

Definitions and Origin of Persuasion

Persuasion, by definition, is the process of changing or reforming attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or behaviors toward a predetermined outcome through voluntary compliance. If you properly implement the strategies of *Magnetic Persuasion*, you'll persuade others not only to want what you want, but also to be eager to *do* what you want. Note that persuasion is *not* the same as negotiation, a term which suggests some degree of backing down or meeting in the middle. Rather than compromising, as in negotiation, effective persuasion will actually convince the opposing party to abandon their previous position and embrace yours.

There are a number of other important concepts that must be understood within the context of *Magnetic Persuasion*:

- **Influence** is who you are and how you, as a person, will impact the message. This includes whether you are viewed as trustworthy and credible, for example.
- **Power** increases your ability to persuade and influence. This power can be seen with people who possess knowledge, have authority, or use coercion during a persuasion process.
- **Motivation** is the ability to incite others to act in accordance with the suggestions and ideals you have posed. Motivation is your “call to action,” or what you want your audience to *do*.

Persuasion and Rhetoric

One's ability to persuade meant great social prestige in the ancient Greek world. Homer regarded the rhetorical skills of Nestor and Odysseus as tremendous inborn gifts. It was Aristotle who first introduced persuasion as a skill that could be *learned*. At that time, rhetorical training became the craze for citizens of Athens, especially for the politically elite. The first book ever written on persuasion was Aristotle's *The Art of Rhetoric*. The book's basic principles established a foundation for persuasion that still holds true today. Aristotle taught that rhetoric was an art form that could be approached systematically by a formula for all persuasive attempts. Aristotle's most famous contribution to persuasion was his three means of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. He argued that the most effective persuasive attempts contain all three concepts, setting an unshakable foundation for success. Let's briefly review Aristotle's three basic means of persuasion:

Ethos

Ethos refers to the personal character of the speaker. Aristotle believed that audiences could be persuaded if they perceived a speaker as credible. In his own estimation: “We believe good men more fully and readily than others.” Aristotle also stated that “ethos is not a thing or a quality but an interpretation that is the product of the speaker-audience interaction.” Ethos includes such things as body type, height, movement, dress, grooming, reputation, vocal quality, word choice, eye contact, sincerity, trust, expertise, charisma . . . well, you get the idea. It is the audience's perception of the credibility of the speaker.

Aristotle taught that ethos was the most powerful of the three persuasive means. Indeed, scientific research has proven the power of individual ethos. A Hovland and Weiss' study gave students messages that were identical in all respects except for their source. High credibility sources yielded large opinion changes in the students while low credibility sources produced low opinion changes.

Pathos

Pathos is the psychological state of the audience. The psychological or emotional state of the listener can affect persuasion because "our judgment when we are pleased and friendly [is] not the same as when we are pained and hostile." When considering pathos, it is important to know both the individual's actual state of mind and his desired state of mind. When you determine the difference between the two, you can use that knowledge to your advantage. By helping them see how they can get from their current state to their desired state, you can persuade people to do just about anything.

Logos

Logos is the substance of a message, or the *logic* presented to provide proof to the listener. Aristotle believed that humans are fundamentally reasonable people who make decisions based on what makes sense. This manner of reasoning is what enables the audience to find the message persuasive and convincing.

Aristotle's three concepts are central to understanding modern-day persuasion. The principles and laws of *Magnetic Persuasion* are built on the principles presented by Aristotle and the ancient Greeks. Admittedly, however, the times and the means of persuasion have changed over the years. It is more difficult now than in any other time in history to persuade and influence those around us. In Aristotle's time, the people had limited access to information and most could not read. That gave Aristotle an advantage, we no longer have today. Modern-day Master Persuaders run into three major factors that make persuasion a greater challenge than it was in the past. First, people are better educated and have access to more information than they did in any other time in history. With the explosion of the Internet, information is instantly available at our fingertips. We can now find out the cost of the car before we even enter the dealership. The second roadblock to persuasion is that today's consumers are increasingly doubtful and skeptical. The number of persuasive arguments we are bombarded with is growing at an alarming rate. We have all been taken advantage of in the past when something seemed too good to be true. The third barrier to persuasion is choice. Now, via the Internet, the consumer has access to the world market. In the past, if you had the only bookstore in town, that is where people had to shop. Now, one bookstore owner has to compete with hundreds of bookstores around the globe for the same business.

Persuasion, Communication & Knowledge Breed Confidence

The greatest common denominator of the ultra-prosperous is that wealthy people are master communicators. There is a direct correlation between your ability to persuade others and the level of your income. Impeccable and masterful communication unarguably leads to wealth. The highest paid and most powerful people on the planet are

all master communicators. These individuals put themselves at stake in front of large groups of people, communicating and persuading in such a way that people are inspired to support them. Your financial success in life will be largely determined by your ability to communicate with other people. Everything you want, but don't currently have, you currently will get from others. It is a fact then that your ability to effectively communicate and persuade will be your key to riches.

Persuasion is also your golden ticket to promotion. Communication skills ranked number one of all the personal qualities employers seek in college graduates. While most people shy away from overtly persuasive situations, master communicators welcome such opportunities. Master communicators feel in control of challenging situations because they understand the art of persuasion and they know how to recognize and use persuasive strategies.

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