

### **Applying the Law of Obligation**

This is a very simple law to implement. All you need to do is create a need or obligation in the mind of the other person. Think to yourself what can you do, give, or say that would create that indebtedness in the mind of your prospect.

As you think of the perfect persuasive situation, include one or more of the following items to help you create a greater sense of obligation: a service of some sort, information or concessions, secrets, favors, gestures, compliments, smiles, gifts, invitations, attention, or your time. Any one, or a combination of several, of these will create a need to reciprocate in your prospect – as long as your act is perceived as altruistic. If, however, your pre-giving is read as manipulating, bribing, or “tricking,” it will understandably not be met with much compliance.

Take caution with this strategy. The use of obligation will backfire if your prospect sees your actions as a bribe to comply. Feeling tricked, your prospect will not be pressured to comply or reciprocate. “When pre-giving is perceived as a bribe or a pressure tactic, it actually decreases compliance.” The obligation you create must be perceived as an unselfish act.

### **Reciprocal Concessions**

Researchers have found that when someone persuades you to change your mind, they will be inclined to do the same if approached by you. Conversely, if you resist that person’s attempts and do *not* change your mind, then he will likely reciprocate in a similar fashion, resisting *your* attempts to change *his* mind. Consider how this can be used to your advantage if you approach a person you wish to have future dealings with and say something like, “You know, I got to thinking about what you said, and you’re really right...”

### **Give a Favor, Expect a Favor in Return**

Before a negotiation, it is wise to offer some sort of gift. Note, however, that offering the gift *before* and not during the negotiation is of prime importance! Otherwise, your token will come across as bribery. Your gift will almost always be accepted, even if only out of social custom and courtesy. Whether your recipient likes or wants your gift or not, the psychological need to reciprocate will take root, increasing the likelihood that your request will be met affirmatively. Of course, even when giving the gift *before* you make your request, be sure your motives come across as a sincere effort to help the recipient rather than yourself.

### **Secrets Create Obligation: The Secret of Secrets**

Everybody loves secrets. We all love to be in the know. When you share something personal or private with another person, you create an instant bond and sense of obligation and trust with them. For example, imagine saying in the middle of a negotiation, “Off the record, I think you should know....” or, “I shouldn’t be telling you this, but....” These statements show that you are confiding in your listener. By offering him inside knowledge, you’ve created a sense of intimacy and made your listener feel important. Your listener will feel a need, and often even the desire, to reciprocate the

information or to share something personal about himself in return. He will begin to open up and share useful information with you.

Judges especially have to deal with their jurors being influenced by “secret information.” Attorneys often strategically introduce information that the jury really isn’t supposed to evaluate. When this happens, the judge can either declare a mistrial or tell the jury to ignore the information. In most cases, the jury is told to ignore the information, but the perpetual dilemma is that doing so heightens the information’s validity in the minds of the jurists. The University of Chicago Law School executed an exhaustive study on this issue. In their research, a jury was to decide the amount of damages in an injury lawsuit. When the professor made it known that the defendant had been insured against the loss, the damages went up 13%. When the judge told the jury they had to ignore the new information, the amount went up 40%.

Be extra careful not to plead and beg for your prospects to open up. Let them know you truly care and have a desire to know out of genuine concern, not curiosity. Pleading quickly becomes a red flag that shows your prospects you just want to know the juicy details rather than having any real desire to help them. As with the other laws of persuasion, be sincere by showing you really care and truly have their best interest at heart.

### **Caution**

The Law of Obligation can backfire on you or become a matter of ethics if it’s used for the wrong reasons. Manipulation is the flip side of obligation. If you use obligation to manipulate, I guarantee that you will lose your ability to persuade. People will catch on to your tactics, quickly declining any gifts you might offer or even refusing to be around you. Your gifts will be perceived as set-ups. People will instinctively know that it’s only a matter of time before you come back around asking for that favor to be reciprocated.

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