

Influence

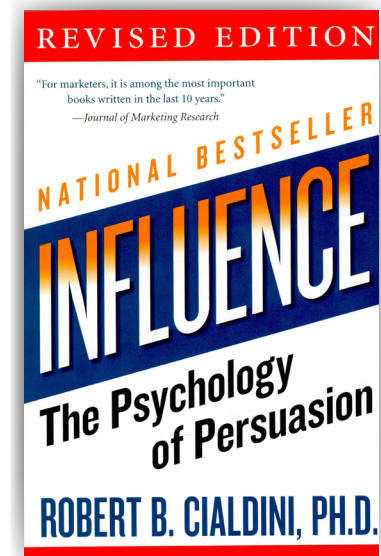
The Psychology of Persuasion Revised Edition

Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D.

©2007 by Robert Cialdini

Adapted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN: 978-0-06-124189-5



KEY CONCEPTS

Influence by Robert B. Cialdini reveals the primary reasons people says “yes” and shows readers not only how to use these reasons in their own lives, but also how to protect themselves from others who use these reasons to manipulate.

- The *rule for reciprocation* states that people feel obligated to repay what others have done for them.
- When people make decisions about their own behaviors as a result of others’ behaviors, they are reacting to *social proof*. They use the actions of similar others to determine appropriate behaviors for themselves.
- People tend to say “yes” more often to people who they like. Some influence professionals manipulate this in their efforts to get potential buyers to like them so they are more inclined toward a purchase.
- People like others who are similar to them, whether it is in appearance, background, beliefs, or personality traits.
- The recommendations of authority figures are generally followed.
- Limited time offers work because people place more value on things that are viewed as scarce. This is also true when something is presented as being limited in quantity.

INTRODUCTION

In **Influence**, Robert B. Cialdini combines experimental research with real world immersion studies in different professions and situations over three years to analyze the power of influence. Although the tactics used to persuade others are numerous, Cialdini discovered the majority of tactics fall into one of six primary categories:

reciprocation, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity. These categories can be used as “weapons of influence” to persuade people to make decisions they otherwise would not have made.

WEAPONS OF INFLUENCE

The power of influence is very important to business, especially in the world of retail. For instance, in one shop studied by the author, a particular item was not selling well and the owner asked her staff to cut the price in half. The staff misread the owner’s note and thought they were instructed to double the price instead. Because customers assumed that expensive items meant they were higher quality, the entire stock immediately sold out.

People’s lives are so complex that they must rely on shortcuts to make decisions. This is why *weapons of influence* can be so powerful, and essentially why discount coupons in retail are so effective. Shortcuts tell people that these discounts will save them both money and time from thinking about what they really need or how to get it.

However, problems occur when people exploit these shortcuts and use them as weapons. This usually happens when people understand how much these shortcuts can impact other’s actions. Those who use shortcuts are able to manipulate others, and most people who are being manipulated do not even realize they are victims.

Another weapon of influence is utilized when someone presents a high priced item and then follows it with a lower priced item, which is how savvy retailers sell some expensive items. For example, a \$195 sweater may sound expensive if it is the first item presented to a customer. However, if a man first buys a \$995 suit, the \$195 item is seen as a more reasonable price. Although both items are expensive, once the suit is purchased, the sweater price seems fair and the person is more likely to make the purchase. Automobile dealers use the same method to sell new cars. Once the price of the car has been agreed upon, it is easier to sell add-ons, which will seem reasonably priced after the large initial purchase.

RECIPROCATION: THE OLD GIVE AND TAKE . . . AND TAKE

A professor once tested the *rule for reciprocation* when he sent Christmas cards to people he did not know. Surprisingly, many recipients reciprocated the gesture without question. This principle indicates that the social norm is for people to repay the positive things others do for them, often without thought. People comply with this reciprocation rule because it is viewed as an appropriate social norm and, at times, there are social sanctions for non-compliance.

People who are not well liked can increase their chances of having others reciprocate their gestures by first offering them small favors. The rule for reciprocation is very strong and difficult to ignore, which is why there are limitations and rules in place about giving gifts to public officials.

