

Psychological Negotiation

Psychological Power is the ability people have to influence you while disguising their true intentions. People who are adept at using Psychological Power seek to alter another individual's perceptions. Some of the most common and effective Psychological Power techniques are outline below. When reviewing them, consider how you would use them versus how you could see them being used on you.

Technique # 1: Time Pressure

People are slow at making decisions because they're afraid of making mistakes. Negotiators hate to leave deals open-ended too long because the more time passes, the more time their prospects have to think of all the reasons why they should walk away. The reverse is also true: The more quickly you get a commitment out of your prospects, the more likely it is they'll follow through. Basically, people who utilize this psychological tactic are leveraging the moments when emotion is high and judgment is suspended. It's the "get 'em energized, seal the deal while they're still soaring" mentality. It is from this mentality that we get promotions like "This offer only good for next hour" and "This offer won't last long." I remember once negotiating a contract for the marketing department of a big corporation. I had a million other responsibilities weighing on me, so I felt rushed to hammer out the details of the contract that morning. The person I was negotiating with, on the other hand, was in no hurry whatsoever and had nowhere else to go. We bantered back and forth for six hours and still had not reached a resolution on a contract we were both happy with. My urgency to leave the meeting affected the terms I was finally able to get.

When we're in a hurry, we'll usually pay more to get what we need. When we need something right now, and someone else has it, we will pay whatever it takes to get it. Think of all the convenience services that cost more. The all-night convenience store charges twice as much for a gallon of milk as the grocery store down the street. Likewise, the 24-hour copy mart charges more than the traditional print service. Think about how much you paid for that book or magazine at the airport before you rushed to catch your

plane. Being in a hurry definitely costs money. So too, being in a hurry will cost you the negotiation.

Technique #2: Boldness

Acting with boldness not only emits the perception of confidence to others, but it actually helps you *feel* more confident about yourself. When you come across as confident, whether you really are or not, people will be much more likely to rally behind you. They will automatically assume that you know what you are doing. Boldness can lead to the accomplishment of unimaginable things, which then in turn makes your confidence more and more genuine. When you are on the receiving end of boldness, however, be aware that another's assertiveness is sometimes used as a means of coming across as a better negotiator. People who come across as timid or weak-willed are much less likely to be good at negotiations.

Technique #3: Unpredictability

Sometimes, negotiators try to use unpredictability to throw the other person off. Humans are creatures of habit; we love the familiar and predictable. We love routine. Hence, when something unpredictable happens, we feel out of control. Think of a person you know who has an unpredictable personality. You never quite know if s/he is going to be happy or angry, thankful or resentful, elated or depressed. How do you feel when you're around this person? People sometimes do this on purpose to intimidate you or to feel a sense of control over you. Some negotiators will work through lunch, yell, lose control or be seen tearing down a colleague. These examples will often throw rookie prospects off guard. Be aware of these psychological negotiating tactics that could make you feel intimidated or out of control.

Technique #4: Surprise/Distraction

People who are caught off guard by a request will often comply with it simply because they make a knee-jerk reaction during a brief moment of insecurity. A study by Milgram and Sabini demonstrated that people riding the New York subway were twice as likely to give up their seats to passengers who surprised them with the request, "May I have your

seat?” as they were when they were told ahead of time of the passenger’s intention to ask for their seat. Fifty-six percent of surprised passengers gave up their seats compared to twenty-eight percent of those who had been warned in advance.

Distraction is also a form of Psychological Power. Sometimes negotiators use this technique to lead the negotiation away from a main objective. To that end, they say or do something to break the focus on the point at hand and get their prospect on another completely different topic. Of course, this negotiating strategy can be unethical, but unfortunately, it also runs rampant. Distractive techniques might come in the form of smoking in a non-smoking room, fire alarms blaring during critical moments or strange, unscheduled interruptions occurring.

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