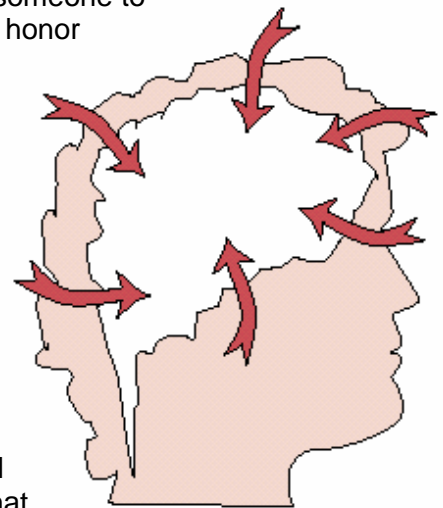


# THE SCIENCE OF PERSUASION: SIX PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS EVERY MARKETER SHOULD KNOW

Six principles come into play whenever we persuade people to buy our products or services. These six principles lie at the heart of our persuasive skills. Based on the book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* by social psychologist Robert Cialdini, this tool explains each psychological principle in detail and provides examples. Marketing executives can use this tool to design successful campaigns. Sales people can use these six principles every time they make a call.

Here are the six psychological principles and how they work:

1. **Reciprocity:** If I give you something, you're likely to give me something. If I give you a free trial of a new Persian rug, for example, then you're more likely to feel obligated to buy it. Another example is with direct mail: the organization Disabled Veterans of America sends out requests for money each year. The basic mailing generates only an 18 percent response, but when it adds free personalized address labels, it improves to 35 percent. In negotiations this principle is very much at play. If I concede something to you by retreating to a smaller request, then you are more likely to concede something to me by giving up something of your own. So by starting with a higher asking price, you can create concessions and engage the psychological desire for reciprocity.
2. **Consistency.** People honor their commitments. So getting someone to make a public commitment enables you to ask him or her to honor that commitment. For example, a tree organization circulated a petition asking prospects to support planting more trees in public spaces. When the organization followed up the petition drive with a request for funds from people who signed the petition, the fund-raising campaign was very successful. Some marketing companies conduct research first about whether people need their product or service. By calling back those people who said they might need it, they're relying on the principle of consistency to gain a positive response.
3. **Social validation.** People like to do what other people do. So demonstrating that a lot of people have already complied exerts a strong social pressure. That's why marketers say that something is the "largest selling bath soap" or "fastest selling car." Social validation can have unexpected effects. For example, a campaign to curb litter featured the headline: "Gross National Product." And the copy read: "This year, Americans will produce more litter and pollution than ever before." This unfortunate campaign backfired. Within the statement that says: "Look at all the people who are doing this *undesirable* thing" lurks a message that says: "Look at all the people who *are* doing this undesirable thing." The campaign was scrapped.



4. **Liking.** People will say “yes” to people they like. That’s the genius of Tupperware parties. You like buying from people you like. There’s a Tupperware party every 2.7 seconds somewhere in the world. Other techniques: Physical attractiveness. Looking for a connection between yourself and your customer. Compliments, indirect praise. They all work.
5. **Authority.** People believe authority figures. That’s why salespeople wear a suit and a tie. Or why people tout their scientific credentials. “Four out of five doctors recommend.” Even the appearance of authority can be convincing. Robert Young proclaimed the health benefits of decaffeinated coffee, and even though Young is an actor, because he portrayed Marcus Welby M.D., his endorsement carried a lot of authority.
6. **Scarcity.** Items become more desirable to us as they become less available. For this reason, marketers trumpet the one-of-a-kind nature of their product or service. “Limited time only” offers. Scarcity can be turned to your advantage. Telling customers that “We’ve been informed that there’s going to be a beef shortage” will increase orders. “Telling customers that “We have an exclusive source who’s told us that there’s going to be a beef shortage” will drive up orders even higher. The more the appearance of scarcity, the higher the desire to act quickly before it’s too late.