

persuasion

the act of influencing someone to do something or to change their mind

Persuasion is convincing others to change their point of view, agree to a commitment, purchase a product or service, or take a course of action. Oral and written persuasive skills are valued in the workplace. Sales is the most obvious form of persuasion, but this skill is used in many other positions as well. Managers persuade employees to do unpleasant but necessary tasks, billing representatives persuade their clients to pay their bills, PCCs persuade HHAs to take patients.

Regardless of our position in the company, we can all benefit from fine tuning the art of persuasion:

Let them know you care. When you make understanding the needs of your audience your first priority, you'll see there's no reason to kick off the agenda with an elevator pitch.

Use their name in conversation. As referenced in Dale Carnegie's famous work, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, calling someone by their name -- and using it often -- is one subtle, yet effective way to appear more persuasive.

Let the other person speak first... Waiting to open your mouth until the other person says their piece could unlock the key to getting what you want out of the arrangement. "If you let somebody speak first, they'll usually tell you what they want to hear and what you need to do to get the conversation across the finish line. Then you know exactly what your target is," says Christopher Kelly, co-founder and president of service and design company Convene. "By listening deeply and being empathetic you can appeal to somebody's human side, which is where decisions end up getting made."

Let it be "their idea" all along. Kim Kaupe, co-founder of custom publication company ZinePak, rethinks her approach to persuasion to frame the situation in the eyes of the person she wants to get on her side. "Too often, people approach being persuasive as moving people from point A to point B, instead of saying, 'Let me join you at point A and see where we go,'" she says. "Talking through a situation with the person you are trying to persuade allows them to take the journey with you. In fact, sometimes halfway through the journey, it becomes their idea to go to Point B: the exact place you've been trying to go!"

Be specific and confident. If you speak confidently, clearly and concisely, people are more likely to listen to you, to take what you have to say seriously, and to agree with you. Prepare what you want to say; make sure you have everything clear in your own mind before tackling a tricky conversation. When speaking, avoid filler words -- such as 'umm', 'err' or 'like' -- because these suggest that you're struggling to express your message or are uncertain about its validity.

Make the conversation about goals -- not yourself. Setting individual gains aside is what the act of persuasion is all about, and a mutual understanding of what goals you're working toward can help establish common ground off the bat. Michael Spinosa, CEO of Unleashed Technologies, finds that a focus on the desired outcome is key when being persuasive: "This helps garner a greater investment in what everyone is working to achieve as opposed to creating roadblocks because of personal agendas," he says. "A goal-focused approach has everyone winning and opens people up."

Pay attention to your body language.

Your body language also has a significant impact on your ability to persuade:

- *Smiling naturally -- makes you seem approachable and likeable, *even over the phone*
- *Raising your eyebrows -- signals you are not a threat, and are friendly and approachable
- *Avoid crossing your arms and putting your hands in your pockets -- signals that you don't feel comfortable and makes you appear less approachable
- *Eye contact -- shows interest in the conversation and trustworthiness

The age-old anecdote "You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar" is a figurative way to say that one is likely to achieve better results by being agreeable rather than disagreeable. When an individual uses logic, reason, or positive argument to achieve an outcome, they have used the technique of persuasion.