# How To Become Convincing

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4-5 minutes

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Underlying every idea someone has lies a more subtle, hidden fantasy of what is *actually* driving them. An emotional narrative the person built around what they want to do. They're often not aware of it.

If you need to convince someone to do something, don't pitch your idea. Instead, pitch the underlying idea *fantasy* to someone who would enjoy it. Similarly, if you want to convince someone not to do something, you need to understand their true motivation.

**Don't debate at the surface.** Suppose someone wants to get a new job. They'll tell friends "they want to grow" or "don't feel like they're learning in their current job". Debating the points they bring up with you won't help because that isn't what is *really* motivating them to leave. True motivation is often simpler: they heard a friend is making much more money than them. They met someone at the new job they really like. They haven't been sleeping well, and they're just tired. The fantasy that's stuck in their mind is a mental image of themselves making more money, being near a person they admire or being more well-rested. You need to determine what that is.

**Listen.** Try to ascertain what the person *really* wants. This requires listening at a whole new level. When they talk, notice what causes their eyes their eyes to light up. Pay attention to their posture. Once you start paying attention to the details, you'll realize other humans are the most interesting thing in the world.

**Counter-position.** Don't try to compete with their fantasy. Like Kellyanne Conway answering a question, just pitch a different one. If you suspect someone the fantasy in the future job is "I will make more money", don't immediately offer a raise. Pitch another something else, e.g: "there will be real opportunity for public recognition in this role". Don't make your idea comparable to another idea.

**Direct a movie.** Suppose you want someone to quit smoking. The fantasy you want to plant is how youthful they'll feel when they stop. The most effective way to incept a person isn't to say those words. Instead, say something like: "it must feel wonderful to run 3 miles in the wilderness, take a breath of fresh air and really live life." Conduct a movie in the mind with words that evoke vivid imagery. It makes for a much more engaging conversation.

**Don't pre-suppose solutions.** Instead of thinking of what you want ("you should build this thing"), think of *why* you want it ("this thing could be really successful, if someone built it"). Try to formulate a narrative around the underlying motivations for the idea, and let them think of the actual concept themselves. Give context, not commands.

**Run a simulation.** Think to yourself: "what would I be thinking if I was in that position?" To do this well, you must disentangle your own motivations. Take your hat off. Put theirs on. Argue against yourself with them. This helps convey that you're really trying to see the problem from their side.

**Pitch theoretically.** When you're in a biased position, don't make any direct suggestions ("you should"). Your idea may get auto-rejected because of its origin. Instead, use yourself or a theoretical stranger ("I would…", "boy *somebody* ought to…").

**Lastly, forget about yourself.** People frequently make the mistake of pitching ideas that will help them, not the other party. This doesn't work. Smart people have a very strong firewall for truly embracing an idea. To pass it you must really afford the other party something that they deeply want. Not what you want. That is a secondary goal.