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How to Get Your Point Across Persuasively

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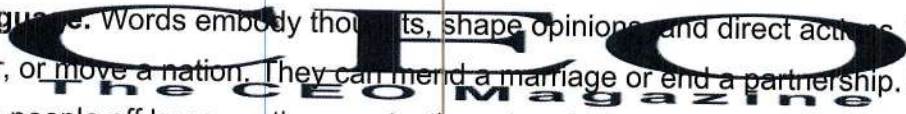


CEOs typically have their minds made up about most things—social issues, business decisions, social issues. Just ask them. Very few individuals will eagerly invite you to persuade them to take on a new perspective. So if you're going to get someone to change their behavior, actions, or opinion, you need to do it purposeful. Then ten tips can make the difference between stubborn resistance and open consideration:

10 Ways to Get Your Point Across Persuasively



- 1. Match the other person's reality:** Many executive speeches miss the mark because the speaker aims for the general workforce and hits no one. For example, the typical employee can't even relate to the senior executive's experience or examples. Don't make that mistake. Match your listener's day-to-day experience. Make your point relevant for the few, not the many. Narrow the focus.
- 2. Reduce emotional noise:** Have you ever been to a sporting event where the noise from the game and fans drowns out your conversation? That's often the type of emotional noise you're competing with as you try to get someone's attention for your idea or opinion. Don't make the mistake of increasing the chatter and drowning out your own message. Choose a more appropriate time.
- 3. Make your point painful or possibly visionary:** Open the other person's eyes to the current situation. Make the group feel the pain of the status quo. What's doing nothing going to cost them? Loss of respect? Lost productivity? Diminished brand? Low morale? Hard dollars? If not pain of the present, paint a picture of the future if they made a change. Help them grab a glimpse of a new dream.
- 4. Be specific:** People think in pictures. Talk about a storage hanger, not a "facility." Ask for an additional "6 more employees to complete the project," not "additional resources." Recommend that you "delay signing the supplier agreement for 90 days," not that they "reconsider the supplier agreement in light of certain unexpected developments."
- 5. Listen well:** Strong negotiators distinguish themselves with their ability to listen intently. Having both people walk away satisfied with a deal often depends on how well one listens for agreement and mutual opportunities. The same goes for changing someone's mind. Where's the sweet spot—the dissatisfaction, the need, the unmet goal, the dream? Listen for how your message aligns with what the other person already wants.
- 6. Present relevant reasons in the right order:** What seems obvious to you is seldom obvious to the other party. Trust me on this. Having taught presentation skills workshops and writing skills workshops for more than three decades, I can't tell you how often I've discussed a persuasive presentation or sales proposal with someone, pointing out that the next action was unclear. Their frequent answer? "Oh, the client will know. That's obvious." (And when questioned, the intended "target" didn't know.) If you're speaking to someone you expect will agree with you or someone you think will be neutral, present your strongest reasons first. If you're speaking to a group or an individual who will resist your point of view or message, begin with your weakest reason and build to the strongest point.
- 7. Make it personal; speak to the heart:** Politicians understand the power of an emotional appeal to move a nation. Consider past campaign slogans and speeches. Listen also to sound bites and stump speeches that tug at the emotional strings—either positively to position their point of view or negatively to push aside opposing perspectives. Yes, of course, people want explanations and data. Just don't expect logic alone to build your case. Storytelling is a basic skill for persuasive leaders.



8. **Watch your language.** Words embody thoughts, shape opinions, and direct actions. Words can sink a stock, launch a war, or move a nation. They can mend a marriage or end a partnership. Some word choices simply turn people off because they are factless, tasteless, or pompous. Sift such from your language. Plan your phrasing before you open your mouth.

9. **Be brief:** Too many words can bury key ideas. Enough said.

10. **Ensure that your body language supports rather than sabotages your point:** “This new program will ultimately save us hard dollars” said with covering posture translates to “I’m unsure whether this new program will save us money.” When there’s a contradiction between the vocal and the visual, body language trumps.

Your ability to persuade makes leadership possible.

For more thoughts on leadership communication, grab a copy of **Communicate Like a Leader: Connecting Strategically to Coach, Inspire, and Get Things Done.** Download a complimentary excerpt here: <http://www.communicatelikealeaderbook.com/excerpt>
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