

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SECURING A SALE

In the first of a new business development series, Steve Hasenmueller offers an unmissable insight into boosting your sales performance

Sales at its worst and lowest level is manipulation, at its best and highest level, Influence.

In 1984 a psychologist named Robert Cialdini wrote what at that time was a breakthrough and seminal work: "Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion" based on exhaustive studies and scientific research of how we are all persuaded to 'take action', and discovered seven characteristics of what makes people move toward our offer and

say "Yes".

When people are uncertain, they move away from what we are offering, so working to eliminate uncertainty becomes a critical aspect of sales presentations.

It is important to understand the concept of each – because we are all influenced differently and if you are only using one or two – it might not be enough, and as one of the best Salespeople I ever met asked me "Steve, if you are in a gunfight, how many bullets

do you want to have?" and after a beat with my blank stare, the answer, "As many as you need".

I always say that if you are good salesperson, working for a good company, selling good products, you have a moral imperative to close the sale. Extreme? Yes – but the point is the greatest person, company, and product doesn't sell itself, and the companies that Thrive work very diligently on their Sales process.

## CIALDINI'S SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF INFLUENCE

### 1 RECIPROCITY

#### PRINCIPLE

Human beings are wired to return favours and pay back debts. I do something for you (offer you a beverage, ask good questions, explain things simply, volunteer a site visit, bring up financing without you asking, distract your kids etc.) – you do something for me (buy). It is the meaning of "Quid Pro Quo" – something granted, something expected in return. Science has discovered that as a species – we feel indebted to someone who has done something for us and want to return the favour.

#### THINK FREE SAMPLES AT COSTCO.

It can also be as simple as calling someone by their name – but whatever it is, the key in the sales Effort is to be the first to give and to make it as personal as possible.

#### 2023

I have an updated higher-level aspiration to this principle – Reverse Reciprocity – which means that instead of "I do something for you – you do something for me" it is "I do something for you, I do something for me." The difference is the elevated understanding that any effort that we extend toward clients – we are really extending it to ourselves. A great presentation, staying late or coming in early to meet, good follow up pre- and post-sale, actually caring – we are doing it for ourselves with the client also being a beneficiary in the process. Thinking of it this way keeps us Developing and Striving for Excellence.

### 2 COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY

#### PRINCIPLE

People feel a desire to comply to a request if they see it is consistent with what they have publicly committed themselves to in your presence. This is in full effect whenever anyone is defending a decision or purchase, they have made. This Principle is what we are employing with a company credibility statement that ends with "Does that sound like the kind of company you would like to do business with?". You have a "yes" and a commitment from the very start – and the product/project discussion hasn't even started yet, and the science tells us we have greatly increased our chances of success for the customer to be consistent.

#### 2023

The key to remember here is that we do not know what our prospects values, priorities, or ideal features of the situation are when we begin, and the ONLY way to know is to ask great questions! The use of questions allows us to control our focus on the prospect to establish how we align our presentation, proposal, and value proposition with what they have told us. Want a higher closing ratio? Ask better questions and get tiny, incremental buy ins from prospective clients all along the way to trigger this principle.

**THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW IS TO ASK GREAT QUESTIONS!**

### 3 LIKING

#### PRINCIPLE

We like people who are similar to us, who pay us compliments, and who cooperate with us toward mutual goals. This seems pretty simple – we buy from people and companies we “like”. Cialdini also lists 5 traits that help this Principle:

##### PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS

– one of my mantra’s is “Every Day is a Presentation” and this is a key component – it doesn’t mean beauty per se – it means Effort – are you neat and clean in appearance and speech? Is your showroom or office neat and clean (how about the restroom! ) We associate these things with success – and we all want to be associated with it.

