

- Cialdini proposed six psychological persuasive techniques: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity.
- The Relationship Based Persuasion technique has four steps: survey the situation, confront the five barriers to a successful influence encounter, make the pitch, and secure the commitments.

Key Terms

- **reciprocity:** the responses of individuals to the actions of others
- **social proof:** People tend to do things that they see others are doing.

There is no single key to a successful persuasive speech. Some people take longer than others to be persuaded, and some respond to different persuasion techniques. Therefore, persuasive speakers should be cognizant of audience characteristics to customize the pitch.

The psychology of persuasion is best exemplified by two theories that try to explain how people are influenced.

Robert Cialdini, in his book on persuasion, defined six “weapons of influence:”



more person looked up into the sky, bystanders would then look up to see what they could see. This experiment was aborted, as so many people looked up that they stopped traffic.

4. Authority: People will tend to obey authority figures, even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts. Cialdini cites incidents like the Milgram experiments in the early 1960s and the My Lai massacre in 1968.
5. Liking: People are easily persuaded by other people whom they like. Cialdini cites the marketing of Tupperware, wherein people were more likely to buy from others they liked. Some of the biases favoring more attractive people are discussed, but generally more aesthetically pleasing people tend to use this influence over others.
6. Scarcity: Perceived scarcity will generate demand. For example, saying that offers are available for a "limited time only" encourages sales.

The second theory is called Relationship Based Persuasion. It was developed by Richard Shell and Mario Moussa. The overall theory is that persuasion is the art of winning over others. Their four step approach is:

1. Survey your situation: This step includes an analysis of the persuader's situation, goals and challenges.
2. Confront the five barriers: Five obstacles pose the greatest risks to a successful influence encounter

– relationships, credibility, communication mismatches, belief systems, and interest and needs.

3. Make your pitch: People need a solid reason to justify a decision, yet at the same time many decisions are made on basis of intuition. This step also deals with presentation skills.
4. Secure your commitments: In order to safeguard the longtime success of a persuasive decision, it is vital to deal with politics at both the individual and organizational level.

The Ethics of Persuasion

Persuasion is unethical if it is for personal gain at the expense of others, or for personal gain without the knowledge of the audience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Discuss the qualities that assure that persuasion is ethical

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key Points

- Methods such as torture, coercion, and brainwashing are always unethical.
- Ethical persuasion has three components: the exploration of the other person's viewpoint, the explanation of your viewpoint, and the creation of resolutions.
- Tests such as the TARES test and the Fitzpatrick & Gauthier test are used to determine if a persuasion attempt is ethical.

Key Terms

- **coercion:** Use of physical or moral force to compel a person to do something, or to abstain from doing something, thereby depriving that person of the exercise of free will.

Ethics of Persuasion

Not all persuasion is ethical. Persuasion is widely considered unethical if it is for the purpose of personal gain at the expense of others, or for personal gain without the knowledge of the audience. Furthermore, some methods of persuasion are wholly written off as unethical. For example, coercion, brainwashing, and torture are never considered ethical.

Barring any of the persuasive methods that are easily distinguished as unethical (such as torture), the line between ethical and unethical is less clearly

demarcated. Ethical persuasion has a series of common characteristics that are missing in unethical persuasion. Ethical persuasion seeks to achieve the following three goals:

1. Explore the other person's viewpoint
2. Explain your viewpoint
3. Create resolutions

Notably, this approach involves input from the audience and an honest explanation of your viewpoint. If you have questions about the ethics of a persuasive attempt, there are a number of tests that can be done.



Understanding Ethics: Al Capone, an American gangster in the early 20th century, used coercion as a persuasive technique, which isn't ethical.

TARES Test

Sherry Baker and David Martinson proposed a five-part TARES test to help guide the PR practitioner to define ethical persuasion. An ethical persuasive speech must have all of the following components:

1. Truthfulness of the message
2. Authenticity of the persuader
3. Respect for the audience

4. Equity of the persuasive appeal

Fitzpatrick & Gauthier

Fitzpatrick and Gauthier developed a series of questions that must be honestly answered to determine how ethical a pitch is:

1. For what purpose is persuasion being employed?
2. Toward what choices and with what consequences for individual lives is persuasion being used?
3. Does the persuasion in this case contribute to or interfere with the decision-making process for its target audience?

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