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Influence: Science and Practice

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Influence: Science and Practice

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Introduction:

- Six basic categories [of influence] . . . reciprocity, consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity.
- The ever accelerating pace and information crush of modern life will make this particular form of unthinking compliance more and more prevalent in the future. It will be increasingly important for the society, therefore, to understand the how and why of automatic influence.
- Material self-interest: a motivational given.

Chapter 1: Weapons of Influence

Click, Whirr

- fixed action patterns . . . the trigger feature.
- A well-known principle of human behavior says that when we ask someone to do us a favor we will be more successful if we provide a reason . . . '*because*'.
- Stereotype: expensive = good . . . inexpensive = bad . . . rule: 'You get what you pay for.'
- Stereotyped behavior is prevalent in much human action, because in many cases, it is the most efficient form of behaving . . . and in other cases it is simply necessary.
- You and I exist in an extraordinarily complicated environment, easily the most rapidly moving and complex that has ever existed on the planet. To deal with it, we *need* shortcuts.
- Sometimes the behavior that unrolls will not be appropriate for the situation, because not even the best stereotypes and trigger features work every time.

- We will accept their imperfections since there is really no other choice. Without these features we would stand frozen.
- *Judgmental heuristics* . . . especially relevant . . . are those heuristics that tell us when to believe or do what we are told.
- “If an expert said so, it must be true.”
- *Controlled responding*.
- Those subjects for whom the issue mattered personally, on the other hand, ignored the speaker’s expertise and were persuaded primarily by the quality of the speaker’s arguments.
- The form and pace of modern life is not allowing us to make fully thoughtful decisions, even on many personally relevant topics.
- *Captainitis*.

The Profiteers

- It is odd that despite their current widespread use of looming future importance, most of us know very little about our automatic behavior patterns.
- They make us terribly vulnerable to anyone who *does* know how they work.
- We too have profiteers who mimic triggers features for our own brand of automatic responding.
- Weapon of automatic influence.

Jujitsu

- The ability to manipulate without the appearance of manipulation.
- The contrast principle.
- The same thing . . . can be made to seem very different depending on the nature of the event that preceded it.

Chapter 2: Reciprocation: The Old Give and Take . . . and Take

- One of the most potent of the weapons of influence around us — the rule of reciprocation. The rule says that we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us.
- All human societies subscribe to the rule.
- It may well be that a developed system of indebtedness flowing from the rule of reciprocation is a unique property of human culture.
- Richard Leakey ascribes the essence of what makes us human to the reciprocity system. He claims that we are human because our ancestors learned to share food and skills.
- Interdependencies that bind individuals together into highly efficient units.
- A widely shared and strongly held feeling of future obligation made an enormous difference in human social evolution because it meant that one person could give something (for example, food, energy, care) to another with confidence that the gift was not being lost. For the first time in evolutionary history, one individual could give away a variety of resources without actually giving them away.

How the Rule Works

- There is a general distaste for those who take and make no effort to give in return.
- Before a donation was requested, the target person was given a ‘gift.’

Politics

- Favors . . . political contributions, the stockpiling of obligations.
- Elected and appointed officials often see themselves as immune to the rules that apply to the rest of us . . . But, to indulge them in this conceit when it comes to the rule of reciprocity is not only laughable, it’s dangerous.

The Rule Enforces Uninvited Debts

- There is an obligation to give, an obligation to receive, and an obligation to repay.

- Surprise is an effective compliance producer in its own right. People who are surprised by a request will often comply because they are momentarily unsure of themselves and, consequently, influenced easily.

Reciprocal Concessions

- Another consequence of the rule, however, is an obligation to make a concession to someone who has made a concession to us.
- It is in the interest of any human group to have its members working together toward the achievement of common goals.
- Compromise . . . Mutual concession is one such important procedure.

Rejection-Then-Retreat

- One way to increase the chances that I will comply is first to make a larger request of me, one that I will most likely turn down.
- Labor negotiators, for instance, often use the tactic of making extreme demands that they do not expect to win but from which they can retreat and draw real concessions from the opposite side.

Reciprocal Concessions, Perceptual Contrast, and the Watergate Mystery

- In combination, the influence of reciprocity and perceptual contrast can present a fearsomely powerful force.
- Embodied in the rejection-then-retreat sequence, they are jointly capable of genuinely astonishing effects.

