

3 surprising takeaways from robert cialdini's 'pre- suasion'

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After a 30-year wait, Robert Cialdini has written a sequel to his best-selling classic, *Influence*. The new book is

As you might expect after the long wait, *Pre-Suasion* is packed with new research, tactics and insights. Here are a few of the ones I found most surprising.

1. Unity -- The seventh principle of influence.

Perhaps the biggest shock in Cialdini's *Pre-Suasion* is that he's finally added a new major principle of influence to his long-standing roster of six. The new principle is "unity," which refers to the perception of shared identity.

Family is the ultimate shared identity and Cialdini proved its potency with a classroom experiment.

By offering an inconsequential benefit (one point on one test) to students if their parents completed a survey, Cialdini increased participation by those parents fivefold to nearly 100 percent. Invoking familial unity was remarkably persuasive.

Even familial language is persuasive. Cialdini cites Warren Buffet's now-classic shareholder letter dealing with the future of Berkshire Hathaway. Instead of simply describing the succession plan, Buffett made his missive more persuasive by saying, "I will tell you what I would say to my family today if they asked me about Berkshire's future."

Unity can be based on other groups: ethnicity, geography, shared interests and many more. The more the individual identifies as being a member of that group, the more powerful the unity effect will be.

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2. Surveys can increase demand.

We know about political push-polls and their effects. A statement like, “ Have you heard about allegations that Candidate X took bribes from lobbyists?” can have a negative impact even if the voter hasn’t heard about those allegations or even if they didn't exist.

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Cialdini's insight in *Pre-Suasion* is that simply asking a question in the right way can put customers in the right frame of mind to buy your product.

His first example comes from a surprising group: religious cult recruiters.

When they recruit new members, they often ask, “ Are you unhappy?” rather than, “ Are you happy?” or the more neutral, “ Are you happy or unhappy?”

The cult recruiters do this because framing the issue with “ unhappy” makes the individual more likely to focus on those things in their life that are making them feel bad.

Research supports this. Cialdini describes a survey in Canada that asked people about their social satisfaction by asking if they whether they were “ unhappy” or “ happy” with their social life. The group asked using the word “ unhappy” were triggered to dwell on their dissatisfactions, and were almost five times as likely to report being unhappy.

This has major implications for business surveys. A software maker could ask, “ Are you satisfied with your current solution?” But, they would be more likely to increase interest in a change by phrasing it, “ Are you dissatisfied

with your current solution?” or “ Are there problems with the product you use now?”

3. Where never to sit in a meeting.

If you are heading for an important meeting, you might be inclined to sit next to the key influencer. What better place to exert some influence of your own, right?

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Cialdini says that would be a mistake because of the “ next in line” effect. If discussion rotates around the table, the VIP you want to sway will be least likely to hear your message if you go just before or after her. If you speak before, she’ll be rehearsing what she plans to say when you are done. Speak after, and she’ll be mentally rehashing what she just said.

Instead, sit across from the person you want to influence. You’ll be more likely to avoid speaking being just before or after her.

More importantly, you’ll have better “ visual prominence.” A speaker in full view is assigned more of the responsibility for the outcome of the meeting. Cialdini gives the example of interrogation videos that record police using heavy-handed techniques to elicit a confession, such as providing false information about physical evidence.

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Typically, the suspect is seen facing the camera while the interrogator is viewed from behind. In this situation, viewers are much more likely to say <https://assignbuster.com/3-surprising-takeaways-from-robert-cialdinis-persuasion/>

the suspect is fully responsible for his confession than when the two parties are viewed side by side. This is called "visual salience" -- what you see in front of you is more important.

Cialdini wryly points out that if you actually have nothing useful to contribute at the big meeting, or you expect the meeting to go badly, you might be better off sitting next to the VIP. She won't notice your minimal input due to the next-in-line effect and you won't get blamed if no breakthrough result is reached.

Cialdini's *Pre-Suasion* is packed with useful nuggets like this. The combination of big-picture insights and actionable tactics make it an instant classic and worthy successor to "Influence."