##### SIMILARITY

We like people with shared interests; where we or our kids went to school, our sports teams, hobbies, vehicles, restaurant, blogs, books, etc. Customers usually signal some of these with their actions, but

even if they don’t – simple questions can uncover – and also it’s these type of questions that move a sale out of purely transactional to personal. I met a new neighbour recently, who is a runner, (like me) outside sales (like me) and from Tennessee (like me) – we are now great friends – and though I’m not “buying” anything – I certainly would.

##### COMPLIMENTS

– we like people who give us praise, it makes us happy. The key here in sincerity – it is a BIG mistake to give false praise and have it backfire on our efforts. These can usually flow sincerely and easily with uncovering similarities.

##### COOPERATION

– We feel more positive when we work closely with someone. This is a critical aspect of Consultive Selling – when we are trying to figure out exactly who the client is and what is

going to best suit their needs. (Their needs, not ours). When we can establish the right product, spec it appropriately, and deliver as best possible to the desires, times frames and expectations of customer, at that point – we are working together in mutual cooperation.

##### ASSOCIATION

We feel better toward things that are associated with things we like. Think celebrity endorsements. This is why they contract and pay huge sums for celebrities to hawk products – Nick Saban – Insurance, Models and actresses- perfumes, comedians and Geckos, etc. (Michael Phelps or Dave Scott for swim spas). For individual companies – our products presented in their best possible light, for example Pools or Spas displayed in vignettes or in pictures of beautiful settings with people enjoying them – the epitome of the aspiration of the buyer.

### 2023

I would emphasise sincerity and authenticity in all of these – which is very easy to do – and would add one more to this list: Humour. If you can get a prospect to laugh – you can get them to buy. It doesn’t mean you have to be a comedian – it mostly means that we don’t take ourselves too seriously, and do what we can to make the buying experience “fun”.

#### ADD ONE MORE TO THIS LIST: HUMOUR. IF YOU CAN GET A PROSPECT TO LAUGH

Think about how you can incorporate any of these you aren’t currently using in your Selling Efforts, and how to strengthen the ones you are using. #4-7 next month

### 4 SOCIAL PROOF

#### PRINCIPLE

Humans are heavily influenced by the actions of others. The opinions of the many can influence the individual. Recommendations, starred reviews, Trust Pilot, are all looking to appeal to this very influential aspect. As Seth Godin would say “People like us, do things like this” meaning we all want to be associated and involved with others like us who have already made the decision and are happy with the outcome.

#### MY ADVICE

Third party endorsements are one of the MOST powerful methods to get credit for what you do, no one wants to hear us telling them how great we are – but other people telling it – that is a different story and much appreciated. Understanding this allows you to realize the importance and as a result – that you might have to ASK your satisfied customers for a few words to use – some will gladly – some won’t – so cultivating this information is an ongoing effort – that pays big dividends.



## 5 AUTHORITY

### PRINCIPLE

People who are credible and knowledgeable in their fields are more influential and persuasive than those who are not. Pretty simple – know your stuff! If you don't know it – learn it. Be the expert. There is a lot of research on the power of "specific knowledge" and how knowing one thing really, really well can be a catapult for your career.

### MY ADVICE

This is a major component of the value proposition of selling – as much as influence. We all want to buy from experts. A common misperception is that customers know what they want or what is available because of the internet. I would argue that they know even less!!! This usually requires effort and initiative from the salesperson – and really no excuse for anything less than expertise in our profession. Competence builds Confidence, and both are very powerful influencers in any sale.

## 6 SCARCITY

### PRINCIPLE

Products are more attractive when their availability is limited. We all just saw this principle in action for all of the duration of Covid demand and supply chain limitations – people bought whatever they could get – or bought and waited up to a year to receive goods or services – the driver being the scarcity of the products or projects.