Defense

- With the proper understanding of the nature of our opponent, we can come away from the compliance battlefield unhurt and sometimes even better than before.
- The real opponent is the rule. If we are not to be abused by it, we must take steps to defuse its energy.

Rejecting the Rule

- The major problem . . . it is difficult to know whether such an offer is honest or whether it is the initial step in an exploitation.
- A policy of blanket rejection, then, seems ill advised.
- “Honored network of obligation.”
- A profiteer.
- The rule says that favors are to be met with favors; it does not require that tricks be met with favors.

Smoking Out the Enemy

- Merely define what you have received . . . not as gifts but as sales devices, and you will be free to decline.
- The reciprocity rule asserts that if justice is to be done, exploitation attempts should be exploited.

Chapter 3: Commitment and Consistency: Hobgoblins of the Mind

- Our desire to be (and appear) consistent with what we have already done.
- Once we make a choice or take a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment.

Whirring Along

- Consistency is valued and adaptive.
- Inconsistency is commonly thought to be an undesirable personality trait.
- A high degree of consistency is normally associated with personal and intellectual strength.

- It is the heart of logic, rationality, stability, and honesty.
- Without it our lives would be difficult, erratic, and disjointed.

The Quick Fix

- When it occurs unthinkingly, consistency can be disastrous.
- Like most other forms of automatic responding, it offers a shortcut through the complexities of modern life.

Seek and Hide

- Christmas promises . . . they undersupply.

Commitment is the Key

- Once a stand is taken, there is a natural tendency to behave in ways that are stubbornly consistent with the stand.
- Progressively escalating commitments.
- “No longer a prospect — he is a customer.”
- Be very careful about agreeing to trivial requests.

Hearts and Minds

- Once you’ve got a person’s self-image where you want it, that person should comply *naturally* with a whole range of requests that are consistent with this new self-view.
- The real goal . . . to modify . . . hearts and minds of their captives.

The Magic Act

- Our best evidence of people's true feelings and beliefs comes less from their words than from their deeds.
- Active commitments give us the kind of information we use to shape self-image, which then shapes future actions, which solidify the new self-image.
- Oh those 'harmless' concessions.
- Once an active commitment is made, then, self-image is squeezed from both sides by consistency pressures.
- There is something magical about writing things down.

The Public Eye

- Whenever one takes a stand that is visible to others, there arises a drive to maintain that stand in order to *look* like a consistent person.
- Public commitments had hardened them into the most stubborn of all.
- "Persons who go through a great deal of trouble or pain to attain something tend to value it more highly than persons who attain the same thing with a minimum of effort."
- Acts of group survival.

The Inner Choice

- The commitments most effective in changing a person's self-image and future behavior are those that are active, public, and effortless.
- They want the participants to *own* what they had done.
- Those men had to be made to take inner responsibility for their actions.
- We accept inner responsibility for a behavior when we think we have chose to perform it in the absence of strong outside pressures.
- All this has important implications for rearing children. It suggests that we should never heavily bribe or threaten our children to do the things we want them to truly believe in.
- We must somehow arrange for them to accept inner responsibility.

- [In regards to Freedman's experiment] Freedman had instructed [the boys] that playing with the robot was wrong, but he had added no threat of punishment should they disobey him . . . they didn't want to [play with it].
- The important thing is to use a reason that will initially produce the desired behavior and will, at the same time, allow a child to take personal responsibility for that behavior.

Growing Legs to Stand On

- After people come to view themselves as public-spirited citizens, they will automatically begin to see things differently.
- As a general guiding principle, more information is always better than less.

Standing Up for the Public Good

- Depending on the motives of the person wishing to use them, any of the compliance techniques discussed in this book can be employed for good or for ill.

Defense

- The only effective defense . . . is an awareness that, although consistency is generally good, even vital, there is a foolish, rigid variety to be shunned.

Chapter 4: Social Proof: Truths Are Us

The Principle of Social Proof

- We determine what is correct by finding out what others think is correct.
- We view a behavior as correct in a given situation to the degree that we see others performing it.
- Usually, when a lot of people are doing something, it is the right thing to do. This feature of the principle of social proof is simultaneously its major strength and weakness.
- Makes one who uses the shortcut vulnerable to the attacks of profiteers.

