business bitesize

business breakthroughs in minutes

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Who's winning the persuasion game in your business?

Every day in business you spend much of your time **persuading** people to do what you want them to do.

You're **convincing** customers to buy your products and services and to use them more often.

At home you're **coaxing** your kids to keep their room tidy. Or you're **enticing** your spouse to go out for a curry when they'd much prefer the French bistro in town!

Can you see how your *'powers of persuasion'* skills help determine your level of success?

So, are you any good at it?

- Could you be better at persuading others?
- How well do you know the science of persuasion?

And to protect yourself:

- How good are you at spotting others using the skills of persuasion on you?

Start right or fail...

Like Sun Tzu (ancient military strategist) suggests:

"Every battle is won before it is fought."

Although persuasion isn't a battle the persuasive point being made here is:

"It's what you say BEFORE you say what you want to say, that really matters"

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Pre-suasion is learning what to say or do BEFORE making a request of someone. All because there are ways of making people more open or willing to say yes to you... BEFORE you make a request, offer or proposal. Remember it's much harder to influence people after they've already made their decision.

In a nutshell

For successful persuasion you must first prepare the ground before you start to persuade – **'set the scene'**.

Pre-suasion is the preparation work you must do before you seek approval.

For example: Set the scene for a street survey...

Does anyone really want to help fill out a survey when stopped in the street? Not really.

So how do you drive survey responses from 29% of those asked up to 77.3%?

You put pre-suasion to work!

Ask them a question that puts their attention on something relevant to what you want! Here's how...

When people are asked first:

"Are you a helpful person?"

...they mostly respond positively.

A proven solution for you...

Asking careful questions is a powerful way to influence what someone is paying attention to. Anchoring them to a large comparison also shifts attention.

Pre-suasion is about choosing your questions and anchors carefully – you'll then positively influence what they remember, say and do.

And then, when asked if they would fill out a brief survey 77.3% say yes.

A *'helpful'* question first causes a small shift in attention which makes people more likely to say YES to the survey.

Set the scene for your price

Do you ever try and convince your customer that your price is fair AFTER you've told them the price?

Instead why not put a large number *'on the stage'* in your customer's mind at the beginning. This makes any price you discuss feel less costly by comparison.

The number you share BEFORE you show your price to customers has a huge impact on how they perceive your price. That's pre-suasion at work.

Price-anchoring like this is one way of using pre-suasion or setting the scene.

Check out the downloadable tools and see Steve Jobs (founder of Apple) use price-anchoring in a 2-minute video.

Start with pre-suasion...

When persuading others, giving them reasons why we're right and they're wrong can be counter-productive.

It's a lot easier (and more successful) to set the scene and change what someone is paying attention to before a decision is made.

Dr Robert Cialdini has invested a lifetime researching the science of influence. In two of the most influential(!) and most quoted books on influence, Cialdini reaches a landmark conclusion about the most 'influential' people from his research:

"...before introducing their message, they arrange to make their audience sympathetic to it"

"To persuade optimally, it's necessary to pre-suade optimally"

Helpful definitions x2:

1. **Persuasion** means getting someone to say YES. It means getting someone to believe something or do something you want them to.
2. **Pre-suasion** is helping people be receptive to your message before they see or hear it.

Pre-suasion comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Cialdini's research shows this in many ways:

The right lines – Draw long lines on a board before asking the length of the river Thames and you'll get longer answers than if you'd drawn short lines!

The right music – German music in a wine shop raises the sales of German wine! French music sells more French wine!

The right image – A website landing page with clouds pre-disposes furniture buyers towards soft, comfortable furniture. A landing page showing coins results in a preference for cheaper furniture.

The right question – See the difference asking – "Are you a helpful person?" – has on

the number of survey successes – 77.3% vs 29%.

It's all about attention focus

Your attention is limited. You can only really pay attention to one thing at a time – it's how the human brain is wired.

"...the human mind appears able to hold only one thing in conscious awareness at a time, the toll is a momentary loss of focused attention to everything else."- Dr Robert Cialdini

Privileged moments...

