

The Brick Wall of Resistance

Has this ever happened to you? You enter a retail store and you're approached by a sharply dressed persuader. You are interested in buying, but the salesperson is a little aggressive. You get an alarming feeling in the pit of your stomach and then do what many of your customers do to you. You lie! You say, "I'm just looking; I'll come back later," or "It's too expensive," or "I have to talk to my spouse before I decide." What you're really thinking is "I don't like this guy," or "I don't trust her," or "Something didn't feel quite right." In the end, you never go back to this store, you never recommend it, and neither the store owner nor the persuader ever knows why. This is a large brick in the Brick Wall of Resistance.

This obstacle is truly a silent persuasion killer. Most people will never say anything to you to alert you to the fact they are feeling this way. They are more comfortable lying to you—so they don't hurt your feelings. They walk away and simply never deal with you again. The reason this obstacle is such a killer is because we don't even realize we're doing it. We are offending people and don't even know it. You may think you're just being friendly or enthusiastic, but be careful. While friendliness and enthusiasm are great attributes, if there is even so much as a hint of force, deception, hype, or selling underlying any of it, you've pretty much sunk the deal.

Audiences are tough. Ever-smarter consumers have built a lot of resistance to the old style of persuading; many people have a brick wall of resistance up before you've even started your presentation. They assume you're going to be the sleazy, manipulative sales guy before you've even had a chance to speak. They are all ready to resist you before you start.

What do you do to overcome this tendency? Your persuasion attempts must be nonthreatening and very natural. Forget loud and flashy. That strategy only encourages resistance. And most definitely forget about high pressure. Not only does that solidify the wall of resistance in that particular moment, but the wall will increase in size. When people feel they have been pressured, bullied, or coerced into buying or doing something

they don't need or want, they are resentful. They will never do business with you again. They will detest you for "tricking," "manipulating," "selling," or "forcing" them. They will bad-mouth you to all of their friends and family—even to people they don't know! You can end up losing not only this one person but, as the grapevine goes, potentially hundreds of others as well.

The moment people sense that you are attempting to persuade them, the brick wall increases in size and strength, and they will resist you. To counter this tendency, persuasion and sales must take place below the conscious radar.

The following are common mistakes that will create large bricks in the wall of resistance.

What You Do	How Your Audience Feels
Cover every single possible detail.	Overwhelmed, confused, stressed out.
Incessantly ask unnecessary questions.	Antagonized, annoyed.
Say, "Honestly . . ."	Persuader is getting ready to lie.
Take excessive time with the person.	You don't respect their time.
DemEAN or belittle the competition.	Lack of confidence.
Exaggerate the details.	Mistrustful and more skeptical.
Try to show off your impeccable skills, know-how, and experience.	Annoyed, that you're arrogant and egotistical, condescending.
Say, "Are you prepared to buy today?"	Incoming, here come the old-style tactics.
Overly friendly or happy.	Insincere and <i>fake</i> .
Say, "How are you doing today?"	"Now what are you trying to sell me?"
Employ coercive tricks.	Manipulated, turned-off, tense.

Great persuaders have cultivated a sixth sense when it comes to the "push and pull" aspect of persuasion. You must encourage without pushing. Entice, but don't ensnare. You have to sense and then predict, based upon knowledge, instinct, experience, and nonverbal cues, what you can do and how your audience will respond. With this sensitivity, which you can learn, there won't be any smacking head first into the brick wall of resistance.

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