

Master the art of persuasion

Increase your power of persuasion with these 4 tips



Introduction

Do you recognise this? Your proposal or plan is well thought out, but you still encounter unexpected resistance? That it is not easy to get your colleagues or your manager to agree with your way of thinking, and that you may be overwhelmed by their "suggestions for improvement"?

Being right does not automatically mean getting your way. You may be very knowledgeable, but your expertise and knowledge may not always get you what you want.

Achieving good results requires successful collaboration. This is important for anyone who wants to be influential. Influence is about having an impact by bringing others along with you to achieve your goal. In this e-book, we show you how it works.

"The most powerful way to win an argument is by asking questions. It can make people see the flaws in their logic."
- unknown



#1

Think of arguments for the other person

You don't need to convince yourself that your idea is clever. The point is to get the other person to believe in your idea. So think carefully about which arguments are relevant to your discussion partner. They may be different from the ones you think are important.

Example: You prefer having an agenda for weekly team meetings so you can see the topics in advance and prepare accordingly. However, this might not be the case for all your colleagues.

But your colleague who is always extremely busy is likely to be persuaded by the argument that the meeting will proceed more smoothly and efficiently this way. Another colleague might want to hear that everyone's points will be addressed, and that time will be well-distributed among the topics. As for your boss, it's better to argue that this approach will help employees work more efficiently, make higher-quality decisions, and spend less time in meetings.

In a nutshell: what's in it for them?



#2

Dare to be incomplete

Don't lay out all your arguments at once. There's a good chance your conversation partner might check out or only respond to the last argument you gave—possibly even to your weakest one. Even if you have a well-prepared argument and an in-depth analysis with multiple points, break it down into smaller parts.

Clearly state your proposal and support it with one or two brief arguments. Then, summarize your proposal again. After that, give the other person space to respond. You can present the rest of your arguments based on their questions or feedback.

Example: “I suggest we start using an agenda for our weekly team meetings. In our last meeting, we agreed that the discussions were somewhat chaotic, often causing us to run over time. An agenda could help prevent this. What do you think?”

Save your third argument—that everyone gets a chance to speak—and use it as an additional point if you face any opposition or pushback.

In short: make a concrete proposal and limit the amount of arguments



#3

Ask questions

Asking questions to make your message more convincing may seem contradictory, but asking good questions during a substantive discussion can help you tremendously.

Simply asking questions is the easiest way to find out what arguments convince others or what might still stand in their way. Think of questions like "What is your biggest objection to my proposal?" or "What would convince you to do this?" Then you can address that directly.

In short: ask!



#4

Keep it short & to the point

Just as you shouldn't begin with a long list of arguments, it's helpful to keep your language concise and clear. Use short sentences that are easy for the other person to follow. Avoid auxiliary verbs like 'will' and 'can,' as well as weakening words like 'actually' or 'maybe.'

Example: You've thoroughly prepared for a meeting, carefully considering all your proposals and arguments. However, as you're presenting, you notice your colleagues growing impatient. On autopilot, you begin explaining even more to win them over, but the opposite happens—your colleagues tune out.

Are you often long-winded? It pays to practice actively. Try doing it in front of a mirror or recording yourself with your mobile phone camera. It may be a bit stressful, but it is very helpful to become aware of how you use language and where it could be shorter and more powerful.

In short: be concise and get straight to the point.



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