

#### **4. I am an outgoing people person, so I am a natural persuader.**

Of course, there are the stereotypical persuaders who are friendly, outgoing and sometimes loud. Research reveals, however, that some of the best persuaders are actually introverts. How can you persuade if you are always talking? Great persuaders will listen more than they will talk. In fact, great persuaders use their listening and questioning skills to get prospects/customers to persuade themselves. Which approach do you think will have better long-term results: *you* persuading them, or you helping them to persuade *themselves*? It's much better if your prospects feel like they have made the decision themselves, without any outside pressure.

Fortune 500 companies commonly require listening training, even though many employees think it's a waste of time. The truth is, poor listening skills account for the majority of people's communication problems. Many years ago, Dale Carnegie asserted that listening is one of the most crucial human relations skills that could possibly be developed. Listening is how we find out people's preferences, desires, wants and needs. Of all the skills one could master, listening is probably the one that will pay you back the most. After all, it is only by effective listening that we learn to customize our message to our prospects. Good listening is not just looking at someone and nodding your head in agreement. You have to make sure the other person knows you understand what s/he is saying. The more the other person feels understood and cared about, the greater your ability to persuade and influence will become.

Of all the tools in your persuasion toolbox, questioning is probably the one that is most often used by Master Persuaders. Questions create immediate involvement with your prospect; they guide the conversation, clarify concerns and objections, reveal beliefs, attitudes and values, help you find out what your prospect needs and show your sincerity toward your prospect. The bottom line is, questioning is a very diverse and useful tool.

We are taught to answer a question when it is posed to us. We have become so conditioned, in fact, that we automatically think of a response when asked a question. Even if we don't verbalize the answer, we think about it in our mind. Most people want

to be cooperative; we don't want to be considered rude by ignoring a question when it is asked of us. As a result, a question stimulates our thinking response.

When attempting to persuade others, make sure you are careful in how you pose your questions. The structure of your questions dictates how your listener will answer them. A good rule of thumb is to start with the easiest questions first. You want to draw your audience into the conversation and help them feel relaxed and comfortable. People are encouraged by answers they know are right. Begin the conversation by starting with a general topic instead of a specific subject. You need to get the wheels in your prospects' minds rolling before you ask them to answer the more specific questions.

The best questions draw a person into the conversation and out of being unreceptive. It is to your advantage to ask questions that will get your prospects to open up. For example, use questions that start with:

What do you think about...?

Have you ever thought about...?

How do you feel about...?

When did you start...?

Where did you find...?