People Power

- “ Since 95 percent of the people are imitators and only 5 percent initiators, people are persuaded more by the actions of others than by any proof we can offer.”

After the Deluge

- Zealous missionaries . . . publicity and recruitment efforts provided the only remaining hope. If they could spread the Word, if they could inform the uninformed, if they could persuade the skeptics, and of, by so doing, they could win new converts, their threatened but treasured beliefs would become *truer*. The principle of social proof says so: *The greater the number of people who finds any idea correct, the more a given individual will perceive the idea to be correct . . .* Convince and ye shall be convinced.

Cause of Death Uncertain(ty)

- When we are unsure of ourselves, when the situation is unclear or ambiguous, when uncertainty reigns, we are most likely to look to and accept the actions of others as correct.
- *Pluralistic ignorance*. A thorough understanding of the pluralistic ignorance phenomenon helps explain a regular occurrence in our country that has been termed both a riddle and a national disgrace: the failure of entire groups of bystanders to aid victims in agonizing need of help.
- With several potential helpers around, the personal responsibility of each individual is reduced.
- We can learn from the way the other witnesses are reacting whether the event is or is not an emergency.
- Everybody else observing the event is likely to be looking for social evidence, too.
- By the principle of social proof, the event will be roundly interpreted as a non-emergency.
- Once witnesses are convinced that an emergency situation exists, aid is very likely.

Devictimizing Yourself

- “You, sir, in the blue jacket, I need help. Call an ambulance.”
- The failure of your request for emergency aid could mean your life.
- The principle of social proof was working for us now. The trick had been to get the ball rolling in the direction of help. Once that was accomplished, social proof’s natural momentum did the rest.

Monkey Me, Monkey Do

- We will use the actions of others to decide on proper behavior for ourselves, especially when we view those others to be similar to ourselves.
- School based antismoking programs had lasting effects only when it used same-age peer leaders as teachers.

Monkey Die

- Immediately following certain kinds of highly publicized suicide stories, the number of people who die in commercial-airline crashes increases 1000 percent!
- Publicized suicide story itself that produces the car and plane wrecks.
- Stories reporting suicide-plus-murder incidents produce an increase in multiple-fatality wrecks only. Simple bereavement could not cause such a pattern.
- Certain troubled people who read of another’s self-inflicted death kill themselves in imitation . . . copycat suicides.
- Whether they appear as news reports, information features, or fictional movies, these stories create an immediate cluster of self-inflicted deaths, with impressionable, imitation-prone teenagers being the most frequent victims.
- Evidently, the principle of social proof is so wide-ranging and powerful that its domain extends to the fundamental decision for life or death.
- Homicides in this country have a simulated, copycat character after highly publicized acts of violence. Heavyweight championship prize fights that receive coverage on network evening news appear to produce measurable increases in the United States homicide rate.

- Widely publicized aggression has the nasty tendency to spread to similar victims.
- Copycat crimes . . . A 14-year-old in Taber , Alberta , and a 15-year-old in Coyers , Georgia , killed or wounded a total of eight classmates within 10 days of the Littleton , Colorado massacre.
- **Media officials need to think deeply about how and how prominently to present reports of killing sprees. Such reports are not only riveting, sensational, and newsworthy, they are malignant.**

Monkey Island

- Uncertainty — the right-hand man of the principle of social proof.
- There will always be a few such fanatically obedient individuals in any strong leader-dominated group.
- Understanding of fundamental psychological principles.
- The most influential leaders are those who know how to arrange group conditions to allow the principle of social proof to work in their favor,
- Following into a herd.
- The mentality of a herd makes it easy to manage.
- Social jujitsu.

Defense

- The difficulty is compounded by the realization that, most of the time, we don't want to guard against the information that social proof provides.
- Those problems appear whenever the flight information locked into the control mechanism is wrong.
- A classic problem: how to make use of a piece of equipment that simultaneously benefits and imperils our welfare.
- Our best defense . . . is to recognize when the data are in error.

