

Monitoring the Ability to Change: Getting Inside the Closed Mind

Life is change; persuasion is change. As a Master Persuader, you must be able to create and motivate change. Understanding human nature is knowing that most people will resist change and burrow into their comfort zones as we've previously discussed. We tend to follow the path of least resistance. However, change is the only thing that can lift us up from where we currently lie. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Man's mind, stretched to a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions." We all want to become a better person and to be "stretched" to accomplish more things, but we are stuck in our daily patterns.

As you go through the Pre-Persuasion Checklist, find out how resistant to change your audience will be. Will persuading them be like breaking through a brick wall or a cardboard box? Are they ready to make changes because of their circumstances and surroundings? Are they already trying to change? Some of your prospects will oppose you and blatantly resist your persuasive message. This is great news – this means they are listening and it's a sign of involvement. If the audience gives no feedback, then they are not involved in your message.

There are three ways people make changes in their life. One is through drastic change. This could be a heart attack, a personal tragedy, or losing a job. These events force people to change their lives. They did not feel a need to change until threatening, life-changing events occurred. The second is through gradual change. This is a process that evolves from events or personal relationships. Gradual change happens over time, so much so that you usually don't notice that it is happening. The third way people change their lives is through internal change. This can come from inspiration or desperation, but either way, you have consciously decided you are going to make changes in your life.

To get change to stick, you must make sure three things occur, whether within yourself or your audience. First, there must be a long-term, enthusiastic commitment to change. You have to decide there is no other option. The second thing is that you must be willing to pay the price, persisting even when you feel weak. Third, you have to know where the change is taking them. How is this going to affect their lives? What are the end results?

The biggest obstacles to change are lack of motivation, lack of knowledge, and fear. People will not change if they don't know where that change is taking them. We naturally watch out for our own future and want to prevent harm from reaching us. As a persuader, you need to create a vision for your audience, one that shows them what they will be like in the future. If you can get people to see themselves in the future and witness where that change will take them, they will be more willing to embrace change. Understand that people will resist change unless sufficient reinforcement and tools are provided to assist them. Without having this knowledge, their attitudes won't change, and if their attitudes won't change, then their actions won't change.

Monitoring the Current Acceptance Level: Detect to Accept

An important part of the Pre-Persuasion Checklist is determining what the audience's current acceptance level is for the subject you want to present. Ask yourself the following things when making this determination:

1. Knowledge: What does my audience know about the topic I want to talk about?
2. Interest: How interested is the audience in my subject?
3. Background: What are the common demographics of my audience?
4. Support: How much support already exists for my views?
5. Beliefs: What are my audience's common beliefs?

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