

Good Cop / Bad Cop

«Good Cop / Bad Cop works as follows: A robbery suspect, let's say, who is maintaining his innocence, is brought to a room to be questioned by a pair of officers. One of the officers plays the role of Bad Cop. Before the suspects even sit down, Bad Cop curses him for the crime. For the rest of the session his words come only with snarls and growls. He kicks the prisoner's chair to emphasize his points. When he looks at the man, he seems to see a mound of garbage. He swears he will do everything possible to assure a maximum sentence.

At the outset of Bad Cop's performance, his partner, Good Cop, sits in the background. Then, slowly, he starts to chip in. First he speaks only to Bad Cop, trying to calm him down. A bit later, Good Cop actually says something in the suspect's behalf. Not much in the way of support, but compared to the rantings of Bad Cop, the words fall like music on the prisoner's ears. Then Good Cop begins to speak directly to the man, calling him by his first name and pointing out any positive details of his case. If the suspect persists in claiming innocence, Bad Cop launches into another tirade of curses and threats. But this time Good Cop stops him and asks him to leave the room.

When Bad Cop is gone, it's time for Good Cop big scene: "Look, man, I don't know why, but my partner doesn't like you, and he's gonna try to get you. You're looking at five years, man, five years! Now, I don't want to see that happen to you. So if you admit you robbed that place right now, before he gets back, I'll take charge of your case and put in a good word for you. If we work together on this, we can cut that five years down to two, maybe one. Do both of us a favour, Kenny. Just tell me how you did it, and then let's start working on getting you through this." A full confession frequently follows.

The big reason that the Good Cop / Bad Cop technique is effective is that it gives the suspect the idea that there is someone on his side, someone with his welfare in mind, someone working together with him, for him.»

Abbreviated quotation from: Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence - The Psychology of Persuasion*, William Morrow & Co, revised edition, 1993