- Whenever possible we ought to sting those responsible for the rigging of social evidence. We should purchase **no** products featured in phony “unrehearsed interview” commercials. Moreover, each manufacturer of the items should receive a letter explaining our response and recommending that they discontinue use of the advertising agency that produced so deceptive a presentation of their product.
- I get a genuine sense of righteousness by lashing out when they try.

Looking Up

- The notion that there is safety in numbers can prove very wrong once a herd mentality sets in.
- First, we seem to assume that if a lot of people are doing the same thing, they must know something we don't. Especially when we are uncertain, we are willing to place an enormous amount of trust in the collective knowledge of the crowd.
- Second, quite frequently the crowd is mistaken because its members are not acting on the basis of any superior information but reacting, themselves, to the principle of social proof.
- There is a lesson here: An automatic pilot device, like social proof, should never be trusted fully; even when no saboteur has slipped information into the mechanism, it can sometimes go haywire by itself.

Chapter 5: Liking: the Friendly Thief

- “The main work of a trial attorney is to make a jury like his client.” – Clarence Darrow.
- Professional exploitation of the liking rule . . . Tupperware.
- The growing number of charity organizations that recruit volunteers to canvass for donations close to their own homes.
- Compliance professionals . . . “endless chain method” . . . sales and a list of their friends . . . Calling Circle .

Why Do I Like You? Let Me List the Reasons

- **Physical Attractiveness** . . . halo effects.

- Attractive candidates receive more than two and a half times as many votes.
- Attractive individuals get paid an average of 12 – 14 percent more.
- Our judicial process is similarly susceptible to these influences.
- More persuasive in changing the opinions of an audience.
- Better liked, more persuasive, more frequently helped, and seen as possessing more desirable personality traits and greater intellectual capacity.
- Teachers presume good-looking children to be more intelligent.

Similarity

- We like people who are similar to us.
- Dress . . . backgrounds and interests similar to ours.
- Advise special caution in the presence of requesters who claim to be “just like you.”

Compliments

- “I like you.”

Contact and Cooperation

- Frustration, conflict, or competition.
- The typical American classroom fosters precisely these unpleasant conditions.
- *In general, here is how it works: The teacher stands in front of the class and asks a question. Six to ten children strain in their seats and wave their hands in the teacher's face, eager to be called in and show how smart they are. Several others sit quietly with their eyes averted, trying to become invisible. When the teacher calls one child, you see looks of disappointment and dismay on the faces of the eager students, who missed the chance to get the teacher's approval; and you will see relief on the faces of the others who didn't know the answer . . . This game is fiercely competitive and the stakes are high,*

because the kids are competing for the love and approval of one of the two or three most important people in their world.

- *Further, this learning process guarantees that the children will not learn to like and understand each other. Conjure up your own experience. If you knew the answer and the teacher called on someone else, you probably hoped that he or she would make a mistake so that you would have a chance to display your knowledge. If you were called upon and failed, or if you didn't even raise your hand to compete, you probably envied and resented your classmates who knew the answer. Children who fail in this system become jealous and resentful of the successes, putting them down as teacher's pets or even resorting to violence against them in the school yard. The successful students, for their part, often hold the unsuccessful children in contempt, calling them "dumb" or "stupid." (Aronson, 1975, pp. 44, 47)*

Off to Camp

- Intergroup conflict.
- The recipe for disharmony was quick and easy: just separate the participants into groups and let them sit for a while in their own juices. Then mix together over the flame of continued competition. And there you have it: Cross-group hatred at a rolling boil.
- Cooperation was necessary for mutual benefit.
- Imposition of common goals on the group.

Back to School

- Jigsaw learning stimulated significantly more friendship and less prejudice among ethnic groups.
- Not only are cooperative learning techniques a radical departure from the traditional, familiar routine of most teachers, but they may even also threaten teachers' sense of importance in the classroom by turning over much of the instruction to the students.
- Competition has its place too. It can serve as a valuable motivator of desirable action and an important builder of self-concept.

- Break its monopoly.
- The point is to make two points. First, although the familiarity produced by contact usually leads to greater liking, the opposite occurs if the contact carries distasteful experiences with it. Therefore, when children of different racial groups are thrown into the incessant, harsh competition of the standard American classroom, we ought to — and do — see hostilities worsen. Second, the evidence that team-oriented learning is an antidote to this disorder tells us about the heavy impact of cooperation on the liking process.
- Compliance professionals are forever attempting to establish that we and they are working for the same goals, that we must “pull together” for mutual benefit, that they are, in essence, our teammates.
- Good Cop/Bad Cop.

