

NLP and Choices

There is a strange human psychological phenomenon in regards to drawing conclusions. If someone tells us exactly what to do, our natural human tendency is to reject it simply because it has been dictated. The solution is to offer your prospects a few options so they can make the choice for themselves. People feel the need to have freedom and make their own choices. If forced to choose something against their will, they experience psychological resistance and feel a need to restore their freedom. We all need options. Recently, while I was vacationing at a national park, I saw a moose get surrounded by people who wanted a picture of it. Feeling trapped, the moose charged at the people in an attempt to escape. This same scenario can crop up in your persuasive efforts. If you don't offer options to your audience, they could attempt to charge and escape.

The way in which this technique still gives you an advantage is that it gives you control over your prospects' options. As a Master Persuader, you only give them options that will satisfy your situation. We have all done this type of option control with children: "Do you want to finish your dinner or go to bed early?" In sales, they call this strategy the alternative close. For example, have you heard the line "Do you want regular or deluxe?" Or what about "Do you want it in blue or green?" or "Do you want to meet Monday afternoon or Tuesday evening?" The prospect is presented with options, but both options are pleasing to the persuader.

Even if it is just something simple, people need to have options. I heard a story about one lady who desperately needed to take her medication or she would die. Her doctor, nurse, son and husband all tried to get her to take her medication but to no avail. The doctor insisted she take her medicine first thing when she arose in the morning, but she just wouldn't do it. Distraught, the family took her to a new doctor. This doctor immediately saw the situation and talked to the patient. He explained the benefits of taking the drugs and how it could help her. Then, he gave her an option. He said, "You need to take this once a day. Would you like to take it with your breakfast or your dinner?" The patient smiled and said she would like to take it with her dinner. After she made that decision,

she no longer gave people a hard time about taking her medication. The key was that both options the doctor gave her accomplished the same thing.

If you absolutely have to limit your audience's choice to one thing, you must explain to them why there are limitations on their options. If the audience understands why a limit has been put on their freedom, they are more likely to accept it without feeling undermined. On the flip side, try not to give your prospects 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 the audience the impression of control. As a result, they increase cooperation and commitment.

Offering choices is also called “binds.” Each option offered gives the persuader what s/he wants without making her/him appear as if s/he is restricting freedom. When you use the word “or” in your persuasive efforts, the very opposite is implied, so try to structure your prospects' choices with the word “or.” For example, “Would you like to make an appointment now, or should we meet next week?”

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