

3 steps to convince someone to see your point of view

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Have you ever worked up the courage to pitch an idea, raise a concern, or make a tricky request—only to be shut down or ignored?



It's frustrating. But a few changes to your approach could make all the difference. Next time you need to get someone to understand and agree with your perspective, try these steps.

1. Understand these common—and effective—styles of appeal to tailor your message to your audience.

Many of us don't give enough thought to which appeal style might hold another person's attention. Instead, we just start sharing, defaulting to a style that's convincing to us ... *not them*. Then we wonder why our point falls flat!

These three appeal styles are particularly effective and can be used in a range of situations:

- **Credibility.** This style works well when the other person cares as much or more about the trustworthiness and expertise of the messenger than the message itself. If you're seen as someone with integrity and know-how, focusing on why your well-deserved reputation makes you worth listening to may make the person more receptive. For example:

“As someone who’s been working directly with customers for more than five years, I think it’s important for us to do X.”

- **Heart.** A heart-centric approach is most effective when the person you’re talking to is motivated by how they feel—and by whether you understand them and can relate. Showing genuine curiosity about and empathy toward their perspective may inspire them to do the same for you. For example:

“Given our planned move to remote work, I’ve been thinking about how to keep relationships strong on our team. I know that staying connected is important to you. I would love to hear your thoughts on how we can do that.”

- **Head.** Getting some people’s support hinges on whether you can back up your views with compelling statistics, examples, and clear logic. Even if you don’t have reams of research to support your idea, you may still be able to get their buy-in by tying the idea to an important data point. For example:

“I’m concerned about the latest client survey showing a 6 percent drop in engagement, which leads me to think we should try X.”

You can practice these approaches in your everyday life to get more comfortable using them. Maybe you can talk a friend into trying a new restaurant by reminding them that your last pick was a winner (credibility), empathize with your homework-resistant kid over the ickiness of algebra (heart), or mention to your data scientist neighbor who fires up a leaf blower at 6 a.m. that interrupted sleep has been linked to health issues (head).

2. Choose the style or mix of styles that’s best for your audience.

If you want to get through to someone, you need to understand them—and adapt based on what you learn about them and what they say.

Start by asking yourself:

- *When I've talked to this person in the past, which approaches worked well and which didn't?*
- *When they present an idea, raise a concern, or make a decision or request, which appeal style do they tend to use?*
- *When have I seen them get excited or deeply engaged in a topic? When have they gotten upset or appeared to tune out? What patterns emerge?*
- *Which colleagues do they admire or get along with well? Which authors and experts do they follow? What does this tell me about what gets through to them?*

For example, if a peer is always striving to win big awards, credibility probably matters to them. Or if your boss has never met a spreadsheet they didn't love, a head-centric appeal might be the way to go. Or if you're talking to a leader who's known for getting upset when others are treated unfairly, they may be convinced with a healthy dose of heart.

These styles can be used alone or in combination. For example, you might ask for your boss's perspective on the likelihood of getting a bigger budget for your project (heart), then bring in data (head) to show why it makes sense to invest more in your work.

What if you don't have enough information to deduce which appeal style is best? Ask for advice from a trusted colleague who knows the person well. Or ask the person directly (e.g., *"What would make you feel good about supporting my idea?"*).

3. Build your case using the style or styles of appeal you chose.

Now that you've picked an appeal style that matches your audience, think through what to highlight to ensure that your message doesn't get lost. Then craft what you'll say.

For example, you want to convince your manager to take a task off your plate so you can focus on work that is more important to the team. Based on what you know about your boss, you've selected the head-centric appeal style, with a dash of credibility. Your approach might look like this:

What facts or data support my argument?

- The hours I spend on task X are out of proportion with the task's impact on our larger team goal. My focusing on a different task could help us quickly make progress on our larger goal and boost everyone's effectiveness.

What information can demonstrate my credibility?

- I've been doing task X for years at a high level. I understand the task's best practices and its impact on our goals.

Here's how you might put the pieces together:

"I've been doing task X for three years. While I've been able to execute it well [credibility], it's no longer the best use of my time. I tracked the hours I spend on task X each week and compared it to the task's impact on our team goal of processing student applications more efficiently. I realized that my time could be better spent creating a standard rubric for evaluating applications, which I estimate would help us meet our team goal three months sooner [head]. I'd be happy to train someone in all the best practices [credibility], so they can take over task X while I focus on creating the rubric. If we do that, our team's effectiveness could go up measurably [head]."

Of course, there may be times when you can't draw on the appeal style that seems best. For example, you want to convince someone who prioritizes credibility, but you're a new hire who hasn't yet established much credibility. What could you try? Maybe a colleague who *has* proven themselves could help make your point. Or, you might learn that your intended audience is a fan of an industry expert who's written something relevant that you could cite. A little creative thinking can lead to surprisingly strong results.

For more on persuading others, see [Template: Create an irresistible pitch for your next idea](#).