An interesting aspect of this rule is that recipients do not even have to receive something they originally wanted to begin with. Such is the case when charities send out free address labels along with solicitation requests. The obligation to repay is still present even though recipients did not request the address labels in the first place. Once gifts are taken, however, recipients have given all the power to the gifters.

Reciprocal concessions are another way to convince people to make unwanted purchases. For example, if someone declines to purchase a \$5 item, the seller can offer a \$1 item instead. This is viewed as a concession by the seller, so buyers are also expected to concede by agreeing to make the \$1 purchase even though they never wanted either item.

One of the reasons reciprocation can be used so effectively as a device for gaining another’s compliance is its power. The rule possesses awesome strength, often producing a “yes” response to a request that, except for an existing feeling of indebtedness, would have surely been refused.

With reciprocity, the real opponent is the rule, not the compliance professional. When the potential recipient recognizes that the goal of a “gift” is compliance rather than a no-strings attached favor, the reciprocation rule no longer applies and the potential recipient can decline.

COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY: HOBGOBLINS OF THE MIND

The concepts of *commitment* and *consistency* are illustrated in an experiment done at a racetrack. Moments before people made their bets, they were uncertain about their decisions. However, once their bets were placed, they became convinced that they made the right choices. Because of their need for consistency, they came to believe in what they had already done. This is something many people do in order to feel good about their actions and decisions.

This need to be consistent is another powerful weapon of influence and results in behaviors that may not be in people’s best interests. When people are inconsistent, they are viewed in a negative light, which is why consistency, even if costly, is generally seen as the best option. People are consistent out of habit. This automatic behavior keeps people from having to think about their decisions.

Few people would be surprised to learn that, as a rule, we most prefer to say “yes” to the requests of someone we know and like. What might be startling to note, however, is that this simple rule is used in hundreds of ways by total strangers to get us to comply with their requests.

The advantage to sellers in regard to consistency is that they can structure their interactions with buyers based on the buyers’ need to be consistent. For example, once a stand is taken about an issue, or a desire is made public, it is difficult for a person to change his or her mind out of fear of being seen as inconsistent. As a result, earlier commitments can be used to sellers’ advantages. Sellers can turn a small decision into something bigger that can benefit them.

A written declaration can be even more powerful than a spoken one because it can be shown to other people. Written words can also be used to persuade others to make decisions that favor the desires of compliance professionals. The assumption is that someone who makes a statement—even if he or she is influenced to do so—will stand behind what he or she said. On the other hand, this is why written goals are so powerful and written declarations can be so positive and beneficial; people who write down their important goals are more likely to reach them.

Commitment is also more likely to stick when it is internalized. External rewards and pressures may result in desired behaviors; however, individuals are not likely to remain committed to behaviors until they are seen as motivated from within. Once actions have been internalized, they gain power and influence people to engage in additional behaviors that are in line with their commitments.

Once small commitments are made, people tend to justify them and will commit themselves even further. They will continue to do things that are consistent with their first responses even if they agreed to something they did not want in the first place.

Automatic behaviors are not all negative. In fact, most of the time they result in appropriate reactions. However, people can minimize any negative consequences by staying alert and recognizing when an initial commitment may no longer steer them correctly.

SOCIAL PROOF: TRUTHS ARE US

Social proof is seen when people make decisions based on what others seem to accept as correct. The more people who view an idea as correct, the more the idea is actually assumed to be correct. If something cannot

be proven logically or factually, people will cling to the belief by proving it to themselves socially, through the responses of others. In other words, if the interpretation of a situation is unclear, people will look to others and use the others' actions to decide what is correct. The irony is that the people who are looked to for the answer are essentially doing the same thing. They too seek social proof about things that are unknown. Simply put, people seek answers based on how others act.

The search for social proof can be dangerous in emergency situations. If bystanders do not respond, the overall conclusion is that nothing is wrong. This pluralistic ignorance is especially common among strangers. People want to appear confident in public, and when they are unfamiliar with the reactions of others, they determine whether to be concerned based on the reactions—or lack thereof—of total strangers.

