

## How to Create Extra Value

Have you ever taken your car to the mechanic and he tells you that you might need new brakes, a new transmission, a new fan belt, and that the timing sounds off? You go away thinking, “Oh man, I’m sunk. I might as well just buy a new car.” Then when you come back, he tells you, “You just need new brakes.” You feel as free as a lark, only having to pay \$300 for what could have been a \$3,000 repair job. Imagine if he had told you he thought he could fix it for \$50 and the bill ended up being \$500. That is the Law of Contrast in action.

The Law of Contrast explains how we are affected when we are introduced to two vastly different alternatives in succession. We know that contrasting two alternatives can distort or amplify our perceptions of things. Generally, if the second item is quite different from the first, we will tend to see the object even more differently than it actually is. As a Master Persuader, you can use this contrast to steer your audience toward the object of your persuasion.

The use of contrast is based on our perception of items or events that happen one right after the other. If you’ve had a rotten day because you found out you’re losing your job and you come home to a new scratch on your car, you will have a vastly different reaction than if you were having a great day because you’re getting a promotion and then came home to the scratch on your car. It’s the same scratch, but there are very different perceptions and reactions to it, depending on your personal circumstances.

Time can erode your ability to use the Law of Contrast. Key to the law is that the two contrasting items must be presented one right after the other. This has an effect on group meetings and decision-making: If your great idea comes after another great idea, it won’t have the impact it would have had if it had followed someone else’s poor idea. Likewise, if we are talking to a beautiful woman or man at a party and we are then joined by an unattractive woman or man, the beautiful person will seem even more beautiful, and the less attractive person will seem even less attractive.

This is all about human perception. The human mind has to find a benchmark of comparison to make judgments, especially when we are talking about unfamiliar situations. People need to make comparisons with their past experience and knowledge. By presenting your prospects with contrast, you are creating those comparisons for them. The mind can’t process everything at once and so it develops shortcuts to help make decisions. Instead of making a completely internal judgment, we look for boundaries, patterns, and polar opposites. We want to know the difference between our options, so we naturally contrast the two items. We mentally place things in our mind from best to worst, first to last, or highest to lowest. Do you want your prospects to compare your product or service to a second-hand used car or to a Rolls Royce? You get to decide where you want them to start their benchmark.

When using the Law of Contrast, keep in mind the powerful differences between positive and negative information. Psychologists have asserted for years that people

automatically and subconsciously have extremely high expectations for the good over the bad. Because of this consistent tendency, negative information, when it comes, always seems to be given considerable weight because it is such a jarring contrast to what was expected. For example, have you ever had a salesperson get you all excited about some incredible product you were about to purchase? You're totally *thrilled* with all the things this product is going to do for you and then BAM! The salesperson hits you with the ghastly price. Suddenly the hefty price tag, just one little negative detail, outweighs the product's twenty terrific features. Negative information has taken precedence over all the positive information. In fact, now it's consuming your thoughts. You drive home only able to think about how the precious item is going to cost you an arm and a leg.

Contrast works in many arenas. You can contrast just about anything and immediately see its effects. Try this experiment: Get three buckets of water, one filled with hot water, another with cold water, and the third with tepid water. Soak one of your feet in the hot and cold buckets simultaneously for 30 seconds. Now place both feet in the warm bucket and you will be shocked with the results. The middle bucket is considered a warm temperature but to the hot foot it feels cold and to the cold foot it feels warm. It is the same water but two completely different reactions. This is the Law of Contrast. Any product or service can be contrasted to appear very different from what it actually is.

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