

CSP E-Lesson 14, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "My boss is so persuasive that I end up wanting to do things his way, even if, at first, I'm not sure I agree.

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You Talked Me into It

"Robin, you have to wear your red suit. Red is a power color, and, with your dark hair and eyes, you look great in it. Trust me on this. I'm your best friend, and I'm sure it's the right color for you." Diane looks Robin up and down and nods her head as she tries to convince her friend to make this wardrobe choice for a speech she will be giving at a fundraising event.

"Are you sure it's not too much?" Robin looks questioningly at her boyfriend, Chris.

Chris shrugs nonchalantly and offers his opinion, "I don't know anything about fashion, but I read something online that says winners wear red. Tiger Woods always wears red on the last day of a tournament because his mother told him it's a power color. And the Philadelphia Phillies wore red when they won the World Series."

Diane giggles at Chris' remark and says, "Condoleeza Rice says she wears red when she wants to 'look in charge'. And I saw an article that men find women in red more attractive and take them on more expensive dates."

"Okay, you've convinced me," Robin grins, "the red suit it is!"

The ability to make convincing arguments and persuade another person to adopt an idea or attitude is a valuable skill in the workplace. Which of the following is Diane and Chris's most persuasive argument?

- Complimenting how Robin looks in red
- Using examples of successful people who wear red
- Mentioning studies that prove red is a power color
- The fact that they are Robin's trusted friends
- All of the above

The Big Three

You may not realize it, but you sell yourself and try to influence or persuade people every day. When you express an opinion, ask for a special privilege, or encourage someone to participate in an activity, you are applying your power of persuasion. How well you use your power determines whether people agree or disagree with you and whether they respect or distrust you.

What are the best ways to persuade people to do what you want? Here are three successful methods.

- Reason - Use facts, statistics, examples and expert opinions.
- Emotion - Use words and examples that tug at the emotions.
- Character - Display integrity and honesty to show you can be trusted.

Two of these methods are used in each of the following stories, and one method is not used. If you think a statement appeals to the listener's reason, write an "R" in the appropriate blank. If you think the story appeals to the listener's emotion, write an "E" in the blank. If you believe the listener will make a decision because of trust in the speaker, write a "C".

The blank space is for you to write the missing appeal. For example, if the story is followed by statements that appeal to reason and emotion, you should write an example based on character.

1. A lawyer prosecutes a defendant charged with a brutal attack on a child. He uses the following arguments to persuade a jury to find the defendant guilty.

a. _____ This defendant is charged with a vicious crime against a young and defenseless victim. A three-year-old child suffered a brutal beating that left her blind in one eye, and battered and traumatized to the point that she hasn't spoken one word since the crime.

b. _____ I have served as a public prosecutor for 20 years. I believe it is right and necessary to prosecute criminals to the fullest extent of the law when they harm children.

c. _____

The Big Three (Continued)

2. A minister is asking for food donations for the community homeless shelter.

- a. _____ The need for hot meals in our homeless shelter has grown by more than 100 meals a day, even as the cost of food has risen dramatically. Poverty is growing in this fragile economy, and we see more families living in their cars and more mentally ill and handicapped people living on the streets.
- b. _____ When you and your family eat your hot supper tonight, or when you can't decide which snack to eat, I know you'll be thankful for your blessings. Take a moment to think of those who are hungry, those whose next meal may come from a trash can if our shelter's cupboards are bare.

c. _____

3. A politician appeals to voters for their support.

- a. _____ I've represented you with honesty and with integrity for four years. I have always put the welfare of our community ahead of the interests of a special few. My record speaks for itself.
- b. _____ Our police need a leader who equips them with the newest technology and makes sure that funds are spent in the most cost-effective way. Our 911 emergency call system must have enough dispatchers to handle any crisis.

c. _____

Write an example of each kind of appeal—reason, emotion, and character—that could be used by a marketing assistant who asks to take off four days to attend a friend's wedding in another country.

