

Exercising Your Influence

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The ancient Greeks spent a lot of time thinking and writing about the effect of one personality on another. They broke down the process of communication into three parts, which they called ethos, pathos and logos.

The ethos of communication is defined as the ethical part. This revolves around the person you really are and, more important, the person you are perceived to be. If you are in sales or business, the way you are perceived by someone, which will largely determine the influence you have over him or her, will be strongly affected by your level of credibility, your ethos. In the area of personal credibility, the rule is that everything counts. Everything you do or don't do either adds to or takes away from your credibility and your capability to influence someone. Ralph Waldo

Emerson said, in essence, that what you are shouting at me so loudly, I cannot hear a word you are saying.

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First Impressions Count

Perhaps the simplest example of the application of this rule, that everything counts, involves your image or appearance. You've heard it said that you never get a second chance to make a good first impression. The fact is that when you first meet a person, he makes a judgment about you in approximately four seconds, and his judgment is finalized largely within 30 seconds of the initial contact. In a survey of the members of the American Personnel and Guidance Association those men and women who are responsible for hiring people for large companies members generally agreed that they made their decision to hire or not to hire a person within 30 seconds of the first meeting.

Everything contributing to the way you look on the outside is important. If it's not helping you, it's hurting you. While you cannot control your physical features, you have total control over your dress and grooming. In fact, we generally assume that a person consciously and deliberately makes a personal statement about himself with every part of his appearance that he can affect in any way.

Your clothes are responsible for 95 percent of the first impression that you make on someone because, in most instances, your clothes cover 95 percent of your body. Your grooming, your hair style and the other ways you can determine your appearance from the neck up also exert an inordinate influence on the way that you are perceived, on your ethos with someone. Your accessories, such as purse or briefcase, watch, tie, rings, pens and other elements, all make a statement that will or will not help to put you in a position to influence someone.

Connect with Your Customer

The second part of communication and influence that the Greeks wrote about is pathos. Pathos refers to

the emotional elements of a conversation. In modern selling and marketing, pathos is the ability to communicate with the deep, subconscious needs of a customer. Human beings are largely emotional, in that everything that we do and say, all of our decisions, and our indecisions, are determined by our emotions. Therefore, to have a great influence on others, we need to be able to connect with whatever causes them to feel strongly one way or another.

There is a little saying that we teach in our sales seminars: "If you can see Joe Jones through Joe Jones's eyes, you can sell Joe Jones what Joe Jones buys." This simply means that if you can develop a high level of empathy and put yourself into the mind and heart of a person, you can have an inordinate influence on his actions and his behavior.

The best salespeople and the most effective influencers of behavior are extremely empathetic and sensitive to others. They listen closely to what others are saying, and they listen for the messages that are being conveyed between the lines. They are aware that there are things that are said and things that are not said. If you can get your ego out of the way long enough to focus in, like a laser beam, on a person, you will often be aware of concerns that the person has concerns that you might have missed if you had allowed yourself to get wrapped up in your product or service, or in your desire to communicate your message.

Perhaps the most powerful ability you can develop to influence others is the ability to ask questions carefully and to listen attentively to the answers. Remember, listening can build trust and credibility. The more you listen to what a person is really saying, the more the person will trust you and be open to your influence. A basic rule is that you should never say anything if you can find a way to ask it instead. Telling is not selling.

Deliver Your Message

The third part of communication, or human influence, is logos. The logos discussed by the Greeks refers to the factual content of a message, the words used. It refers to the argument that you present on behalf of your point of view. (However, we know that the facts themselves, although they are important, are not as powerful or as influential as the emotions are.)

In selling, we know that there are three parts to the process. These are, first, establishing rapport with the prospective customer, second, identifying the problem or need that the prospective customer has and, third, presenting the solution. These are the ethos, the pathos and the logos of selling to someone.

