

The 6 Principles of Persuasion Everyone in Business Should Know

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Why do you buy a product or paid for a service? What motivates your customers to say yes. Have you ever thought about it, really? The list in your mind is probably endless I suppose but do you think it has anything to do with persuasion. Yeah, persuasion. For a number of years' many companies' have persuaded us the public to buy their products or to try their service using some very catchy ads.

A lot of companies understand the science behind what makes you say yes and you can thank Dr. Robert Cialdini for it. If you don't know who Dr. Robert Cialdini is, well welcome to the club. Up to a month ago I had no clue who this guy was, I never heard of him before but what got me intrigued is a social experiment video I saw on Facebook named "**most people are sheep**". You guy need to watch that video man very interesting.

It shows an experiment of a person who is simply standing when a group of people is standing. The interesting thing is when the person enters the room and notice that everyone in the room is standing when a horn is blown the person resisted at first. However, after three times, the person who is sitting begins to stand when the horn is blown as well for no reason at all.

This experiment led me to Dr. Robert Cialdini book Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion. Cialdini defined this as social proof, People doing what they observe other people doing. It's a principle that's based on the idea of safety in numbers. For example, when I am feeling for a good doubles; Trinidadians and Tobagonians can attest to this. I will automatically gravitate to the doubles man who has a lot of people around him. I will be very caution of someone selling doubles who have a few people buying.

But that is the science of social proof if a group of people is looking to the back of the elevator, the individual who enters the elevator will copy it and do the same, even if it looks funny and that was a proven elevator experiment. Companies use this all the time. Anyone shopping on Amazon can read tons of customer feedback on any product. Some companies show their Facebook likes and twitter followers.

According to Jeff Sexton, whether we admit it or not, most of us are impressed when someone has a ton of subscribers, Twitter followers, YouTube views, multiple blog reviews for their upcoming book etc. When I read the 6 principles of Persuasion and the application I must admit, it felt surreal.

1. Reciprocity
2. Commitment and Consistency
3. Social Proof
4. Likability
5. Authority
6. Scarcity

And if you are wondering if it is still relevant after almost 30 years, yeah it is. As a matter of fact, these principles is the foundation for many marketing campaigns and many companies use them to get you to buy their product or service. Most people can't explain why they made a particular decision. But Cialdini can. After countless experiments and research, Cialdini was able to identify the underlying factors that influence decisions and how to use them to get more positive responses. Let take a look at them individually and their application in a business context:

RECIPROCITY

According to Cialdini, Reciprocation explains why free samples can be so effective. People feel indebted to those who do something for them or give them a gift. People who receive a free, unexpected gift are more likely to listen to a product's features, donate to a cause, or tip a waitress more money. The implication is you have to go first. Give something, give information, give free samples, give a positive experience to people and they will want to give you something in return.

A lot of companies adopted this principle of reciprocity. Netflix, Amazon, Hubspot all offer a free service for a stipulated period of time or a blogger who offers a free download, free webinars, free ebooks. These companies and individuals understand that human beings are wired to return favors and as a result, your site visitors would be more likely to feel obligated to buy something from your website.

COMMITMENT and CONSISTENCY

People take a lot of pride in being true to their word. Cialdini suggests that both oral and written commitments are powerful persuasive techniques and that people tend to honor agreements even after the original incentive or motivation is no longer present.

Cialdini indicated that people want to be both consistent and true to their word. Getting customers or co-workers to publicly commit to something makes them more likely to follow through with an action or a purchase. For instance, if you ask your team members to support your next initiative, ask them to say why. Getting people to answer 'yes' makes them more powerfully committed to an action.

When Conversion Voodoo helped a mortgage company increase their completed application conversion rate by more than 11% with the simple addition of a commitment checkbox that simple act of commitment propels the mortgage company customers towards making a larger commitment. In combination with the five other principles, it will become increasingly difficult for the customer to decide not to go ahead with the purchase.

SOCIAL PROOF

We dealt with social proof above. People will normally follow the crowd, safety in numbers.

LIKABILITY

Cialdini explained that likability is based on sharing something similar with people you like. People will naturally associate with people who are like them and this applies to business as well. Customers tend to buy

from companies they like; everyone has a favorite brand that appeals to them and the more similarities between the customer and brand the more positive that relationship developed over time.

A lot of companies conduct extensive research to segment their market, target their niche and position the company to appeal to their target market. These companies design their products, services, logos, websites, outlets etc to mirror their customers. We are influenced by a product or service we like.

Likability may also come in the form of trust. If you are fair, open, genuine and honest in your actions and have a general interest in people and their welfare. This will begin to build that trust with your staff which is one of the branches of liking and respect.

AUTHORITY

Are you more likely to take instruction from a person who you perceived to be an authoritative person? According to Cialdini, job titles such as Dr. can infuse an air of authority into people and as a result, this can lead the average person to accept what a person in authority is saying without question.

If you take LinkedIn influencers, for example, their post attracts thousands of views and comments simply because people considers the influencers authority in their field because of their success. According to Cialdini, “when people are uncertain they don’t look inside themselves for answers—all they see is ambiguity and their own lack of confidence. Instead, they look outside for sources of information that can reduce their uncertainty. The first thing they look to is an authority, We’re not talking about being in authority but about being an authority. What do the experts think about this topic”?

Nike is one of the most coveted brands in the world and one of their major strengths is their association with very successful athletes who are considered an authority in their sport. So quite naturally with that association, Nike has become an authoritative brand in the world of sports apparel.

SCARCITY

In economic, Scarcity relates to supply and demand. The less there is of something, the more valuable it is. According to Cialdini, the more something is rare and uncommon the more people want it. So for example, a lot of companies use “don’t miss this chance” book your spots early limited seating available.

For example, many companies may manufacture a limited amount of their product in an attempt to generate a sense of limitation to the general public. Have you ever notice the long lines for a new product? People camping outside the store. If you create that environment of scarcity, you will create a demand for your product or service.

These principles are very powerful simply because they bypass our rational mind and appeal to our subconscious instincts. A good seller will always refer to the positive opinion of other users and how successful the product is. Or will give their customer a free trial etc. But it is important to note that if you are unethical and trying to con your customers, people will see right through your scam. These principles will only be effective if you are genuine in your efforts and deliver on your promise to your customers.