1. Reason: _____

2. Emotion: _____

3. Character: _____

Convince Me!

When we try to persuade someone to see things our way, we want them to want what we want, not just to give in to us! How well you can persuade people to *want what you want* depends on three important communication skills:

1. Your talent for arousing emotions
2. Your power to appeal to the other person's self-interest
3. Your ability to challenge the person to take action

In the story called *Basketball Buddies*, Jacob wants to persuade his friend Marty to quit smoking. He wants Marty to really *want* to quit smoking. In a few sentences, Jacob arouses Marty's emotions, appeals to his self-interest and calls him to action.

Jacob and Marty play basketball together every day after school to relax and relieve stress. A few months ago, Marty started smoking cigarettes, and now he gets winded quickly while Jacob is still full of energy. This afternoon the two buddies are sitting beside the court so Marty can catch his breath after a competitive game.

"Now that you're a smoker, it's getting too easy to beat you, buddy! It must hurt you to know I'm going to beat you every time from now on." Jacob grins.

"Don't be too sure of yourself," Marty snaps back.

"You're never going to beat me again because you get too winded from smoking," Jacob teases. "You should quit."

"That's easier said than done," Marty replies.

"I'll tell you what. I shouldn't give you this game advantage, but you call my cell phone every time you feel like having a cigarette, day or night, and I'll talk you through it. I'll remind you of what a lousy ball player you're getting to be."

Practice your power of persuasion by writing a few sentences to fit each of the situations on the next page. The object is to make the listener *want* to do what you want by arousing their emotions, appealing to their self interest, and calling them to action.

Convince Me! (Continued)

1. Persuade a friend who eats unhealthily to avoid fast food and make better food choices.

2. Convince a co-worker to help organize the company blood donor drive.

3. Select an issue that is important to your generation and influence your classmates to write, call, or e-mail their congressperson about it.

A Persuasive Presentation

If you watch election events on television, you are familiar with persuasive presentations. Whether in advertising, debates, or speeches, the candidates make presentations to persuade you to *want* to vote for them. All sorts of other groups also use persuasive presentations to convince you. The Red Cross shows television commercials to make you want to give blood, and the Girls Scouts set up stands in front of grocery stores, where they give short presentations to make you want to buy cookies.

At work, you'll be expected to make presentations that persuade people, and they'll be different from ones you are used to giving at school. Some may be one-on-one with your boss or a co-worker, and others may be before a large group of people. This may seem intimidating if the listeners have authority over you, but, remember, you persuade your parents and siblings, your friends and teachers to do things every day. You can use some of the same techniques that persuade them to convince your work colleagues.

The rest of this lesson will help you prepare presentations for work. You'll need to know how formal to make your presentation, who the audience members are, and what they want from you. Then you'll have to practice, practice, practice. There are three primary types of presentations:

Formal Presentation. In a formal presentation, you stand before a group and deliver a rehearsed talk. The audience doesn't usually participate. This is the style used by political candidates when they give a campaign speech.

Semi-Formal Presentation. In this type of presentation, you may still stand before a group and give a planned talk, but the audience participates by asking questions or offering differing opinions, either during or after the presentation. Political candidates illustrate this style in town hall meetings.

Informal Presentation. This is a discussion where you may sit in a small group and talk to listeners face to face. The group participates in the dialogue. As the primary speaker, you will guide the conversation, but others may ask and answer questions. Political candidates use this style during interviews and panel discussions.

A Persuasive Presentation (Continued)

Most persuasive presentations you'll be expected to make will fall into the informal or semi-formal categories. Are you ready to start identifying the types of presentations to use in different situations? For each presentation described below, write "F" if you think the presentation should be formal, "S" if you think it should be semi-formal, and "I" if you think it should be informal.

