# 

# **Chapter 12 Assignment**

Victor C. Harris II

COM-170-OL

Professor Sara L. Wilson

April 11, 2021, 2021

# 

# **Chapter 12 Assignment**

Prior to entering the workforce in 2011, my experience in communicating with others was limited almost exclusively to interpersonal relationships between myself and friends, family, and peers at school. However, after graduating high school, my scope of communication was radically broadened when I accepted my first full-time job as a door-to-door canvasser for a remodeling company, and thus beginning my career in sales. During my time of door-to-door sales, however, I quickly realized that the people who found the most success going door-to-door were not the people with the highest degree of product knowledge, but rather the ones who were the most capable communicators. Upon realizing this, I began to take a more scientific approach to communicating with home-owners, and found immediate success, and was even promoted to be the designated trainer of new-hires. While I couldn’t describe my techniques “*by the book*” until now, the key to success that I discovered was the effective management of power in communications.

The intrinsic goal of any type of sales is negotiation, and eventually agreement. The problem: people with less power in a conversation tend to take a nonnegotiating approach, especially when speaking with a person that they do not know --like door-to-door salespeople, who typically possess an inherently high level of expert and persuasive power. Although somewhat counterintuitive, and highly debated among salespeople, my suggested solution to this problem is to empower the prospect, which increases the likelihood that they will make decisions (what products they are interested in), and more likely to take risks (e.g., buying a product from a stranger). The key to this method for a salesperson is to narrow to power distance, while still maintaining the advantage, which requires a certain degree of finesse.

Due to power’s asymmetrical nature, empowering a customer can be done by either increasing their power, or decreasing the salesperson’s. Personally, I find it to be beneficial to do both as to not discredit yourself as a salesperson to the point that you are no longer credible, and to not empower the customer to the point that they feel privileged, which is where the finesse comes into play. Over the years, I have learned to do this both verbally and nonverbally by showing power in several ways.

Showing power nonverbally is especially important when meeting a prospect for the first time because it demonstrates your level of power before a formal introduction has taken place. When training new salespeople, I often placed an almost obsessive emphasis on physical distance. I did this because when a person sees a stranger at their front door, their first reaction is to question why they are there and whether they should answer the door or to ignore them. When canvassers stand directly in front of the door, it communicates to the homeowner that they have a lot of power, which can often be misconceived as coercive power, which is less than ideal for a person that is hoping to make a sale.

To avoid this, I would always instruct them to take three steps back after knocking on someone’s door, or to step down to the ground if the home had a front porch. This technique was essential to narrow the power distance immediately and increased the rate at which homeowners answered the doors dramatically, though standing too far away increased the chances that a homeowner would open their door and shout “not interested”.

Placing emphasis on introductory handshakes is also something I do as much as I can. This nonverbal cue, though remarkably simple, can be detrimental to a new relationship if not executed in the right way. The handshake is especially important when keeping a distance, because it allows the power advantage that was initially forfeited to the prospect to be regained while maintaining a proportionate power distance.

During the business stage of a sales call is when I place more emphasis on verbal communication to understand the needs of my customer and to expand, or at times regain the power distance advantage to ease the process of closing the sale. The most effective way that I do this is by gradually increasing the directiveness of my questions. At the beginning of a call, I try to ask more tag questions to gauge the level of interest that they have in a product and to let them make their own decisions. But as the conversation progresses, I am more direct in my requests for their personal information, required documents, and anything else I may need from them. This allows me to take the power back and to ensure their compliance through the most delicate parts of the call.

Unfortunately, the constant shift of power that I experience in virtually all my professional conversations can create a bit of turbulence in many of my personal relationships, especially with those I am very close to like my fiancé Allison. Because of my work experience, we both know that I have the advantage between us in terms of communications skills and intrinsic power (outside of, but for the benefit of our relationship, I try to ensure that the power distance between is not disproportionate. The problem with this, though, is that to close the power gap I frequently diminish my own power through self-critical statements, slang, and hesitation. Unfortunately, the only thing that comes from this is that it detriments my own power both at home and at work. The best way to fix this, and ultimately increase my power in all conversations is to actively empower her as a person and in our relationship by sharing decision making, and by being her biggest supporter. This, in turn, will increase both of our degrees of power and benefit us both, a clearly healthier alternative to degrading my own power.

**962 Words**