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it--and science shows us how. BY JEFF HADEN, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, INC. @JEFF_HADEN



incredibly good at persuading other people. Maybe that's because selling is the one skill everyone needs to be successful? But being persuasive doesn't mean you have to manipulate or pressure other people.

to gain agreement – and that means we all need to be more convincing: to persuade others

a proposal makes sense, to show stakeholders how a project or business will generate a return, to help employees understand the benefits of a new process, etc.

And that's why the art of persuasion is critical in any business or career – and why successful people are extremely good at persuading others. How can you be more persuasive?

Nope. Research shows humans prefer cockiness to expertise. We naturally assume

confidence equates with skill.

nodding in agreement.

poor track record. So be bold. Stop saying, "I think" or "I believe." Stop adding qualifiers to your speech. If

Even the most skeptical people tend to be at least partly persuaded by a confident speaker.

In fact, we prefer advice from a confident source, even to the point that we will forgive a

Stand behind your opinions – even if they are just opinions – and let your enthusiasm show. People will naturally gravitate to your side. 2. Start slow by getting small "wins."

So instead of jumping right to the end of your argument, start with statements or premises

you know your audience will agree with. Build a foundation for further agreement.

3. Adjust your rate of speech to the audience's perspective. There's reason behind the "fast-talking salesman" stereotype: In certain situations, talking

• If your audience is likely to disagree, speak faster. • If your audience is likely to agree, speak slower.

them less time to form their own counter-arguments, giving you a better chance of persuading them.

your reasoning plus their initial bias means they are more likely to, at least in part,

Here's why: When your audience is inclined to disagree with you, speaking faster gives

attention. 4. Don't be afraid to be moderately unprofessional. Take swearing. Cursing for no reason is just cursing.

But say your team needs to pull together right freaking now. Tossing in an occasional – and

heartfelt – curse word can actually help instill a sense of urgency because it shows you care.

(And of course it never hurts when a leader lets a little frustration or anger show, too.)

In short, be yourself. Authenticity is always more persuasive. If you feel strongly enough

little more persuasive. 5. Take into account how your audience most prefers to process information.

I was young and enthusiastic and would burst into his office with an awesome idea, lay out

all my facts and figures, wait breathlessly for him to agree with me...and he would disagree.

After a number of failed attempts, I finally realized *he* wasn't the problem. My approach

was the problem. He needed time to think. He needed time to process. Demanding an

immediate answer instantly put him on the defensive. In the absence of time to reflect, he would fall back on the safe choice: staying with the status quo.

gave him time to process my idea in the way he felt most comfortable with. Always know your audience. Don't push for instant agreement if someone's personality style makes that unlikely. But don't ask for thought and reflection if your audience loves to

He loved that approach. One, I showed I valued his wisdom and experience. Two, I showed

I didn't just want him to agree – I genuinely wanted his opinion. And most importantly, I

understand they could have misgivings. So talk about the other side of the argument – and then do your best to show why you're still right.

7. ... And then focus on drawing positive conclusions.

make quick decisions and move on.

6. Share both positives and negatives...

While it's tempting to use scare tactics, positive outcome statements tend to be more

• "You'll stop feeling so tired," or

bullied or guilted into changing a behavior.)

"You'll feel a lot more energetic."

8. Choose the right format. Say you're a man hoping to convince a man you don't know well, or even at all. What

sometimes.)

But if you're a guy trying to convince another guy you know well, definitely communicate in person. The closer your relationship, the more effective face-to-face communication tends to be.

conversation into a contest we think we need to win. (Be honest; you know you do it

Persuasive people understand how to frame and deliver their messages, but more importantly they know their message is what matters the most.

conclusions are beyond reproach.

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LEAD Want to Be Extremely Persuasive? 9

persuasive and influential. The rest of us have to work at

Think about all the extremely successful people you know. I guarantee they're incredibly good at selling themselves, selling their ideas – in short, they're

At its best, persuasion is the ability to effectively describe the benefits and logic of an idea

1. Take strong stands. You would assume data and reasoning always win the day, right?

you think something will work, say it will work. If you believe something will work, say it will work.

if only over the short term.

Remember, a body in motion tends to remain in motion, and that also applies to a head

Research shows – yep, more research – that gaining agreement has an enduring effect, even

fast works. Other times, not so much. Here's what one study indicates:

When your audience is inclined to agree with you, speaking slowly gives them time to evaluate your arguments and factor in a few of their own thoughts. The combination of

persuade themselves.

Every. Freaking. Time.

In short: If you're preaching to the choir, speak slowly; if not, speak quickly. And if your audience is neutral or apathetic, speak quickly so you'll be less likely to lose their

that you would naturally use stronger language, do it. Research shows you're likely to be a A fellow supervisor used to frustrate the crap out of me. (See? That swearing thing works.)

feel sure there are things I'm missing. If I run it by you, could you think about it for a day or two and then tell me what you think?"

So I tried a different approach. "Don," I said, "I have an idea that I think makes sense, but I

According to University of Illinois professor Daniel O'Keefe, sharing an opposing viewpoint or two is more persuasive than sticking solely to your argument. Why? Very few ideas are perfect. Your audience knows that. They know there are other perspectives and potential outcomes.

So meet them head on. Talk about the things they're already considering. Discuss potential

The people in your audience are more likely to be persuaded when they know you

negatives and show how you will mitigate or overcome those problems.

Which of the following statements is more persuasive? • "You'll stop making so many mistakes," or "You'll be much more accurate."

persuasive. (The researchers hypothesize that most people respond negatively to feeling

So if you're trying to produce change, focus on the positives of that change. Take your

audience to a better place...instead of telling them what to avoid.

should you do? If you have a choice, don't speak in person. Write an email first. As a general rule, men tend to feel competitive in person and turn what should be a

Or between these two?

The opposite is true if you're a woman hoping to persuade other women. According to the researchers, women are "more focused on relationships," so in-person communication

tends to be more effective.

9. And above all, make sure you're right.

So be clear, be concise, be to the point, and win the day because your data, reasoning, and

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