Your customers, your kids, your spouse (we) all have limited attention.

And like Cialdini suggests:

"...the guiding factor in a decision is often not the one that counsels most wisely; it's one that has recently been brought to mind."

The moment when an individual is particularly receptive to your message happens just before their decision.

Such elevated attention makes this a privileged moment worth capturing.

Put these privileged moments to work for you...

Cialdini's earlier research points to 6 tools of influence. And in his more recent research, he points to using the 6 tools when pre-suading – use them before the decision is made:

1. **Reciprocation** – give and take – people say yes to those they owe.

Shoppers are 42% more likely to make a purchase if they receive a gift of chocolate when entering the store.

Give first in a **meaningful** way (2 chocolates at the end of a restaurant meal rather than 1); **unexpected** (turn away after giving 1 choc then unexpectedly return with the 2nd choc); **customise** your 'gift' (zero sugar chocolate for diabetic customers). Each result in a sizeable increase in tips to the waiting-on staff.

2. **Liking** – people say yes to people they like...

...and they like people like themselves,

which is why **similarities** and **compliments** work so well.

Waitresses coached to mimic the verbal style of customers doubled their tips. And you know compliments work if even computer-generated compliments result in more favourable feelings towards a computer!

3. **Social Proof** – people follow the lead of people like themselves.

'Most popular dishes' on a menu get ordered 13-20% more than other dishes. And even though we all know we're hearing canned laughter on TV comedy shows, we rank them higher with canned laughter than without!

Validity makes social proof stronger – comments by doctors have greater effect on other doctors than on nurses.

Social proof also destroys the problem of uncertain achievability – "if others can, I can too!" It provides **feasibility**.

4. **Authority** – authority-based evidence increases persuasion.

Expertise and **trustworthiness** determine the authority of the messenger – it's why lawyers try to undermine an expert witness rather than what they are saying.

5. **Scarcity** – we want more of what we can only have less of.

Which is why you get queues for petrol when there's a shortage. And why limited-time offers are so persuasive.

6. **Consistency** – we want to be consistent with our existing commitments.

When you get a customer to take a pre-suasive step (even a small one) towards your chosen outcome, it makes a later, larger commitment more likely.

Blood donor participation went from 70% to 82.4% when they used a commitment-inducing question:

"We'll mark you on the list as coming then, okay?"

They then waited for confirmation (commitment) before saying 'thank you'.

Use Cialdini's 6 tools of influence in the moments before a decision is made and you put pre-suasion to work for you and your business.

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TIME TO DISAGREE

"Me and my team are not comfortable manipulating our customers like this…"

Quite right. Fail to respect customers and we will be found out. Social media gives businesses nowhere to hide if they mislead or mistreat customers.

But like all tools, the skills of persuasion can be used for good or bad.

And so, it's only right to take the moral responsibility of using the science of influence seriously.

Use the skills of influence for ill-gotten gains and it will back-fire. A 2005 study of 585 businesses that were found guilty of financial misrepresentation lost 41% of their market value. In 2015 VW suffered the largest annual loss in company history following its diesel emissions trickery.

So why not hold your customers' interests at heart and still use the science of influence? They are not mutually exclusive. Like the blood donor example of consistency – pre-suasion is used and everyone benefits.

"We already do everything we can to persuade our customers to buy from our company"

We are all doing what we can to sell more and help more customers.

But are you adventurous enough to consider a new way of working to influence your customers?

This is a question straight from Cialdini's book 'Pre-suasion'.

In a study about launching a new soft drink, when people were asked:

'Do you consider yourself to be somebody who is adventurous and likes to try new things?'

Almost everyone said yes.

As a result, instead of 33% of people volunteering personal information (before the adventurous question), 75.7% gave their details – more than double the success rate.

Why not tap into Cialdini's research, his examples, and the science of influence to help your business?

If waiting-on staff can increase tips by simple but clever use of chocolates and mimicry to increase liking and the power of reciprocity – what could you and your team achieve?
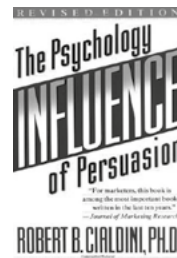
You gain a decisive competitive advantage when you heighten the probability of agreement through pre-suasion.