Relationships are Key

Your success in every area of life will be based largely on the quality and quantity of relationships that you can initiate and develop over time. In the world of business and sales today, relationships are everything. We often call this the “friendship factor.” We have discovered that a person will not do business with you until he or she is convinced that you are his or her friend and are acting in his or her best interest. In other words, someone cannot be influenced by you unless he or she likes you in some way. Of course, it’s often possible for you to influence a person if he fears you, but that type of influence lasts only until the person can rearrange his situation and escape from the circumstances that enable you to have control over him.

The safest way to influence someone, then, is to earn his liking and respect by appealing to the friendship factor. This requires spending time with him, caring for him and respecting him. The more time that you are willing to spend with the person, the greater will be his tendency to trust you and to feel that you are

acting in his best interest. The more obvious it is that you care about the person, about what he really needs, the more likely it is that he will be open to your influence. This is even more important in your personal relationships, with members of the opposite sex, your friends and your children. The more that people feel you care about them, the more open they will be to your influence in some way. The third ingredient of the friendship factor is respect. Being respected by others is very important to each of us. A survey done by the Gallup organization found that the most prominent living Americans rated the respect of others as the most important measure of success in life. They worked very hard to earn the respect of their parents, the respect of their spouses and children, the respect of their peers and colleagues, and the respect of mankind at large.

How to Earn Respect

It seems that we truly respect ourselves only when we feel that we are respected by others, and we will go to great lengths to earn and keep that respect. When we feel that someone respects us for who we are and what we have accomplished, we tend to be more open to that person's influence.

We can do two things to put ourselves in a position to be respected by others. The first is to develop our knowledge of our field. The more people perceive you know about your subject, the more they will respect you. The highest-paid people in almost every field are those who know more than the average people. They are recognized as experts, and they develop what is called "expert power." Because of their superior knowledge, they are looked up to and listened to, and they are much more capable of influencing others to act

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in a particular way than they would be if their knowledge level were just average.

The best salespeople are those who know their products cold. They deeply understand every aspect of their products and the ways in which their products can be used to achieve the most important goals of their customers.

A good example comes from the field of life-insurance sales. One of the most successful and famous insurance salesman of all time is Ben Feldman. Ben Feldman is a legend in the life-insurance business. He has been written up in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the greatest salesman in the world.

There are many books and articles by and about Ben Feldman that describe one of the most important activities he engaged in to achieve his level of success. For many, many years, Ben Feldman spent two hours every night, from 10:00 P.M. to 12:00 midnight, studying the field of life insurance. He studied not only life insurance but also selling methodologies, persuasion skills, financial planning, actuarial tables, and every other subject he could think of that would make him more knowledgeable and, therefore, more capable of serving his customers. He became respected far and wide for his extraordinary ability to tailor a variety of life-insurance instruments to help individual business owners achieve and maintain financial estates that would live on after them. He became a walking embodiment of “expert power,” and because of that power, he had tremendous ability to influence others. As a result, he became a very wealthy, successful and respected businessman.

Another way to influence others is through expertise. Expertise is closely tied to knowledge, but it is a little different. Expertise is the ability to do, the ability to perform well in your chosen field. Men and women

with expertise are those who practice over and over in whatever they do until they become known far and wide as the very best in their fields.

Be a Result-Getter

One of the most important qualities necessary for influence and success is result-orientation. It is the ability to get results, to get the job done, to deliver the goods. Your ability to get results, to make a commitment to achieve a set of goals and to go out and do it, will earn you the respect of everyone around you, and it will enable you to exert influence over people far out of proportion to what the average person could accomplish.

In every company, there are those men and women who can always be counted on to deliver the goods. They are the men and women who fulfill their commitments. They say that they will do something, and they don't just accomplish it; they exceed expectations. They are relied upon to make a significant contribution to the goals of the organization. And when they speak, others listen. They have a tremendous ability to influence people, people above, below and at their level because everyone looks up to them as people who deliver the results. And so can you, by deciding to do so and then by working on it.

