



## The Art of Persuasion

Aristotle once said that all speaking is persuasive.

This is never truer than during a sales presentation.

The ability to influence and be persuasive is an art. It doesn't have to be difficult, if the following five principles are followed.

### 1) Know Your Audience

Successful sales representatives, no matter what industry, recognize that audience members – whether one or many -- will be listening to their presentation in terms of their own knowledge, attitudes, needs and communication style. A listener is more receptive when the message is delivered in a credible and clear way. The challenge is that everyone has his or her own version of what clear and credible sound and look like.

Pay attention to how each of your clients communicate. Is Jane Doe always brief and to the point? Does Tim Smith prefer a quick chat about his children before a discussion of your product or service? Is Dr. Tyler interested in every statistic and survey that you can find, and will also judge you on how well you understand the data?

It is a proven fact that people buy from people who are like them. Get in touch with your own style of communicating first. If you are a detail-driven, cautious individual, then your customers who are like-minded will be a much easier sell for you. However, if you have key customers who are bottom-line oriented, your style may drive them crazy. It's up to you, not the clients you call on, to adjust your style!

Next, never lose sight of the fact that your message should be framed in terms of your clients' needs – first and foremost. However, be mindful that these needs may also take the form of peer or manager approval, industry trends, and any personal philosophy concerning acceptance of new products and services.

Pay careful attention to what drives your customer's buying decisions. Never assume that all of your clients come from the same mindset about what is important and what is not, and never expect that what you and your company think is most relevant about your product/service is immediately what should be stressed first.

The most influential sales representatives know that their first task is to earn their customer's trust and respect. Once the relationship is established in those terms, product discussions become more valuable and persuasive.



## 2) Know Your Product Line (or Services)

This goes without saying. You have been hired and trained, and should understand by now that product knowledge is paramount. Your reputation and your level of commitment to knowing your product strengthens that of your company.

Your knowledge and the way you impart it, must be beyond reproach. Adhere to any industry and client guidelines, and always lead with integrity. Trusted people are influential people.

## 3) Appeal to the Head & Heart

People typically make decisions with their heart, and justify them with their head. We are emotionally driven creatures, and your customers are no exception – no matter what their industry.

Getting to the heart of what is most important to your clients is key to getting their attention and influencing action. Communicate your product's features and benefits in terms of what is most important to each person, and the specific goals and priorities each has for his or her own customer base.

## 4) Use Confident Language

All too often, our verbal skills distort our image as capable, knowledgeable professionals. Descriptive, simple language and short sentences work the best. When you search for the so-called more "impressive" words, trying to expand your statements or sales pitches into drawn-out monologues, you tend to run into more trouble with comprehension and effectiveness.

Certain expressions, phrases and word selection rob salespeople of their power. These "power robbers" should be avoided. Examples of power robbers are: "I guess," "I hope," "I think," "maybe," "sort of," "kinda," "kind of" and "probably."

Tag questions are another form of power robbers. These are questions at the end of a sentence that give the impression you are unsure of what you just said, or are looking for approval. An example would be: "I think our product's performance is impressive, **don't you?**" The "don't you" gives the sentence a weak ending.

If your aim is to stimulate conversation or encourage feedback, ask an independent question. "I think the new feature we added will improve performance and longevity. **What are your impressions?**" This allows you to say what you think, and encourages a response without devaluing your original statement. In other words, if you are asking a question, ask directly.

You can be powerful with your vocabulary without sounding arrogant. Two of the most powerful words in the English language are **you** and **I**. **You** is most effective when influencing, persuading or selling to someone. The focus should be on the person you are speaking to.



Other strong words are **urge**, **recommend** and **suggest**. Pick your words carefully. Selecting the wrong one is sure death for a salesperson trying to convince a potential buyer about the merit of his or her product or services.

Which is the most confident statement and would close a sale?

- “I hope your customers would benefit from the smaller size of our new product.”
- “I guess your customers would benefit from the smaller size of our new product.”
- “I believe your customers would benefit from the smaller size of our new product.”
- “I think your customers will benefit from the smaller size of our new product.”
- “I am confident your customers will benefit from the smaller size of our new product.”

It's no contest. The final statement is the correct verbal choice of winners. The idea behind understanding which words send which messages, is to make conscious decisions about the words we choose to use. Instead of saying things out of habit, be aware of what you say and create new more effective habits when you speak. Aristotle also said, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit.” Make sure your habits are good ones.

## 5) Deliver Your Message With Passion & Polish

Even the most effective sales presentation will not guarantee success. Other factors influence decisions. The audience's perception of you is vital. You must be perceived as credible, trustworthy, knowledgeable and passionate.

Remember, you can raise your credibility with any audience by being well organized, using a passionate delivery, and demonstrating sound knowledge of your products/services and your client needs. The ability to empathize effectively with the client is essential to your success in sales.

The sales professional who is attuned to all of these elements of influence, and is disciplined enough to apply them on a consistent basis, will be distinguished as an exceptionally influential individual.

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