

Power of Repetition: Increase Awareness and Retention

The more you expose someone to some concept or idea, the more that concept or idea will become favorable to them. Things do grow on us. Have you ever heard a song on the radio that you didn't like until it started to grow on you? This is also true with people. Some people you just don't like at first, but after awhile you grow to like them and sometimes you even become their friend. Ever wonder why politicians want signs and posters of their names and faces all over everyone's yards, street corners, bumpers, and windows? The use of repetition can be very effective. It is often said that repetition is the mother of all learning, but it is also the mother of effective persuasion. Repetition increases awareness, understanding, and retention.

You have to be careful to use repetition wisely, however. My motto is, "Repackage; Don't Repeat." This means you can use the power of repetition, but you don't always have to say the words exactly the same way. You can say the same thing with a story, a fact, a statistic, an analogy, or a testimony and never have to repeat the same thing twice. You know how you feel when you hear the exact same joke for the second or even third time – it doesn't carry the same punch as it did the first time, so you usually tune out. Even when repackaging, keep it to no more than three times. If you present your message less than three times, it will not have a very strong effect. If you present your message more than three times, it becomes "worn out" and loses its potency. For example, in a study where children were shown the same ice cream commercial over and over while watching a cartoon, the children who saw the commercial three times actually wanted the ice cream more than those who had seen the commercial five times. In another study, students were told they were to judge the sound quality of audio cassettes. What the researchers were really searching for, however, was the varying responses after having heard the recorded message one, three, or five times. The message discussed support of an increase in university spending via visitor luxury tax or increased student tuition. Students actually favored the argument for the luxury tax with up to three repetitions, but at five repetitions, their favor for this argument declined.

Another aspect of repetition is persistence. If you have ever been in sales, you know that the most successful salespeople are the most persistent; they keep nudging until the sale is made. Most sales reps only try to close the sale once or twice, but we know the average person has to be asked five to six times before a sale takes place. Many people are afraid to ask again and again. We tend to think that if we ask someone to do something and they say they'll think about, that they will. Well, I hate to break the news to you, but they don't. We forget. Our lives are busy. That is why repetition and persistence increase your involvement and your ability to persuade. Master Persuaders can feel the fine line between persistence and annoyance. My general rule is that if you detect even the remotest of interest, keep up your persistence. I was in Mexico recently with a friend, We were enjoying a nice walk through the town, looking at all the shops and buildings. Out of nowhere, a vendor selling bracelets and necklaces approached and disrupted our nice stroll. "No thank you" did little to deter the pesky vendor. He followed us through the town and through the streets. When we went into a shop hoping he'd leave, he even waited outside the store for us. Again, we told him "no thank you" and that we had no need for his gold and silver bracelets. "But I have a special deal," he

kept telling us! Well, he was persistent (or we could say a pain in the butt) but it finally paid off. We bought a bracelet and he went home happy.

Persistence is a state of mind, which means it can be cultivated. Most people do not lack desire; they lack persistence. Calvin Coolidge said,

"Successful people always have high levels of persistence, and don't give up until they have reached their objective. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not. Un-rewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence, determination and hard work make the difference."

Remember, you can have the best product and it might even be a perfect fit for the person you are trying to persuade. They might even feel it is a perfect fit and want it, but they will say no just because it's human nature. Good persuaders don't take "no" for an answer. If they know their product is what the prospect needs and is looking for, they keep pursuing. Persuasion is getting the other person to want what you want and to like it. This can only happen with honorable persistence.

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