

Avalanche of Information

Many times, when we are trying to be persuasive, we want to highlight all the perks and plusses. It's only natural. Wouldn't helping someone see the potential gains of your product or service be a good thing? Yes, but here is the issue: Your audience will buy for their own reasons and only their reasons. They don't care about why you like the product or service. They don't care how much you know about it—don't bury them in detail. The more you spout off about features, the more your audience mentally checks out.

When you want to draw attention to the benefits of a product or service, the best thing to do is uncover the features or benefits your audience is looking for *first*. Why spend precious time and energy highlighting things they don't care about? Let them tell you what they're looking for, and then center your discussion around those few key points. It is critical to remember that most people already know what they want. In fact, your audience's mindset often is looking for reasons *not* to buy. It is a natural defense mechanism. They're thinking, "How do I make sure I'm not getting myself into something I'll regret? What could go wrong?"

There is another way spouting and spewing too much information can backfire: You might actually feature something they're not interested in or something they even see as a drawback. Why give them reasons not to buy? Again, let them tell you what they're looking for. *After* you've discussed what they care about, after they've made the decision to buy, then and only then should you fill in any remaining blanks with other benefits or features. Don't oversell by cluttering or distracting the few most important key points.

Overpersuading your audience is in this same category. Many times, our impatience to impress our audience with our knowledge and wisdom leads to overpersuading. When you overpersuade, you give your audience no room to ask questions or make a decision. You come across as forceful, aggressive, and obnoxious. Do you really think you can convince someone by interrupting them? Research demonstrates that 81 percent of persuaders talk more than necessary during the persuasion process. They are talking too much,⁷ and you are likely talking too much.

When we talk too much and fail to allow our audience to ask questions, it increases the thickness of the brick wall of resistance. Consider the doctor analogy to persuasion, meaning you have to listen and ask questions before you can diagnose the problem. The doctor does not come into the examination room and try to sell you on a prescription without first asking questions or trying to discover what you really need. Like a physician, you need to step back and be able to absorb and evaluate everything your audience is saying. While monitoring persuaders, I have found a constant epidemic of overpersuasion and regurgitating too many features.

Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether or not you ever overpersuade or flood them with too much information:

- Do you interrupt your audience in your eagerness to highlight another point before they have finished?
- Are you worried about making the sale or satisfying a new customer?
- Do you ever lose their eye contact or get a glazed look?
- Do they seem stressed, indifferent, or agitated?
- Does your audience seem overwhelmed or confused?
- Are you concentrating on what you need to say next instead of listening?
- Is your audience giving you excuses and objections that you've already covered or that you know aren't really true?
- Do their nonverbal signals tell you they are getting ready to run?
- Are you talking about yourself instead of discovering their needs?