Stay Positive

Another way to become more influential is by developing a positive mental attitude. The more positive and enthusiastic you are about yourself and your work, the more influence you will have over people. The fact is that emotions are contagious. Your emotions have an impact on the behavior of others. When you get excited about what you are doing, you get others excited as well. The more positive and optimistic you are about what you are doing, about what you are selling or servicing, the more positive others will be

toward you. Hence, the easier it will be for you to influence them to buy your products or services, to accept your ideas, to do what you want them to do to help you achieve your goals.

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Perhaps the best way to develop a more positive mental attitude is to continually look for the good in every situation. Become an “inverse paranoid,” in that you assume that there is a conspiracy to make you *successful*, and always look for the silver lining in every cloud. No matter what problems or objections your prospective customers have, look for a constructive way to turn those objections around, to turn them into reasons for going ahead rather than not buying.

Every time you read a positive book, listen to a positive audiocassette, or interact with positive people, you are reinforcing your positive mental attitude and making yourself a more influential and persuasive person.

Quid Pro Quo

Perhaps the most powerful principle of all in personal influence is contained in what is called the Law of Reciprocity. It is also called the Law of Sowing and Reaping, and the Law of Action and Reaction. Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to it as the Law of Compensation, and Napoleon Hill called it the Law of Overcompensation. Probably the best summary of the Law of Reciprocity is the Golden Rule, which says to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, to love others as you love yourself.

After extensive research, Dr. Robert Cialdini of the University of Arizona concluded that the fastest and most powerful way to influence someone is to do things for that person. He found that each of us hates to be under a sense of obligation to another. When someone does something for us, we have an enormous desire to pay back the person, so we can be even. This is another way of saying that there is a deep, subconscious desire in all of us to be fair in our interactions with others. If someone has done something kind for us, we feel it is only fair to pay him back in some way.

One of the best ways to influence someone is to do something nice for him. I know many successful salespeople who make a habit of taking their prospects out to breakfast or lunch. During the breakfast or lunch, they do not talk about their products or services unless the client brings it up. They merely make small talk, ask questions and listen. They work on building trust, and they work on establishing a friendly relationship. At the end of the breakfast or lunch, they tell the prospect that they will be getting in touch with him sometime in the future with the possibility of talking to him about helping him in some way.

The best salespeople and businesspeople in America today are those who look upon their customers and prospective customers as friends and partners. They always look for ways to help their partners improve their lives in ways that are not directly related to the products or services they sell. They sow seeds, and they reap a harvest. They trigger a desire in people to reciprocate. When the time comes for those salespeople to approach their prospects with the possibility of buying their products or services, the prospects are wide open to the questions and inputs of the salespeople. The prospects have a deep-down desire to reciprocate.

One of the best ways to use this principle in your interactions is to continually look for ways to say and do positive things for people. Look for ways to do kind acts and favors for your friends and prospects. Send

thank-you notes. Send birthday cards. Send clippings from newspapers about subjects that you feel may be of interest to them. Always keep your promises, and follow up on your commitments. Always do what you say you will do. Do everything possible to put in, knowing confidently that you will ultimately be able to get out far more. You will reap if you sow.

Be a Giver

Someone has observed that no one ever built a statue to a person to acknowledge what he or she got out of life. Statues are built only to people to acknowledge what they gave. The most powerful, influential and successful people you will ever meet always look for ways to do nice things for others. When you meet someone under almost any circumstance, one of the best questions you can ask is this: "Is there anything that I can do for you?" Always look for ways to put in rather than to take out. The successful man or woman of today is a "go-giver" as well as a go-getter.

The more that people feel that you are open and empathetic and sensitive to their needs and concerns, the more open they will be to your influencing them positively in some way. And the more you can influence others with the power and impact of your personality, the more you will accomplish, and the faster you will accomplish it. The more rapidly you will move toward the great success that you desire and deserve.