**PRODUCTS ARE MORE ATTRACTIVE WHEN THEIR AVAILABILITY IS LIMITED.**

### MY ADVICE

Now that the organic influencer (covid) is over – this aspect still remains as powerful as ever – but now we are going to have to create our own "scarcity". In stock offers, financing timelines, beat the price increase, limited time offers – all of these create a call to action (CTA) – the key here is to keep it credible – not "today and today only" – unless its true. A Credible Reason to Buy – based on our understanding of the psychology behind it – is our challenge to provide in an ongoing creative fashion. Asking yourself this question- "If I was in the market for your product or services – why would I make a decision to buy from you – today?"

## 7 UNITY

### PRINCIPLE

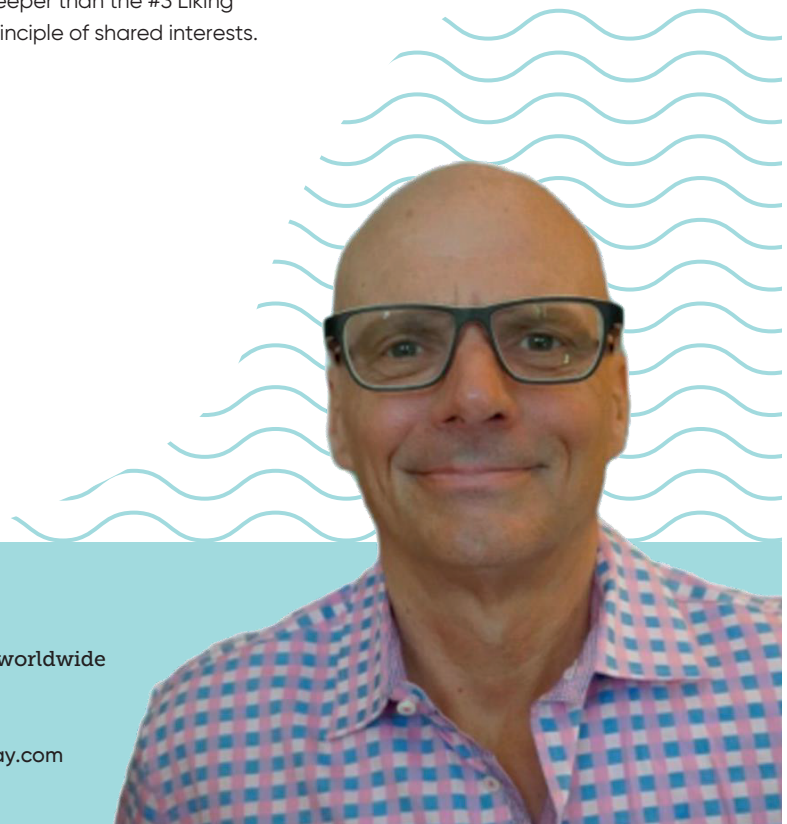
We are more likely to be influenced by people who are more like "us" – a shared identity. Originally Cialdini had six Principles – and this was added later as a stand alone from all the others as an important point of influence.

**WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INFLUENCED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE LIKE "US"**

Being part of a Tribe – whether it is actual family or family type language, sports teams, ethnic groups, location, and what is called co-creation – being a part of developing or going through something together – military, high school (explains why this is so formative in our lives) or college, war, disasters. Jimmy Buffet fans are Parrot heads and Grateful Dead are Deadheads, as an example. Affiliation with very strong experiential roots – much deeper than the #3 Liking Principle of shared interests.

### MY ADVICE

Bernie Madoff used this Principle unethically for his massive Ponzi scheme – friends and families were the Unity aspect of the "privilege" of investing with him. "Family" was the draw and influencer. For us, actual Family of course is limited in scope – but Family language is unlimited – how we refer to our employees and prospects – loyalty programs for customers – even using incentives to buy where the benefit is for someone that isn't the actual buyer – but a family member, the parent, child, or spouse can activate this principle. In thinking about Unity – we all want to "belong" and get great satisfaction in being part of a whole – as Freidrich von Schiller said "Even the weak become strong when they are united". Current "avid" fans of your business are a good starting point of study and evaluation to see what the unifying factors are – and then expand your efforts for more of those types.



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