Conditioning and Association

- The nature of bad news infects the teller.
- The principle of association is a general one, governing both negative and positive connections. *An innocent association with either bad things or good things will influence how people feel about us.*
- “Known by the company we kept.” Our parents were teaching us about guilt by association.
- Associate credit cards and insignia . . . with the positive rather than the negative aspects of spending.
- When asked to contribute to charity (The United Way), college students were markedly more likely to give money if the room they were in contained MasterCard insignias than if it did not.
- Linking of celebrities to products.
- The “luncheon technique.”
- Desirable things can substitute for food in lending their likable qualities to the ideas, products, and people artificially linked to them.
- To be liked, they should connect themselves to good news not bad.

From the News and Weather to the Sports

- It is a personal thing . . . the principle of association.
- “All things being equal, you root for your own sex, your own culture, your own locality . . . and what you want to prove is that *you* are better than the other person. Whomever you root for represents *you*; and when he [or she] wins, *you* win.” (Isaac Asimov, 1975)
- The self is at stake.
- So we want our affiliated sports teams to win to prove our own superiority, but to whom are we trying to prove? Ourselves, certainly, but to everyone else, too. According to the association principle, if we can surround ourselves with success that we are connected with in even a superficial way (for example, place of residence), our public prestige will rise.
- We are trying to get observers to think more highly of us and to like us more.
- They are individuals with hidden personality flaws: poor self-concepts. Deep inside is a sense of low personal worth that directs them to seek prestige not from the generation or promotion of their own attainments but from the generation or promotion of their association with others' attainments.
- The rather tragic view of accomplishment as derived from outside the self.

Defense

- Unlikely that we could muster a timely protection against them anyway.
- Our vigilance should be directed not toward the things that may produce undue liking for a compliance practitioner but toward the fact that undue liking has been *produced*. The time to call out the defense is when we feel ourselves liking the practitioner more than we should under the circumstances.
- Borrows much from the jujitsu style favored by the compliance professionals themselves. We don't attempt to restrain the influence of the factors that cause liking. Quite the contrary. We allow those factors to exert their force, and then we use that force in our campaign against those who would profit by them.

Chapter 6: Authority: Directed Deference

- **The power of authority pressure**

- When it is their job, how much suffering will ordinary people be willing to inflict on an entirely innocent other person?
- “What could make us do such a thing?”
- It has to do, [Milgram] says, with a deep-seated sense of duty to authority.
- “It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study” (Milgram, 1974). There are sobering implications of this finding for those concerned about the ability of another form of authority — government — to extract frightening levels of obedience from ordinary citizens.
- S. Brian Willson . . . refused to treat him . . . a system that constrained their actions through the pressure to obey. “They were just doing what I did in ’ Nam . They were following orders that are part of an insane policy. They’re the fall guys.”
- Lieutenant William Calley . . . and My Lai , Vietnam .

The Allures and Dangers of Blind Obedience

- Consequently, we are trained from birth to believe that obedience to proper authority is right and disobedience is wrong.
- Religious instruction contributes as well.
- Click, whirr . . . Information from a recognized authority can provide us with a valuable shortcut for deciding how to act in a situation.
- Conforming to the dictates of authority figures has always had genuine practical advantages for us. Early on, these people (parents, teachers) knew more than we did, and we found that taking their advice proved beneficial — partly because of their greater wisdom and partly because they controlled our rewards and punishments.
- We often do so when it makes no sense at all.
- This paradox is, of course, the same one that attends all major weapons of influence.
- Once a legitimate authority has given an order, subordinates stop *thinking* in the situation and start reacting. Mix this kind of click, whirr response into complex hospital environments and mistakes are inevitable.
- Take, for example, the strange case of the “rectal earache” reported by Cohen and Davis. A physician ordered ear drops to be administered to the right ear of a patient suffering

pain and infection there. Instead of writing out completely the location “Right ear” on the prescription, the doctor abbreviated it so that the instructions read “R ear.” Upon receiving the prescription, the duty nurse promptly put the required number of ear drops into the patient’s anus. Obviously, rectal treatment of an earache made no sense, but **neither the patient nor the nurse questioned it.**

Connotation Not Content

- The appearance of authority is enough.

