

Discover, Design, and Deliver: Techniques of Great Persuaders

After you've assessed your message, your audience, your goals, and your time management, you're prepared to start designing your presentation. This process is a simple formula: discover, design, and deliver. Here, too, your preplanning and anticipation builds your confidence so that you are more or less ready for anything. Think about the following ideas great persuaders use when they are preparing their persuasive message:

1. How much time is allotted for you to present?
2. What will the setting be (auditorium, office, classroom, etc.)?
3. How large will your audience be?
4. Will you be presenting from a platform, over the phone, in front of a microphone, or in an intimate circle?
5. What time of day will it be? Will your audience be tired, refreshed, hungry, or preoccupied? Should you/can you consider scheduling a break in your presentation?
6. Will there be any possible distractions that you can avoid by knowing about them in advance? For example, noise from neighboring rooms, outside distractions, children, traffic volume as people move from one room to another, sunlight producing too much glare, etc.?
7. Can you inspect the presentation venue ahead of time? Where will you present from and what will your audience's seating situation be?
8. What equipment will be available, such as an overhead projector, a portable microphone, a flip chart, computer, a blackboard, or a dry erase board (along with chalk or markers)?
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After you've considered details about the space, venue, time of day, and so forth, it's time to zero in on designing your message—the actual words you will say. Your message should accomplish all of the following elements based on great persuaders:

1. *Create interest.* Your audience needs a reason to listen to you. You have to generate interest in your chosen topic. Why should they care? What's in it for them? How can you help them? A message that starts with a really good reason to listen will grab your audience's attention. Without their undivided attention, there is no hope of getting your message across.

2. *State the problem.* You must clearly define the problem you are trying to solve. The best pattern for a persuasive speech is to identify a problem and then relate how that problem affects the audience. In this way, you show them why your presentation is of concern to them. Why does your audience have this problem? How does this problem affect them?

3. *Offer evidence.* Evidence is the support you give to your argument. Evidence validates your claims and offers proof that your argument is right. It allows your audience to rely on sources besides you. Evidence can include examples, statistics, stories, testimonials, analogies, and any other supporting material that enhances the integrity and congruency of your message.

4. *Present a solution.* You have gained your audience's interest, described a problem, and provided evidence in support of your message. Now you must solve their problem by presenting a solution. How can your product, service, or idea meet your audience's needs and wants? How can it help them achieve their goals?

5. *Call to action.* A persuasive message is not true persuasion if your audience does not know exactly what they need to do next. In order to solve their problem, your audience must take action. Your call to action is the climax of your presentation. When planning and preparing your call to action, remember that the process does not have to be long and painful. It will work best when you are specific and precise. Bear in mind that the prescribed actions must be feasible—make your call to action as easy as possible.

Using this structure will facilitate people's acceptance of your message and clarify what you want them to do by addressing the logical mind. If your audience doesn't sense some sort of structure, they are likely to become confused and seek their own solution. If you aren't clear, concise, and orderly, your audience will find someone else who is. A great persuader can get his or her audience to remember, retain, and respond to the message. Have your points been memorable, easy to understand, and simple to follow? Your message will boil down to what your audience remembers, not what you say or do.

Making Your Message Memorable

Here are some final thoughts on ways you can make your message more memorable, thus giving it greater impact:

Offer Choices

When someone tells us exactly what to do, our natural human tendency is to reject it simply because it has been dictated to us. People feel the need for freedom and the ability to make their own choices. If forced to choose something against their will, they experience psychological resistance. They are then overcome with the need to restore their freedom—all too often by saying no. The way to avoid this rejection is to offer people a few options so they can make a choice for themselves—let them choose the details of the yes. Great persuaders prepare their choices ahead of time.

If you absolutely have to limit your audience's choice to one option, you must explain the limitation. If your audience understands why a limit has been put on their freedom, they are more likely to accept a constraint.

