke**

Another example of social validation is an observation noted by Dr. Cialdini. When in an audience giving a standing ovation, the ovation happens from the side, not the front as some might think. Most people are influenced by those beside them.

S: What is one way to shorten the time it takes to develop relationships with our prospects, clients and co-workers?

RC: One way to develop a relationship quickly is to increase trust. Show your honesty to those you are influencing. For instance, we all have strengths and weaknesses. You might want to be the first to mention an obvious weakness you have. There is a moment of persuasive power immediately after admitting weakness.

The advertising community has illustrated this concept several times. In the following examples, they established their weakness before delivering their strength:

- Avis—We're No. 2, but we try harder.
- L'Oreal Cosmetics—We're expensive, but you're worth it.
- Volkswagen (in the 1960s)—“Think small” spoke of the advantages of driving the small Beetle versus the large American-made car.

Of course, don't list every weakness you have or every mistake ever made, but the obvious challenges can be overcome if you are the first to mention them and a feeling of trust is established at the outset.