"Please tell me more"

Two books by Robert Cialdini – 'Influence' and 'Pre-suasion' – have been written off the back of decades of research. Yes, Cialdini quotes many academic studies, but he uses examples from the real-world of business too.

This quote by best-selling business author Chip Heath sums up the value of these two books:

"…'Influence' is, by a wide margin, the book that I recommend most often. 'Pre-suasion' may be even more shockingly insightful."

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4 helping hands for you…

Applying Cialdini's insights and guidelines from the science of influence provides a framework you can use to improve your pre-suasion and persuasion skills.

1. **Use the skills of pre-suasion and persuasion with a strong moral compass and ethics**

2. **Start influencing your customers BEFORE they reach the moment of decision-making**

3. **Choose which of Cialdini's 6 tools of influence can best serve the interests of your customers and your business**

4. **Work out what you want your buyers to focus on before you get them to make a decision**

ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:
"How do I know that using the skills of pre-suasion will work for me?"

Robert Cialdini's decades of research point to many real-life examples showing us how skills of pre-suasion determine levels of success.

Isn't it worth working out which of Cialdini's 6 tools of influence are the most suitable for your customers to get the best results for everyone?

When you have worked out what works best for you (and your customers), next it pays to test it and see what happens. Then you'll know that pre-suasion (before a decision is made) is where you should focus your persuasion skills.

STOP: thinking you can influence people after they've made their decision

START: choosing questions and anchors that direct their attention before their decision

Time to start winning the persuasion game for your business?

Your next steps:

If a blood donor service can drive commitments to appointments up from 70% to 82.4% by using a simple pre-suasive question, what can you achieve?

If the tips given to waiting-on staff in restaurants can increase drastically because they apply the 'meaningful', 'unexpected' and 'customised' use of chocolates at the end of a meal – what can you do to help you and your team achieve greater results?

And if a question about being 'adventurous' or 'helpful' transforms the results for a soft-drinks launch and a street survey, how can you use pre-suasive questions in your business?

Do you see yourself as adventurous enough to test and measure the use of Cialdini's insights into successful influence skills?

Too valuable to ignore...

...these insights into pre-suasion and persuasion are being used every day by many businesses. They are too valuable to ignore and can give you a competitive advantage – please use them wisely.

More tools and information for you:

Download the supporting tools and resources for more help on improving your pre-suasion skills – use the URL link in the box below.

To ignore or avoid using the skills of pre-suasion and persuasion is to ignore the way the human brain is wired.

We, as humans, naturally mimic others without thinking – so why not use this pre-suasion skill to build 'liking' more deliberately? It works for waiting-on staff helping them increase tips for a job well-done, it can work for you and your business too.

Of the 6 tools of influence perhaps 'liking' isn't the right one to focus on for your business and your products and services. Perhaps 'scarcity', 'reciprocity', 'authority', consistency' or 'social proof' is more relevant to the way your business works.

Persuasion is a normal human activity – therefore it pays to master the skills of persuasion and pre-suasion also:

1. Use the skills of pre-suasion and persuasion with a **strong moral compass and ethics** – it's too risky in the world of social media to do anything other than respect your customers' best interests

2. Start influencing your customers **before they reach the moment of decision-making** – it's much harder to get someone to change their mind after they've made their decision

3. Choose which of **Cialdini's 6 tools of influence** can best serve the interests of your customers and your business

4. Be adventurous! **What do you want your buyers to focus on** before you get them to make a decision? Use the 6 tools of influence to help

Check out the downloadable tools for more on these insights and skills – use the URL link in the box below.

Use the insights in this Business Breakthrough report (and the supporting tools) to help you strengthen your pre-suasion and persuasion skills.

YOUR SUPPORT TOOLS ARE HERE: Go to the link below and you'll find a selection of practical support tools to help you better understand the tools of influence and how to use them in the privileged moments before a decision is made.

Find the support tools to help you here - www.businessbitesize.com/wright_vigar

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