

# The Power To Persuade

---

Six core persuasion tasks:

1. Mapping the influence landscape



2. Shaping perceptions of interests



3. Shaping perceptions of alternatives



4. Facilitating the process leading to acceptance



5. Gaining acceptance for tough decisions



6. Communicating



## 1. Mapping the Influence Landscape

- \* Identifying the key groups and subgroups
- \* Analyzing influence networks
- \* Identifying supporters, opponents and persuadables
- \* Assessing interests
  - "The key is to understand what others *perceive* their interests to be, not what you believe they *should* be!"
  - Listing possible reasons for resistance
  - Listing driving and restraining forces
    - "People facing tough decisions experience psychological tension as opposing sets of forces push them in conflicting directions. Driving forces push targets into the direction you desire; restraining forces push them in other directions. The key is to find ways to strengthen the driving forces, weaken the restraining forces, or both."
- \* Assessing alternatives (BATNAs)

## 2. Shaping Perceptions of Interests

- \* Altering incentives
- \* Framing decisions
  - "Framing is the use of arguments, analogy, and metaphor to create a favorable definition of the problem to be solved and the set of potential solutions."
- \* Using social influence
  - "People rarely make important choice independently; most people are influenced by their network of relationships and the opinion of key advisors."  
(⇒ Mapping the influence landscape)
- \* Engaging in quid-pro-quo negotiation
  - "Finally, if key people cannot otherwise be brought along, it may be necessary to engage them in a this-for-that negotiation, agreeing to support a project or initiative they care about in exchange for their support of yours."

### **3. Framing Decisions**

- \* Invoking the common good  
(emphasizing collective benefits and downplaying individual costs)
- \* Linking to core values  
See ads for four-wheel drive cars: link with freedom and adventurous spirit
- \* Heightening concerns about loss or risk  
"Many people tend to be loss-averse – i.e. more sensitive to potential losses than to equivalent potential gains. Desired courses of actions should thus be cast in terms of potential gains and undesired choices in terms of potential losses."
- \* Rejection and retreat  
"Ask for a lot initially, and then settle for less." (?)
- \* Narrowing or broadening the focus
- \* Enlarging the pie
- \* Neutralizing toxic issues
  - Explicitly setting them aside for future consideration
  - Making up-front commitment that allay anxiety
- \* Inoculating against expected challenges  
"Presenting and decisively refuting weak form of arguments immunizes audiences against the same arguments when they are advanced in more potent forms."
- \* Providing a script for convincing others

### **4. Shaping Perceptions of Alternatives**

- \* Introducing new options  
"Often we can exert considerable influence simply by expanding the range of options and alternatives under consideration."
- \* Controlling the agenda

- \* Eliminating "do nothing" or "status quo" as an option
  - Setting up "action-forcing events" – i.e. events that force people to make commitments or take actions (→ implementation milestones, deadlines, conditional agreements, etc.)
  - Making irreversible commitments oneself
  - Building change-supporting coalitions
- \* Pruning options
  - Eliminating less desirable options / Funneling decision-making toward favored choices
  - Letting people try to make unpromising options work... and draw the right conclusions themselves.

## **5. Facilitating the Process of Acceptance**

- \* Capitalizing on people's wish to:
  - remain consistent with strongly held values and beliefs (→ 2.b: Linking to core values)
  - remain consistent with their prior commitments
  - preserve their sense of control
  - repay obligations
  - preserve their reputation
  - gain the approval of respected others
- \* Using behavior change to drive attitude change
 

"People have a strong need for consistency; induced to try something new, they are likely to adjust their attitudes to be consistent with the behavior."
- \* Sequencing through relationship networks
  - Planning when and in what order to approach people in order to form a coalition and build momentum
  - Planning the sequence of individual and group meetings (→ 1. Mapping the influence landscape)

## 6. Gaining Acceptance for Tough Decisions

Creating a fair process:

- \* Engaging in shared diagnosis  
"Getting people involved in the diagnosis of organizational problems is a form of entanglement: involvement in the diagnosis makes it more difficult for people to deny the need for tough decisions."
- \* Consulting broadly  
"Consultation promotes buy-in. Good consultation means active listening. Posing questions and encouraging people to voice their real concerns, then summarizing and feeding back what you have heard, signals that you are paying attention and taking the conversation seriously. The power of active listening as a persuasive technique is vastly underrated."
- \* Asking what is needed to get it done... and giving what has been asked for.

## 7. Communicating

- \* Developing reliable communication channels  
"Good communication channels transmit the right information in a timely and responsive way."
- \* Focus and repetition
- \* Matching the medium and the message
- \* Introducing powerful simplifications
- \* Creating a new mythology
- \* Building personal credibility

Source: Michael D. Watkins, *The Power to Persuade*, Harvard Business School, Working Paper 9-800-323, Rev. July 24, 2000