

# The Art of Persuasion: Two Musts!

*By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.*

From the time we are babies, we try to persuade others. Babies want more milk, elementary school kids want to stay up late and teens want the car. Given the fact that we have been practicing persuasion for so many years, you would think that as adults we would be really good at it. However, most people fail to grasp two key principles about influence.

The number one issue is that the person must see value with what you are proposing, either for himself or the company. Without demonstrating value, it is not likely you will gain approval. Take for example my experience in buying a large, flat screen television. The salesperson was friendly enough and showed me various models. What he focused on with each set were all the wonderful features — live video streaming, picture within picture, surround sound, 3D, etc. The list was endless. However, the salesperson never asked if these capabilities were important to me. Since I only watch one channel at a time, I could care less about anything other than a clear picture with decent sound. No one wants to pay for features they will not use. I walked out of the store saying, “I’ll think about it.”

In business, the comment, “I will think about it,” is usually the kiss of death. If, for example, you want your boss to approve allocating funds to a project or hiring a new person, be sure to have facts and figures at the ready to show how much more output your department will have and how that bump will affect the bottom line over the course of a year or resolve the issue with customer service. Do not focus on your needs but on the benefits to the business or to the boss on a personal note. Stressing value is critical!

Another issue in the persuasion game is trust. Building trust takes time. It is related to things like sound recommendations, follow through and going the extra mile. Thus, any suggestions you make must be thoroughly researched. Defining the risks and the opportunities is a must. There should be no surprises.

Rapport also affects perception. Are you friendly, approachable? Would others see you as a team player or a “Can Do” person? It’s to your advantage to build a relationship with individuals you need to influence.

On the other hand, if I don’t know you, your body language can make or break you. First impressions are lasting. A lack of eye contact or a stammer in your voice will erode the perception of you as knowledgeable or confident. Little things matter. Get feedback on how you appear to others. If there are issues, eliminate them.

There are numerous books on the art of persuasion. Various authors have identified many issues that can come into play, but the two critical ones are demonstrating value and establishing trust. Work hard at these two factors and your job of moving someone to action will become a lot easier.

**Question:** *What tips do you have on persuasion? We’re interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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