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Choosing the Right Persuasion Technique: A Practical Guide



Choosing the appropriate persuasion technique for a given problem or scenario depends on several key factors. Here is a practical framework to help guide your decision.

1. Understand Your Audience

Ask:

- What are their values, beliefs, and priorities?
- Are they more influenced by logic, emotion, or credibility?
- Do they see you as part of their “ingroup” (shared identity)?

Techniques to consider:

- Ethos (credibility): Use when your authority or expertise matters.
- Pathos (emotion): Use when the audience is emotionally invested.
- Logos (logic): Use when the audience values data, facts, and reasoning.



2. Define the Goal(s)

Ask:

- Is this a high-stakes decision or a casual influence?
- Are you trying to **change behavior**, **shift attitudes**, or **encourage action**?

Techniques to consider:

- Call to Action: Best for motivating immediate behavior.
- Storytelling: Capture your audience's attention.
- Framing: Determine the best way to make the audience more receptive.



3. Identify Barriers to Persuasion

Ask:

- Am I trying too hard or being too pushy, and therefore coming across as desperate or lacking confidence, undermining my credibility?
- Am I adequately prepared, or is my lack of preparation weakening my argument and exposing me to objections?
- Am I talking too much and dominating the conversation, preventing me from understanding my audience's perspective?
- Am I making assumptions about my audience that might lead to misalignment and missed opportunities to connect?
- Am I failing to consider the whole conversation, treating persuasion as a one-time pitch rather than a process for building relationships?
- Am I letting fear of failure stop me from attempting persuasion or making me hesitant in my approach?

- Am I providing too much information, overwhelming my audience, and reducing the effectiveness of my message?



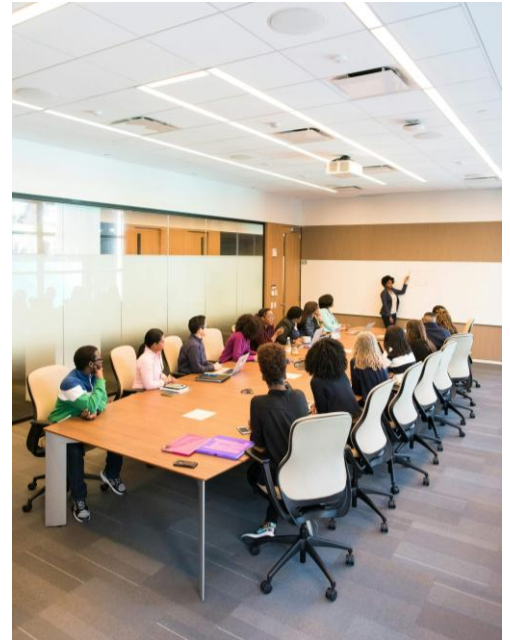
Techniques to consider:

- Pre-Suasion (Cialdini): Manage attention and set the stage before your message.
- Unity: Build rapport and common ground to reduce resistance.
- Simplification: Avoid overwhelming with too much information (stick to three key points).

4. Match the Technique to the Scenario

Ask:

- How can I motivate immediate action or decision-making?
- How can I shape the audience's perception of outcomes?
- How can I prime my audience to be more receptive?
- How can I establish credibility and trust?
- How can I inspire action through emotions?
- How can I convince analytical or skeptical audiences?



Techniques to consider:

- Use a strong call to action, such as “Click here to give a child clean water today.”
- Leverage framing (gain vs. loss), such as “Get stronger and feel more energized in 30 days” (gain) or “Every day you delay increases fatigue and health issues” (loss).
- Foster unity by emphasizing shared identity, such as “We’ve always tackled challenges together—this is just the next step.”
- Use pathos by connecting emotionally, such as “This is Maria. She walks three miles every day for clean water.”
- Utilize logos by presenting logical arguments, such as “This plan will reduce overhead by 18% in the first quarter.”

5. Test and Adapt



Persuasion is dynamic. Persuasion is not a one-size-fits-all process, it is a dynamic, evolving interaction. Even the most well-prepared message may not land as intended. That is why testing and adapting your approach is essential for long-term persuasive success. If one approach does not work:

- Reassess your audience's needs. If your message is not resonating, pause and ask:
 - What matters most to them right now? Are their priorities emotional, practical, or social? Have their circumstances changed?
- Try a different framing (e.g., from gain to loss). Framing your message as a **gain** (what they'll get) or a **loss** (what they'll miss) can dramatically change how it's received.
 - **Gain Frame:** "You'll save \$500 a year by switching." **Loss Frame:** "You're losing \$500 a year by not switching."
- Shift from logic to emotion or vice versa. Some audiences respond to data and facts (logos), while others are moved by stories and feelings (pathos). If one is not working, try the other.
- **Observe and Iterate**
 - Watch for **nonverbal cues**: Are they leaning in or tuning out? Ask for **feedback**: "What are your thoughts so far?" Be ready to **pivot**: Change your tone, simplify your message, or ask more questions.
- **Why It Matters**
 - Build trust by showing you are responsive, not rigid. Increase your chances of success by aligning with real-time needs. Help you grow as a communicator by learning what works and what does not.

Summary

Persuasion is a valuable skill.

It empowers individuals to influence others ethically and effectively—whether in personal relationships, professional settings, or broader societal contexts.

It can help you inspire action, shift mindsets, and promote beneficial behaviors—whether you're encouraging healthy habits, advocating for a cause, or leading a team through change.

Strong leaders are persuasive communicators. They motivate teams, negotiate deals, and gain buy-in for ideas and strategies.

Persuasion involves empathy, listening, and understanding others' perspectives, which strengthen relationships and foster collaboration.

Persuasive communication helps people find common ground, navigate disagreements, and reach mutually beneficial solutions.

Learning to persuade effectively improves your ability to speak clearly, listen actively, and adapt your message—skills that are valuable in every area of life.