

Fear of Rejection

In the last section, we talked about how despair is rooted in fear. In this section, let's discuss the fear of rejection because it is one of the most common fears. Of all the things that we might fear, most of us will have a bout with this one at some time. We all experience rejection in small doses every day. But what about when we persuade for a living? Rejection seems to take a higher toll. We avoid rejection like the plague, but it affects your income. Running away from the rejection solves nothing. Letting our fears overtake us and paralyze us also solves nothing. Ironically, whether we run or succumb, neither option helps the situation.

When we don't handle our fears appropriately, we inadvertently end up being the ones passing out the bricks for that wall of resistance. How excited would you be to buy from someone who seemed nervous, tense, and demanding? Or what if he seemed overly eager for your approval? Even if his awkwardness were totally unrelated to the product—the product is great, let's say—you would probably still feel uneasy buying from this particular person. Fear of rejection can also affect the bottom line by inhibiting you from getting out there and approaching people in the first place. If you are so incapacitated by fears of rejection that you retreat from attempting persuasion at all, then you have sealed your own fate.

So we can hate and fear rejection all we want, but it's still going to happen. What do great persuaders do about this? How do great persuaders respond so that their fear of rejection doesn't paralyze them and affect their performance?

The first thing to keep in mind is that even if your audience ultimately concludes that your product or service is not the right fit, they are not rejecting you personally. We generally understand this concept on a superficial level, but I ask you to give it some thought and really let it sink in. Great persuaders think through the reality of the situation in a rational, unemotional way: "This person just met me. She doesn't even know me. She knows nothing of my background, personal interests, hopes, or dreams. It is not me, personally, that she is rejecting." Once you have established this concept, then it naturally

follows that your audience's rejection has no bearing on your worth or value. It is totally irrelevant to such matters. Do not allow yourself to feel inferior, embarrassed, or depressed based on somebody else's opinion.

The ability to bounce back after being faced with rejection on any scale is critical in the persuasion world. Great persuaders have the ability to erase the negativity from their minds at will and move on with a clean slate in a matter of minutes. This tendency is worth noting considering the fact that most of us hang on to negativity and use it to nurse our wounds or make excuses for weeks, months, and sometimes even years. Another way to hasten your rebound from rejection is to realize that your worst fears are probably not even realistic. Suppose a sweet deal slipped through your fingers. No matter what you said or did, the client's words were final. In other words, you were *rejected*. Is your life really over? Does your audience now hate your guts? Are they going to smear your good name and come after your family in a mad rage? Are they going to spray-paint the office with slanderous, hurtful remarks? Of course not. The truth is, it just wasn't a good fit. They'll have forgotten about it in a matter of minutes or hours, and you should too.

Lack of Preparation

Another reason our persuasion power weakens is that we get lazy and don't take the time to prepare. After acquiring a certain amount of experience, we take for granted that we're pretty smooth and that we can always wing it or go through the motions. Well, maybe you'll get away with that kind of approach every now and then, but I'm here to tell you it's a bad practice.

If you catch yourself feeling this way, it's time to take a personal inventory. First of all, you are going to come across as unprofessional, too laid back, or too relaxed. These perceptions are all turnoffs, making your audience feel like the encounter is not important to you. If you're going to be persuasive, you have to do your homework. Furthermore, if you aren't up on critical details, you risk coming across as uninformed.

How can your audience take you seriously if you aren't taking them or the situation seriously?

There are four areas in which great persuaders prepare. They are:

1. Knowing your product or service inside and out.
2. Knowing your audience and what their needs and wants are so you can tailor your presentation.
3. Having several tools in the toolbox so that you can present them with options and alternatives.
4. Knowing how to customize your presentation.

© 2009 Kurt W. Mortensen