

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR SALES INFLUENCE

It was a research experiment that many would have gladly volunteered for.¹ Three behavioral scientists approached patrons at a local bar and asked them to evaluate two different beers. The first option was simply a regular beer, while the second option was regular beer with a few drops of balsamic vinegar. Prior to tasting, some of the participants were told the ingredients, while others were not told until after tasting. The results were that the majority of those who had been informed about the balsamic vinegar before trying either of the beers selected the regular beer as the best tasting. In contrast, most of tasters who had not been told about the ingredients of the beers chose the beer with balsamic vinegar as the best tasting.

This experiment illustrates that the way something is presented shapes how it is perceived. For instance, a research study identified that Coca-Cola is rated higher when consumed from a cup that displays its brand logo than from an unmarked cup.² Another study found that people rated a slice of turkey as better tasting if it was a well-known brand, than a lesser known brand.³

Likewise, in selling, the more effectively a message is communicated, the more likely it will be favorably received and acted upon. Hillary Chura wrote about this in one of her *New York Times* articles where she cites numerous examples of how, in business, inspiring others to accept an idea is dependent upon one's ability to present that idea persuasively.⁴ Neuroscientist Gregory Berns aptly summarizes this notion when he confirmed, "A person can have the greatest idea in the world – completely different and novel – but if that person can't convince enough other people, it doesn't matter."⁵

In the past, though some basic knowledge about influence was known, much of what produces influence was a mystery. However, this is no longer the case.

Within the last few decades there have been thousands of scientific studies focused on obtaining an exact understanding of what creates and enables influence. There is now a consensus within the scientific community regarding the psychological principles that generate influence. These principles are measurable, predictable and repeatable and when leveraged will boost one's capacity to positively influence another. As social psychologist Robert Cialdini affirms:

Behavioral scientists have conducted experiments that shed considerable light on the way certain interactions lead people to concede, comply, or change. This research shows that persuasion works by appealing to a limited set of deeply rooted human drives and needs, and it does so in predictable ways. Persuasion, in other words, is governed by basic principles that can be taught, learned, and applied.⁶

The question is, "are you leveraging the proven science of influence when you sell?" Your answer to this question matters because every time you enter a selling situation these scientific principles undergird and shape the persuasiveness of the interaction.

When sales people ignore or contradict this proven science, prospects will reject their product or service, not on its merit, but because of how it was presented. In contrast, when sales people align how they sell with the scientific principles that govern human behavior their ability to compellingly communicate the value and validity of their product or service is enhanced and so is their effectiveness.

At the Hoffeld Group we study a variety of scientific disciplines, such as social psychology, neuroscience and behavioral economics. We then take the principles, which science has proven create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and translate them into practical, sales specific concepts, strategies and tactics. So if you are ready to increase your sales and want sales training that is grounded in proven science, check us out.

About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group's groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.

Notes

1. Leonard Lee, Shane Frederick and Dan Ariely. "Try It, You'll Like It." *Psychological Science*, 17, 2006. p. 1,054 – 1,058.
2. S.M. McClure, J. Li, D. Tomlin, K.S. Cypert, L.M. Montague and P.R. Montague. "Neural correlates of behavioral preference for culturally familiar drinks." *Neuron*, 44, 2004. p. 379 – 387.
3. J.C. Makens. "Effect of brand preference upon consumers' perceived taste of turkey meat." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 49, 1965. p. 261 – 263.
4. Hillary Chura. "Um, Uh, Like Call in the Speech Coach." *New York Times*, January 11, 2007.
5. Gregory Berns. "Neuroscientist Reveals How Nonconformists Achieve Success." *Emory University Press Release*, September 25th, 2008, available at http://www.whsc.emory.edu/press_releases2.cfm?announcement_id_seq=15766
6. Robert B. Cialdini. "Harnessing the Science of Persuasion." *Harvard Business Review*, October, 2001.