

Persuasion –the learnable art

When most people hear the word 'persuasion' they think of it as another word for 'manipulation'. There is, however, a BIG difference.

Manipulation is using any means necessary to motivate or force a person to do something that fulfils *your* needs or desires, whether or not they are in the other person's best interests.

Persuasion is the art of guiding one's mind through a field of ignorance, misinformation or misunderstanding to a destination where there is enough information and understanding to make a logical choice to do that which is in the best interest of the person being persuaded.

So, true persuasion enables the other person to understand what you are saying, feel what you are feeling, and consequently become motivated to do what is in their best interests.

Can you think of the tactics manipulators use?

Think of those professions that are generally looked down on by others; estate agents, insurance salespeople, used-car sales, double glazing, kitchens, etc, etc,

Do they use manipulation or persuasion techniques?

The First Principle of Persuasion: Honour and Respect

These are communicated in various ways:

- You can respect people's time – be sensitive to the timing of your communication

Imagine barging in and demanding someone's attention simply because what you have to say is more important to you than to them. How are they going to respond?

Some would ignore you, or, if you are in higher authority than them, you lay the foundation for silent aggression and resentment rather than effective and persuasive communication.

- You can respect people with the non-verbal way you communicate

We all pick up the non-verbal signals when we communicate. If you don't respect the other person, you will find that anything they do for you will be done out of obligation rather than will. And they may perform what you ask, but only to the letter of your request rather than to its spirit.

The Second Principle of Persuasion: Understanding the other person's Frame of Reference

Have you ever said "that person simply doesn't 'get it'?"

Just as everyone has their own fingerprints, everyone has their own unique personality prints. You are the only person on the face of the planet that thinks and feels the way you do. Having said that, you CAN get to know a great deal about the other person by approaching things from *their point of reference*.

How can you check their reference?

Again, it boils down to the old Q&A: asking questions and listening.

Let people guide you into an understanding about their frame of reference. Ask how they feel about something. Refrain from asking why they feel the way they do, as it can come across as judgmental.

It's critical that you don't interrupt them, or attack, criticize or belittle their thoughts and feelings, either verbally or non-verbally.

If you do, they will mentally and emotionally withdraw from the conversation and build defensive walls.

Remember, your goal is not to change their mind or argue the point – it's simply to understand where they are coming from.

All the right words doesn't mean All the right messages

The Third Principle of Persuasion: You've got to be Effective first!

Think about the times when someone did something that surprised you. And when you asked why they did it, their reply was "But you said...."

Or, how many times have you told someone who didn't do something the way you told them to, "But I told you to do it *this* way!"

You might have said the right words, yet the person didn't understand what you truly intended to communicate.

You need to be an effective communicator before trying to effectively persuade.

The Heart of Effective and Persuasive Communication

Effective communication involves two factors:

You have effectively communicated something when they:

- Understand what you are saying
- Feel what you are feeling

In a meeting I had recently, I mentioned how I had been 'hurt' by something that had happened seven years ago.

A newcomer joined the meeting and my partner, who had been involved in the conversation, said to the new person, 'Mark was just telling us about something that happened a few years ago that he resented'.

I was shocked when he used the word 'resented'. I had said that I had felt 'hurt'. My partner had interpreted his meaning of my use of 'hurt' and repeated what he understood to be true.

When you communicate, verbally or in writing, you are trying to reach three dimensions of a person.

- The person's mind or understanding
- Their emotional state
- Their will or motivation to act

Most communication enters at one level but doesn't penetrate to the other two very often. In other words, most communication is only superficially effective.

One-dimensional communication

This can focus on any one of the three dimensions.

If you ask someone to do something and he doesn't understand *why* he should do it, you are communicating to his will. If they ask for an explanation, it's a sign they want to go to the next level, *understanding*.

If your answer is along the lines of 'because I said so', you are choosing to ignore his other two dimensions and simply focusing on the will.

This might result in action for this particular project or job, but it will do nothing positive to motivate the person in the future and may achieve negative consequences.

