

Prejudging and Making Assumptions

Have you ever caught yourself saying, "Oh, great. Look at that strange person. He's never going to buy," or "I can just tell she's not going to like what I'm offering," "They don't seem that smart," or "I can't change their mind." We do it all the time. We qualify our audience or clients based on only a thumbnail sketch of information, how they look, or worse, no information at all. The problem with this qualification is that we make up our minds before even attempting persuasion, and we end up losing deals, negotiations, or clients because we've already decided our persuasion wouldn't work. This is one of the most devastating mistakes you can make, because you really cannot judge a book by its cover. Many, many times we find that the people who seem to be the least likely candidates are the ones who become a big part of your business.

Your audience can sense when they don't really matter to you. If the ship wasn't sinking already, your lack of interest will definitely sink it fast. Give your audience the time and attention they deserve each and every time. Wouldn't it be a shame to lose a deal because you judged someone wrongly, only to learn later that he ended up going to your competitor with a big order when you had exactly what he needed all along? Furthermore, even if it turns out that what you have to offer is not right for him, he still probably knows someone who does need it. If you've treated him right, he may well send you word-of-mouth referrals. Finally, whether you are consistently successful or not, every time you interact with someone, you're gaining invaluable experience and honing your skills—and you start to become a great persuader.

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