Titles

- The results are frightening indeed. That 95 percent of regular staff nurses complied unhesitatingly with a patently improper instruction of this sort must give us all as potential hospital patients great reason for concern.
- The experiment strongly suggests, however, that one of these intelligences is, for all practical purposes, nonfunctioning . . . click, whirr.
- Business suits.

Defense

- A fundamental form of defense against this problem, therefore, is a heightened awareness of authority power . . . when coupled with a recognition of how easily authority symbols can be faked.
- Yet, there is a perverse complication — the familiar one inherent in all weapons of influence: We shouldn’t want to resist authority altogether or even most of the time.
- The trick is to be able to recognize without much strain or vigilance when authority directives are best followed and when they are not.

Authoritative Authority

- The first question . . . “Is this authority truly an expert?” This question focuses our attention on two crucial pieces of information: the authority’s credentials and the relevance of those credentials to the topic at hand.

Sly Sincerity

- A second simple question, “How truthful can we expect the expert to be?”
- Need to consider their trustworthiness in the situation . . . impartial . . . something to gain.
- By wondering how an expert stands to benefit from our compliance, we give ourselves another safety net against undue and automatic influence.
- Tactic compliance practitioners often use to assure us of their sincerity: They will argue against their own interests.
- A repertoire of approaches, each ready to be used under the appropriate circumstances.
- Who, after all, is more believable than a demonstrated expert of proven sincerity?

Chapter 7: Scarcity: The Rule of the Few

“The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost.” – G. K. Chesterton

Less is Best, and Loss is Worst

- The scarcity principle — *that opportunities seem more valuable to us when they are less available.*
- Pamphlets advising young women to check for breast cancer through self-examinations are significantly more successful if they state their case in terms of what stands to be lost rather than gained.

Limited Numbers

- “Limited Numbers” tactic.

Psychological Reactance

- We know that the things that are difficult to get are typically better than those that are easy to get.

- Secondary . . . as opportunities become less available, we lose freedoms.
- Psychological reactance theory . . . to explain the human response to diminishing personal control . . . whenever free choice is limited or threatened, the need to retain our freedoms makes us want them significantly more.
- It would be helpful to determine when people first show the desire to fight against restrictions of their freedoms.
- An independent being is one with choices.
- It is the wise parent who provides highly consistent information.

Censorship

- The ability to acquire, store, and manage information increasingly affects access to wealth and power.
- Especially clever individuals holding a weak or unpopular position on an issue can get us to agree with that position by arranging to have their message restricted
- Publicize the censorship.
- Official censorship . . . even the proper, official censorship of a courtroom setting creates problems for the censor . . . valuing the banned information more than ever.
- The principle works for messages, communications, and knowledge, too.
- *Information may not have to be censored for us to value it more; it need only be scarce.*
- The real boost in sales, however, occurred among the customers who heard of the impending scarcity via “exclusive” information.

Optimal Conditions

- An important practical defense, then, is to find out when scarcity works best on us.

New Scarcity: Costlier Cookies and Civil Conflict

- The drop from abundance to scarcity produced a decidedly more positive reaction to the cookies than did constant scarcity.
- Such scarcity is a primary cause of political turmoil and violence.
- Thus, it is not the traditionally most downtrodden people — those who have come to see their deprivation as part of the natural order of things — who are especially likely to revolt. Instead, revolutionaries are more likely to be those who have been given at least some taste of a better life.
- Black family income had risen from 56 to 80 percent of that of a comparably educated white family (in the mid-1960s).
- Peaceful civil rights demonstrations of the time were frequently confronted by hostile crowds — and police.
- A valuable lesson for would-be rulers: When it comes to freedoms, it is more dangerous to have given for a while than never to have given at all.
- Should these now established freedoms become less available, there will be an especially hot variety of hell to pay.
- Freedoms once granted will not be relinquished without a fight.
- Parents who enforce and discipline inconsistently produce generally rebellious children.