This can cause real concern for people when they find themselves in emergency situations or when they are in need of assistance. The best way for people to deal with these situations is to request assistance from a specific person in a group. That way, it becomes clear that the chosen individual is responsible for handling the emergency.

PEOPLE LIKE ME

People respond positively to others who are like them. This is why many commercials show real life testimonials from everyday people, even though in some cases these people are paid actors. The point is that the actions of seemingly similar people are often used to dictate appropriate responses and behaviors to others.

The case of Reverend Jim Jones is a perfect example of how people look to define what is "right" by observing others around them. As a well-known cult leader, Jones led 910 people to their deaths through a passive mass suicide. Before that, in the late 1970s, Jones moved the group from San Francisco to a jungle in South America. This move to a foreign environment had a significant impact on how his followers behaved, and they began to look to other cult members (the only similar others in such a place) for guidance on how to act. As a result, he was able to convince them that suicide was an appropriate action to take by getting a few cult members to take that action first.

This property of authority status may account for much of its success as a compliance device. Not only does it work forcefully on us, but it also does so unexpectedly.

LIKING: THE FRIENDLY THIEF

The reason Tupperware parties have been so successful in the past is that their success relied on people inviting their friends to participate. Because these individuals were attending the sales party of someone they liked, they felt more willing to make a purchase.

Physical attractiveness plays a significant role in how much a person is liked. This causes the *halo effect* to come into play because this one feature (attractiveness) implies that an individual's other characteristics are also positive. As a result, sales professionals and retailers are groomed especially well in order to influence others.

People are attracted to other individuals who are similar to them in more than just their appearances. This includes their opinions, personality traits, and backgrounds. With this in mind, some sales professionals are coached to imitate the behaviors of their prospects. Compliance professionals also exploit this when they attempt to find similarities between themselves and any potential buyers.

When groups of people who do not like each other are forced to work together, the shared effort can increase likability. This cooperation causes them to view each other as colleagues who are working toward a shared goal together rather than rivals. Compliance professionals will use this principle to make it appear as if they and the

buyers have similar goals. An example of this is when car salespeople act as if they are on the buyers' sides and it is their dealership managers who are in the way. This makes it seem as though the salespeople and the buyers are on "teams" that work against the managers, when in fact the salespeople and managers have the shared goal of maximizing profits from their sales.

An association between two things can result in positive or negative feelings about a particular item. This is seen when companies have attractive models next to their products, such as boats or automobiles. People subconsciously respond better to the products as a result, but they will deny the attractive models had any influence on their responses. They are instead convinced that their liking is only toward the product. Because this happens subconsciously, manufacturers will frequently work to connect their latest products with the latest positive cultural trends.

It is easy enough to feel properly warned against scarcity pressures; but it is substantially more difficult to act on that warning.

People will even try to associate themselves with positive events when they did not cause them. When people are associated with positive events, they believe their public prestige will also increase. This is demonstrated when people name-drop or boast about successful hometown sports teams.

In order not to be manipulated by the liking principle in a sales situation, people must stop and ask themselves if they like the salesperson more than they should, given the short amount of time they've spent with him or her. If the answer is yes, they should separate their liking for the salesperson from their liking for the product being sold and react only on the basis of the latter feeling.

AUTHORITY: DIRECTED DEFERENCE

In one study subjects were asked to shock another person who was also participating in the experiment. An authority figure (the researcher) told the subjects to increase the shock. Even when the other person shouted out in pain, the subjects continued to deliver the shock as instructed. What surprised the researchers was that none of the subjects was originally found to have psychological problems or aggressive tendencies. Instead, their actions and compliance were the direct result of following instructions that were being delivered by an authority figure.

People are trained from a young age to obey authority figures. Since obedience is regularly rewarded, many people just do what is asked of them rather than think about their actions. However, there are many times when this blind obedience is not the best plan of action. This has been seen when physicians give incorrect orders for nurses to follow. At times, the incorrectness was obvious; however, the majority of nurses did exactly what was asked rather than question the doctors.

