

Pre-Suasion Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Pre-Suasion takes you through the latest social psychology research to explain how marketers, persuaders and our environment primes us to say certain things and take specific actions, as well as how you can harness the same ideas to master the art of persuasion.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



33 years after *Influence* stormed into the hearts of business owners, marketers and managers and sold millions of copies, Robert Cialdini is back on the scene with his first solo book since then. *Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade* isn't about getting people to decide the way you want. It's about setting the stage the right way, so they'll automatically want to when the time comes.

Pre-Suasion shows you two sides of the same coin: the way we're being pre-suaded in our everyday lives and how you and I can use those very same tactics to persuade others. If you're a marketer, this'll help you sell more stuff. If you're a frequent shopper, you'll learn to see why you buy things the way you do.

Here are 3 lessons about how we decide, before we decide:

1. So-called leading or pre-suasive questions elicit certain answers and prime us to decide in a specific way.
2. We put more relevance on what's attention-grabbing, so beware!
3. The words we use determine what we do – more than we think.

Ready to learn the art of pre-suasion? Let's give this a go!

Lesson 1: Leading questions try to get you to respond with certain answers and influence your later decisions.

Last semester I took a statistics class, for which I had to create a survey about energy drinks. One of the first things we learned was that we must not ask leading questions. **Leading questions are questions, which steer the respondent to answer in a certain way.**

For example, if I ask you: “Given the recent terrorist attacks in London, how dangerous do you perceive the threat of terrorism to be?” then that question is *loaded* with pre-suasion. By reminding you of those attacks I draw your attention to the recency of the topic, and thus you’ll naturally evaluate it the danger as a lot realer.

But pre-suasive questions can be even simpler: “Are you unhappy?” gets you to start fishing for unhappiness in your life, whereas “Are you happy?” makes you look for the positives. In a 1993 study among students, those with the first question were 375% (!) more likely to report actually being unhappy.

What kind of answer you get highly depends on how you ask the question.

Lesson 2: Whatever grabs our attention, we think is relevant.

Have you been thinking about terrorism for the last minute or so? That’s because I planted something very attention-grabbing in your head. And the longer you think about it, the more relevant it’ll become in your mind.

What’s more, if we’re not giving our attention to something that grabs it already, we’ll just settle for whatever’s available right now. If I ask you whether you like cappuccino in a Starbucks, you’re a lot more likely to say yes – even if you don’t – just because you feel it’s the right response in this environment.

In the same vein, you will think 9/11 is historically less important two weeks before and after the anniversary date than the week of. When the news have been recycling it for days, the event is still fresh in your mind, it’s emotional and available.

So the next time someone tries to sell you an alarm system by citing all kinds of scary crime statistics, remember: **they’re making things seem more relevant to you than they might actually be.**

Lesson 3: Our word choices matter a lot more than we think, because words get us to do things.

I think you should watch Entourage. It’s a hilariously funny TV show, has great guest stars, awesome actors, and a superb soundtrack, especially for people who like hip-hop.

Does this make you want to watch the show? If so, what do you think sold you on it? The fun? The actors? The soundtrack? Chances are, it's none of those things. Most likely, if you now feel compelled to watch this show, **it's because I used words that reminded you of some of your favorite things**. Maybe you thought of a funny actor you like, a hip-hop song you love, or even just something random you think is awesome.

One of the psychologists Cialdini cites in the book says *the primary purpose of speech is to direct the attention of listeners to certain aspects of reality*. Use the right words, get people to focus on certain things and thus, to take certain actions.

For example, in a study where participants had to assemble sentences from scrambled words, those with aggressive words like "blood," "rage," "angry," or "kill" set intensity levels of electric shocks in a follow-up test 50% higher than the control group. Similarly, after reading a long text about old people with triggering words, participants of another study actually walked slower.

What you say matters. It changes what you do. More than you think.

Pre-Suasion Review

You have to be bold to come back after 30 years and say: "Look, I wrote another book!" Especially when your first one was so successful. I have nothing but respect for that. And I think Robert Cialdini actually pulled it off. *Pre-Suasion* is getting great reviews, the blinks make a lot of sense to me and this adds a fresh and new perspective to a topic that's been talked so much about. Bravo!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Who likes to use leading questions very much
- What question you should ask if you want people's email address
- Why CEOs get both so much credit and flack
- What happens when you try to pay people to cut in front of them in line
- Which simple office change makes people more likely to work harder for their goals
- Why girls often think they're bad at math

Who would I recommend the Pre-Suasion summary to?

The 16 year old, who can't seem to get her shopping habit under control, the 26 year old marketer, who can't figure out how to sell more wine than his competitor, and anyone who wants to watch *Entourage* now.