1. _____ Your boss wants your recommendation on the type of copier the company should purchase to replace the current copier which doesn't work well.
2. _____ The finance department of six members asks you to present your advertising department's budget for next year.
3. _____ You have been asked to demonstrate one of your company's new products to the 200 customers invited to your company's technology convention next spring.
4. _____ The party planning team wants your ideas on the type of party to plan for December.
5. _____ A customer asks you to train ten employees on the new equipment purchased from your company.

After you're sure which type of persuasive presentation is required, the next most important thing is getting to know your audience in advance. Answer these questions before you start planning what you will say:

- What does the audience expect from me?
- What are their beliefs and values?
- What do they already know about the topic?
- Will they be friendly, neutral, or hostile?
- What are their needs and desires that will motivate them to listen to me?
- How can I speak their language?
- How can I appeal to what they have in common among themselves?

A Persuasive Presentation (Continued)

You're ready to start preparing a presentation. Follow these steps and you'll feel your confidence grow.

1. Identify your objective. For example, you might want someone to donate to a cause, fund a project, buy a product, form a citizens group, or vote a certain way.
2. Write down all of your ideas.
3. Organize your ideas into two parts: (1) main talking points and (2) supporting information.
4. Practice your presentation out loud over and over again, with your family, with friends, in front of a mirror, on videotape, on audiotape—every way you can think of to practice. Then, practice some more!

Main talking points. These are simple statements that tell where you stand on a topic.

Supporting information. These are facts, examples, news events, stories and statistics that explain or illustrate each of your talking points.

As an example, if you want to persuade a bank to fund a day care center for its employees, you might use these ideas as talking points: (1) On-site daycare reduces employee turnover and absenteeism and improves productivity, (2) Even workers without children have a positive feeling toward companies that are willing to help their co-workers, (3) employers can receive tax credits for providing day care facilities. Your supporting material will include facts, statistics, and examples to back up these points.

Consider these supporting materials:

- A chart showing the number of days that mothers of young children took off last year compared with the number of days taken by other females.
- The results of a survey among all employees asking their opinion of whether the bank should offer a day care center.
- The dollar savings in taxes that your company would receive from an on-site day care center.

Plan a Presentation

What topics and issues are important to you and your friends today? Politics, education, careers, finances, relationships, fashion and hobbies are some of the things you might have an opinion about.

Use what you've learned about persuasion to deliver a presentation to your classmates. Choose one of the following topics or identify another topic that interests you.

- Is it fair that car insurance is more expensive for males under 25?
 - Is it important to choose a career while in high school?
 - Should public school students wear uniforms?
 - Should principals approve random searches of student's lockers and book bags for weapons?
 - Should the voting age be lowered to 16?
 - Should the government force small businesses to provide health insurance for their employees?
 - Would Saturday classes help American schools rise to the level of other countries?
 - Should "abstinence" be the only sex education taught in public schools?
 - Should piercings and tattoos be acceptable in the workplace?
 - Should the United States be bilingual, with Spanish as an official second language?
 - Should people have to pay to download music?
 - Should employees be able to text message at work?
 - Should bosses be able to require employees to stay later than closing time to meet a deadline?
 - Your choice _____
-

Prepare your presentation to the class by making an outline that (1) identifies your topic, (2) states your position and objective, and (3) includes three talking points and a short description of your supporting material. You may use the outline on the next page or create one on your computer.

Plan a Presentation (Continued)

Topic _____

Your Position _____

Your Objective _____

Talking point one _____

Supporting materials

- _____

- _____

- _____

Talking point two _____

Supporting materials

- _____

- _____

- _____

A Persuasive Presentation (Continued)

Talking point three _____

Supporting materials

- _____

- _____

- _____

After any type of presentation, the speakers want to know the results. Sometimes, participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire or an evaluation. In the case of elections, you see reporters interview ordinary people in the street after candidates present their views. After a customer service presentation, listeners might be asked to evaluate the speaker's effectiveness.

Write three questions you would ask participants after they've heard your presentation described in the outline.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____