

# From Simple Selling to Effective Persuasion

*"If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax."*  
– Abraham Lincoln

Persuasion is your ability to influence others- to bring them on to your side and have them think and feel a certain way about something. Persuasion typically has a negative connotation due to its use in many cases as a tool to cause others to make decisions that are in the best interest of the persuader. However, in your business, persuasion should be used to influence others in a way that ultimately benefits the ones being persuaded. If one does not believe that a product or idea is good for their client, they are obligated to reconsider their inventory and motives for forcing it upon others.

With this in mind, one can earnestly seek to hone their persuasion skills, knowing that they will ultimately be able to add value to the lives of others. This motive and mindset is the seed of the most powerful aspect of persuasion; your reputation (discussed below in more detail). The goal of this article, therefore, is to give you the tools to chisel your ax of persuasion; to work smarter and minimize the fruitless expenditure of effort which is sometimes associated with thoughtless and mechanical selling.

## Factors of Persuasion

### **Reputation**

The first and most important factor which will determine your ability to convince another is your *reputation*. It has been said that, "Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion." Your reputation precedes any communication you have with your client and will remain fairly static, despite your own efforts to shed positive light on yourself. What others say about you means everything; what you say about you means nothing.

The reputation factor is also unique in that it is one of the only factors that has a significant lag time, as well as significant staying power. What you have done over the last five years determines how the market perceives you today. At the same time one action today will not quickly alter the reputation you have established. This "heavy-weight" is not easy to establish, but once earned, gives incredible power (assuming it is positive) to your persuading prowess.

Your reputation is built day by day, by each action that you make. These seemingly insignificant actions are perceived by others and then communicated to their social network. Over time, after many client interactions, the market will have a fairly accurate perception of who you are. Therefore, your reputation is slowly improving or deteriorating every day, with each action you make; thus we should see each meeting, phone call, and email as very important.

### **Authority**

Following reputation, the next thing that can be established in your clients mind to increase your power of persuasion is your *authority* on the subject at hand. If you appear to be unlearned in the topic you are communicating about (or not versed in general macro issues), chances are they will be hard to persuade. People tend to take on the opinions of others who are more advanced in a certain field- those who are experts. You can convey your expertise very simply through using technical terms, asking thoughtful and striking questions, and advising your client to take certain unconventional actions which may open their mind to new opportunities.

## ***Relationship***

After the client has been made aware of your reputation through trusted sources, and has recognized your authority on the subject, the next step to take to increase your influence, is to establish a strong *relationship* with the client. People are easily persuaded by those they feel comfortable with and trust. To build trust with your client, you must always remain sincere and open about yourself and what you are doing. People can easily detect when someone is being evasive, or simply seeking something for their own benefit. Your true heart, be it sincerity or pretense, will eventually be made evident to the client, regardless of how skilled one is at wearing a mask.

There are multiple ways to show a client that you are genuinely after their best interest, many of which will be manifested without premeditation. However, it is worth noting a few things in particular that will express your concern. First, it is very important to directly ask your client what their priorities are regarding the subject at hand and how you can best assist them to obtain these goals. It is important, once you have been made aware of their priorities, that you endeavor to the best of your ability to help your client attain them, and to let them know of your efforts. Actions always speak louder.

Another way to establish a solid relationship with the client is to ask open ended questions regarding all aspects of the client's life, both professional and personal. Good conversation pieces include the client's family, hobbies, alma mater, etc. When asking these questions, be sure to take notes so that in following conversations you can review the client's information and pick up right where you left off. It will impress them as well as make them feel more comfortable with you, if after not speaking to them for several months, you are able to inquire about specifics in their life – much like your personal physician during checkups.

## ***Exceeding Expectations***

Lastly, after your client has heard of your reputation, you have conveyed your authority, and developed a personal connection, you can top it all off by adding an unexpected gesture which will elevate you far above competitors. The aim here is to exceed the client's expectation and thus earn their loyalty, as well as their satisfaction. Loyalty creates repeat customers and boosts your reputation; satisfaction is simply doing what needs to be done to get by. Loyalty is the profit, satisfaction only the overhead. This unexpected action can be a number of things, from a gift card to a restaurant, to a hand written letter thanking them for their business. This finale to their experience will greatly exceed the clients expectation, thus making them more likely to take heed to what you have to say now, and in the future. It also gets them speaking positively about you in the marketplace which will continue to build your reputation.

All of these strategies for increasing your sales efficacy, from your reputation to exceeding expectations, fall under the umbrella of selling your product or service based on everything but price. As these strategies become stronger, price continues to fade away. Clients are looking for value, not cost; therefore you need to make sure that you let your clients know the value in working with you. They must know that they are getting much more than they are paying for.



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