This response to authority is the main reason why con men make up titles they do not have, such as Doctor or Judge. Oftentimes, people will often respond to this appearance of authority without any proof at all. Clothing can also have a strong impact, such as when people dress in hospital coats or police uniforms. The authoritative appearance of an individual can impact the behavior of others.

People can protect themselves from automatic responses to authority by simply being aware of how they are generally impacted by authority figures. It is important that they recognize how easily authoritative self-presentations can be faked. Individuals should also evaluate the authenticity of an authority figure's self-presentation by asking themselves how the authority figure will benefit if they choose to comply with his or her requests.

SCARCITY: THE RULE OF THE FEW

The *scarcity principle* can be very easy to fall prey to, as Cialdini recounts. A Mormon temple near where he lived was open to the public for a limited time. Normally, non-Mormons were not invited to view temples, with the exception of the few days right after they were built. Since this particular one had recently undergone a significant renovation, it was considered new enough to permit non-Mormons to tour it. Cialdini immediately wanted to go see it, and it was not until after a conversation with a friend that he realized the only appeal was that it would soon be unavailable to him. He had never had any interest in a tour of the temple until then, and quickly realized he was caught up in the scarcity principle.

This principle makes opportunities seem more valuable because they are limited. Many retailers capitalize on this with “limited time” or “limited availability” offers. When customers believe there are only a few items available or that their opportunity to get special prices will expire, they are more likely to want them. If something is difficult to acquire, the assumption is that it is also more valuable.

If a message is censored, people become more interested because it is now considered scarce. Manipulation occurs when there is no censorship in the first place, but people state there was in order to capitalize on others’ desires to have something that is scarce. Courtrooms often have an issue with scarcity when a comment is stricken from the record. Once that happens, studies have shown that jury members become even more interested in the comment and use it to influence their decisions.

To protect against this scarcity principle, people must be aware of their agitated reactions to things that are dwindling in availability to them. When they respond in this way, the agitation should be taken as a signal for them to stop and think about the situation rationally. Next, they should ask themselves if they want the item for the sake of ownership or usability. If they simply want to own it, it is likely the desire comes from scarcity rather than necessity.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 4–5 hours, 320 pages

Influence by Robert B. Cialdini is written for individuals who want to understand why they say “yes” to things they do not want and how to use this knowledge to protect themselves from unscrupulous salespeople. The book will also benefit those who are in sales or other influential positions. It should be read in chapter order. Also included are extensive notes, bibliography, and index sections.

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Weapons of Influence
2. Reciprocation: *The Old Give and Take . . . and Take*
3. Commitment and Consistency: *Hobgoblins of the Mind*
4. Social Proof: *Truths Are Us*
5. Liking: *The Friendly Thief*
6. Authority: *Directed Deference*
7. Scarcity: *The Rule of the Few*

Epilogue: Instant Influence: Primitive Consent from an Automatic Age

Notes

Bibliography

Index

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the author and subject:

www.influenceatwork.com

Information about this book and other business titles:

www.harpercollins.com

[CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE THE BOOK](#)

Related summaries in the BBS Library:

Maximum Influence

The 12 Universal Laws of Power Persuasion

By Kurt W. Mortensen

Invisible Influence

The Power to Persuade Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere

By Kevin Hogan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D. is Regents Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University. Dr. Cialdini is also president of Influence At Work, an international training and consulting company based on his groundbreaking body of research on the ethical business applications of the science of influence.

Copyright of Business Book Summaries, Business Book Review, BusinessSummaries and BizSum is property of EBSCO Publishing Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or email summaries for individual use. Business Book Summaries® is a service of EBSCO Publishing, Inc. For more information about BBS, to subscribe to BBS, or to provide us feedback, visit our Web site.

www.ebscohost.com

EBSCO Publishing Inc.

10 Estes Street

Ipswich, MA 01938 USA

Copyright of Influence is the property of Great Neck Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.