Competition for Scarce Resources: Foolish Fury

- This finding highlights the importance of competition in the pursuit of limited resources. Not only do we want the same item more when it is scarce, we want it most when we are in competition for it.
- Social proof
- Wholly fabricated
- The new bidder
- “Feeding frenzy” phenomenon.
- Extreme caution is advised whenever we encounter the devilish construction of scarcity plus rivalry.

Defense

- Knowing the causes and workings of scarcity pressures may not be sufficient to protect us from them because knowing is a cognitive act, and cognitive processes are suppressed by our emotional reaction to scarcity pressures.
- Use the arousal itself as our prime cue.
- The joy is not in the experience of a scarce commodity but in the possessing of it.
- We must also confront the question of what it is we want from the item.
- It is vital to remember that scarce things do not taste or feel or sound or ride or work any better *because* of their limited availability.
- Panicky, feverish reactions have no place in wise compliance decisions.
- Asking ourselves why we want the item under consideration.

Summary

- The scarcity principle also applies to the way information is evaluated.
- Limited information is more persuasive . . . more effective if . . . exclusive information.

Chapter 8: Instant Influence: Primitive Consent for an Automatic Age

Primitive Automaticity

- A fundamental theme of this book: Very often when we make a decision about someone or something we don't use all of the relevant available information.
- A complicating companion theme . . . Despite the susceptibility to stupid decisions that accompanies a reliance on a single feature of the available data, the pace of modern life demands that we frequently use this shortcut.
- That is why we employ the factors of reciprocation, consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity so often and so automatically in making our compliance decisions. Each, by itself, provides a highly reliable cue as to when we will be better off saying yes instead of no.

- When we are rushed, stressed, uncertain, indifferent, distracted, or fatigued, we tend to focus on less of the information available to us.
- All this leads to an unnerving insight: With the sophisticated mental apparatus we have used to build world eminence as a species, we have created an environment so complex, fast-paced, and information-laden, that we must increasingly deal with it in the fashion of the animals we long ago transcended.

Modern Automaticity

- John Stuart Mill, the British economist, political thinker, and philosopher of science, died over 125 years ago. The year of his death (1873) is important because he is reputed to have been the last man to know everything there was to know in the world.
- Issues rated as most important on the public agenda are becoming more diverse and are surviving on that agenda for a shorter time.
- Novelty, transience, diversity, and acceleration are acknowledged as prime descriptors of civilized existence.
- Too many options can prove wearisome.
- Millions of ordinary “duffers” are sitting in front of computers with the potential to present and analyze enough data to bury an Einstein.
- Notice something telling: Our modern era, often termed The Information Age, has never been called **The Knowledge Age**. Information does not translate directly into knowledge. It must first be processed — accessed, absorbed, comprehended, integrated, and retained.

Shortcuts Shall Be Sacred

- A mental apparatus that is unequipped to deal thoroughly with the intricacy and richness of the outside environment.
- We have created our own deficiency by constructing a radically more complex world.
- In response to this “paralysis of analysis” we will revert increasingly to a focus on a single, usually reliable feature of the situation.
- The problem comes when something causes the normally trustworthy cues to counsel us poorly, to lead us to erroneous actions and wrongheaded decisions. As we have seen, one

such cause is the trickery of certain compliance practitioners, who seek to profit from the mindless and mechanical nature of shortcut responding.

- The frequency of this trickery is destined to increase as well.
- Compliance professionals who play fairly by the rules of shortcut responding are not to be considered the enemy; to the contrary, they are our allies in an efficient and adaptive process of exchange. The proper targets for counter-aggression are only those individuals who falsify, counterfeit, or misrepresent the evidence that naturally cues our shortcut responses.
- In short, we should be willing to use boycott, threat, confrontation, censure, tirade, nearly anything, to retaliate.
- I don't consider myself pugnacious by nature, but I actively advocate such belligerent actions because in a way I am at war with the exploiters. We all are.
- Threatens the reliability of our shortcuts.
- We should want to retaliate whenever we see someone betraying one of our rules of thumb for profit. We want that rule to be as effective as possible. To the degree that its fitness for duty is regularly undercut by the tricks of profiteers, we naturally will use it less and will be less able to cope efficiently with the decisional burdens of our day. That we cannot allow without a fight. The stakes are far too high.