On the flip side, try not to give your audience more than two or three choices. If you offer too many alternatives, your audience will be less likely to choose any of them. Structured choices give your audience the experience of control. As a result, they will be more cooperative and committed. Effective use of options will really only give your audience one choice—the one you ultimately want them to make. For example, "Would

you like to see the live demonstration, or do you want me to send you the DVD?” Either choice would work for you.

Use Repetition

The use of repetition is a very effective persuasion tool. We have heard that repetition is the mother of all learning; it is also the mother of effective persuasion. When something gets repeated, it gets stuck in our memory, and comprehension improves. Repetition will create familiarity with your ideas, which will lead to positive association.

You need to repeat your message several times so your audience understands precisely what you are talking about and what you want them to do. Keep in mind that you can repeat your message several times without saying the same words over and over again. Great persuaders repeat but repackage. Each time you express your point, use new evidence and new words—you don’t want to sound like a broken record.

Bear in mind that diminishing returns may result from overuse of repetition. You know how you feel about someone telling you a joke or a story you’ve already heard or about that commercial you’ve seen one too many times. Keep your repetitions about each point to approximately three references, and definitely no more than five.

Brevity and Simplicity

Keep your message short and simple. This brevity will make it clearer and therefore easier to remember. Make sure your speech is articulate and intelligent, but be careful not to use obscure language. Use simple terms and jargon that are familiar to your audience. Complexity will not impress them; rather, it will jumble your message. Make your points simple, clear, and direct.

Inoculation

Great persuaders know how to inoculate. The term “inoculation” comes from the medical field. Inoculation refers to injecting a weak dose of a virus to prevent a patient from actually getting the virus. The body’s immune system fights off this weak form of

the disease and is then prepared in case the real disease attacks. In the world of persuasion, you prepare your audience in advance to fight off the influence of the negative things they might hear about you or your product. Your audience may also generate their own counterarguments, strengthening their opposition against your message.⁸ By presenting your audience with the other side of the argument, you show them that you know how they might be feeling and what they might be thinking. You will win a great deal of respect and enhance your ability to persuade by answering questions and responding to objections before they are even asked.

Imagine that your competition is always spreading the word that your product is the most expensive on the market. You need to inoculate your audience against these attacks. For example, you could tell them that your product is the highest-quality, longest-lasting, most expensive product on the market. That way, you make the drawback an important, positive feature. This inoculation, strategically planted in the mind of your audience, will enable them to access the facts when the competition tries to badmouth you or your product.

Making It Happen

Not being prepared is like driving your car without a map or, even worse, without a steering wheel. You might get lucky and arrive at your destination, but most of the time you won't make it. Preparation and anticipation is the foundation of successful persuasion. It takes extra time, effort, and discipline to hone these skills, but the results are worth it. If preparation has been last on your list of what it takes to convert yourself into a master persuader (or missing from that list altogether), now is the time to reform. Careful, well-planned preparation will ensure that you hit the target every time. The time you spend preparing will return to you tenfold.

Can you set your goals? Do you really want to be a great persuader? You know deep down that creating goals will make the difference between mediocrity and success. Top persuaders have their goals in writing. Do you want the goal system? Do you finally

want to achieve your main objective? Go to www.persuasioniq.com and get your goal mastery system to achieve your goals and desires in life.

The Ant and the Grasshopper: A Fable

In a field one summer's day, a grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An ant passed by, struggling with a piece of corn he was taking to the nest. "Why not come and play with me," said the Grasshopper, "instead of working so hard?" "I am helping to store food for the winter," said the ant, "and I recommend you do the same." "Why bother about winter?" said the grasshopper, "We have got plenty of food right now." But the ant went on his way and continued his hard work. When winter arrived, the grasshopper had no food and found himself dying of hunger. Meanwhile, he saw the ants distributing corn and grain from the supplies they had collected in the summer.

Meaning: The time to prepare is before you need it. The time to learn how to persuade is before you require it.

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