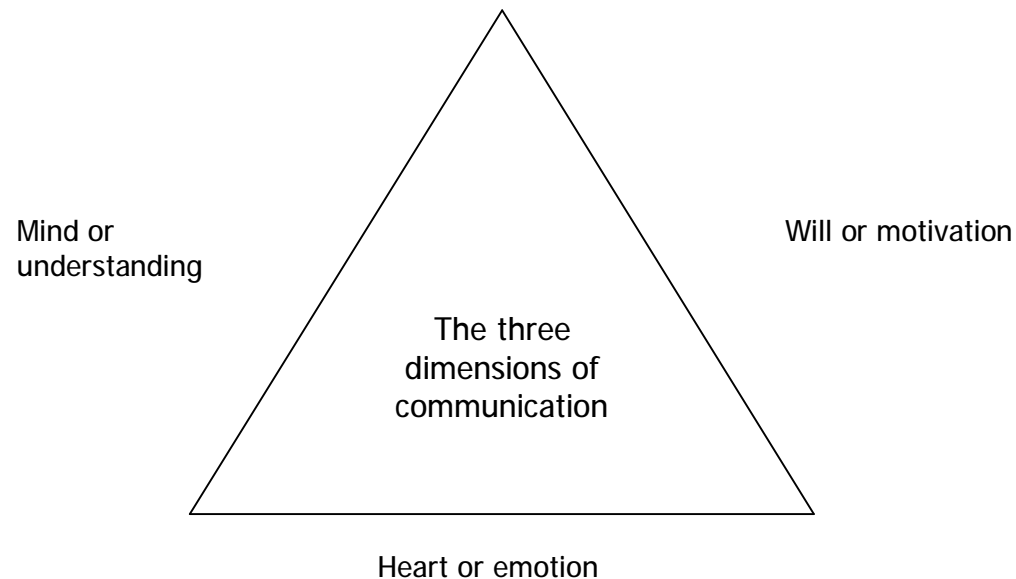
Aiming at the person's mind or understanding is certainly more effective than just focusing on the will. Here, you attempt to give him a logical understanding of what you are communicating. If he understands, he feels a higher degree of self-respect.

However, if this is the only dimension your communication reaches, he may still not have the right amount of input to respond or perform in the way he should.

Do you know people who *understand* certain dangers that might come from unhealthy living, but continue to do it anyway? So, communicating with them at the mind level may still be impotent in terms of the results it produces.

You could focus on the third dimension – that of the heart or emotions.

But this may also be short term, or inconsistent as a person's mood takes them.



So, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION is that which enables the person to *understand* what I'm saying and *feel* what I'm feeling.

PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION enables a person to *understand* what I'm saying, *feel* what I'm feeling, and *motivates* him or her to take the course of action that is in their best interests.

Techniques to achieve Persuasion with anyone

The first problem you face when you want to communicate is getting someone's undivided attention. They are probably thinking about something else when you want to communicate with them. So you must grab their attention and get it focused on what you want to communicate.

You can use something called the 'hook'.

Advertisers do this all the time. Just like a fish being hooked on a line, you need to 'hook' the other person with a real reason for focusing on you. This could be a question or a strong statement – something that takes them away from their current line of thought and onto you and your request or idea.

When you've hooked someone, how do you keep them there?

By using something called 'salting'.

You've heard the expression 'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink'. Well, that was said by someone who wasn't very persuasive!

How about if you put salt in the horse's oats and made him thirsty? When he gets to the water, you bet he's going to drink!

So, you can 'salt' your communication in such a way that it will make the other person thirsty for what you're going to say next. This could be a statement, a group of statements or a question that creates curiosity.

The third technique is by using something called 'emotional word pictures' (EWPs). These can simultaneously communicate with a person's heart and mind, to convey understanding and emotional feelings.

Your understanding or analytical abilities come from the left side of the brain, while your emotions or feelings come from the right. EWP's not only bring added clarity and understanding to the left side of the brain, they can also stimulate feelings and emotions on the right. When you use EWP's they can immediately enable the other person to understand what you are saying and feel what you are feeling.

Here are the benefits of using EWP's:

1. They grab and direct a person's attention
2. They have the power to change a person's thinking and beliefs
3. They make communication come 'alive'. By stimulating both right and left sides of the brain, the person begins 'picturing' what he or she is hearing
4. They lock words into a person's memory – remember, we think in pictures, not words
5. They provide the gateway to provide better quality feedback, more easily received without negative consequences

However, you still need to add the 'motivation to act' to the communication.

The two greatest motivating factors in anyone's life

In order to appeal to anyone's motivation to act, we must know these two biggest motivators.

The first is: THE DESIRE FOR GAIN.

These could include:

Love, security, acceptance, success, achievement, wealth, physical appearance, health, spirituality, etc, etc.

The other is: FEAR OF LOSS.

These could include:

Love, person, security, acceptance, success, achievement, wealth, physical appearance, health, spirituality, etc, etc.

In any communication you have, examine your argument and analyse which desires or fears you are appealing to. Is the person towards or away-from motivated? This will help you determine the best way to appeal to their will.

EXERCISE

What would YOUR hierarchy of desires and fears include?