

O's *Five-Point Plan* to ...

BEING PERSUASIVE

To get what you want from life, sometimes you need to convince others of your dream. O gathered ideas from a few experts.

By *Deidre Donnelly*



1

Give, Then Take

Whether we call it karma or the law of cause and effect, many of us believe in the saying, “You get what you give.” In his 30 years of research, Robert Cialdini, PhD, has proved that reciprocity is key to persuasion: Because someone is more likely to do you a favour if you’ve extended a hand to them, the trick is to be the first to help. Try doing a favour, like offering to water your neighbours’ plants while they’re away. And if you can’t find a way to do an actual deed, simply be helpful with tips, compliments and the impression that you’re willing to help. This way, you’ve sown the seeds (or suggestion) of services you can reap later.

2

Big Steps First

Getting your own way was one of the first things you learnt to do. “I often tell trainees to look at how good children are at persuading,” says sales trainer and coach Pauls Gibbons, from Design Network Associates. Fortunately, you can channel your inner child to charm as an adult. Imagine this: Your 7-year-old writes a birthday wish list, starting with a trip to Disneyland and followed by supper at a steakhouse for his class. Feeling guilty about not being able to grant his big dream, you agree to the next option. Use this Big Ask trick the next time you want your partner to take the rubbish out, for example. “Baby, please will you give me a massage and take the rubbish out?” should do it.

3

Go Crowd Sourcing

As social beings, we’re easily swayed by group opinion and behaviour, and rely on feedback from people around us. That’s why, when faced with a tough decision, you’ll probably canvas the opinions of

others. Cialdini says this need for “social proof” explains why trends catch on. So gather group support to get others on your side. Selling a new product? Use quotes and testimonials from happy users. Need a colleague to buy into your approach to tackling a project? Begin by making casual references to respected team members who agree with your thinking: “I ran this by Lisa and Tendai, and they both agree it could work.”

4

Say the (New) Magic Word

Saying please goes a long way to being seen as polite, but its persuasive power has limits. Thankfully, there is another word that can act as your secret helper: *Because*. Cialdini explains that it works because when we hear it, we’re reminded of all the previous times we’ve been given compelling reasons why, and this triggers an unconscious “compliance response.” Consider the slight yet significant difference between, “Could I print this one page first?” and “Can I print first, because I only have one page?”

5

State Your Case

Laymen can look to the tactics lawyers use in the courtroom to be convincing in real life, especially when it comes to giving a good presentation. Bev Bird, director of the UCT Law Clinic, says that in addition to the basics – be well-prepared, look the part, avoid distracting, repetitive movements, and modulate your voice – this technique works: Say your key phrase. Stop and hold the silence. Then say it again, very slowly this time. The pause gives the statement more impact, while the repetition confirms its importance. “I’ve seen this have a very dramatic effect in a courtroom situation,” says Bird. **O**