

Influence Robert Cialdini

Weapons of Influence

Our ability to be influenced to act in a certain manner is motivated by messages we receive from others or our surroundings that trigger a mechanical response, initiating patterns of behavior embedded in our subconscious minds.

Autonomous responses to certain stimuli can be advantageous in survival type scenarios, but they can also be manipulated by external actors that understand these stimuli, and can use them to take advantage of us. Exploiters have developed ways to reproduce and mimic the trigger features that cause humans to act or behave in a desired manner.

Cialdini covers six methods or techniques of persuasion

Reciprocation

Reciprocation can be used to influence others because it incites a feeling of guilt in someone else so that they will reciprocate the action--we are "guilted" into returning a favor. The obligation to repay is the essence of reciprocity, but the obligation to receive makes it easy to exploit. Those who exploit this rule are able to take advantage of unequal exchanges, where the repayment is worth more than the initial concession.

- Reciprocity works because it instills a sense of indebtedness that pushes us to return a favor. The "rule" was developed so that one person could initiate a relationship without the fear of loss [p. 30], and has been embedded in us from early childhood. It has consequently become a part of human culture, and causes us to become psychologically bothered when we feel indebted to others. Benefits on this social construct include stronger relationships, while some individuals are simply being authentically generous. But the rule can be exploited in a malevolent way, when individuals use it serve intentions outside of relationship building (asking for donations, making a sale, etc.)
- Social pressure also explains why we reciprocate. Failing to repay a gift or favor can turn us into outcasts, meaning there is the potential to be unliked and unwanted by a larger social group
- The power of indebtedness and social acceptance is so great that we may reciprocate even when we don't like the individual that initiated the offering

Commitment and Consistency

Consistency/commitment is highly valued in our society, so we incorporate patterns and habits into our lives, often without much thought. This allows us to fall victim to our commitments in unsensible situations. Developing a new habit can be difficult, but once it is established, it can be difficult to break. Remaining consistent with our own behaviors can sometimes lead to an obsessive desire to continue acting what we have already done

How commitment/consistency can be used to influence others:

- Foot-in-the-door technique: start with a small request to gain compliance with larger requests down the road
- A man's behavior tells him about himself (it is a primary source of information about his beliefs, values, and attitudes).

Why commitment/consistency works as a tool to influence:

- Personal and interpersonal pressures cause us to respond in ways that justify our earlier decisions or statements
- Consistency is valued and adaptive, while inconsistency is commonly considered to be an undesirable trait. When people don't match their words with their deeds they are seen as indecisive, confused, two-faced, or mentally ill, while consistent people are seen as more intelligent and honest
- Why is consistency an attractive quality? It provides us with a shortcut to deal with difficult circumstances, but it also allows us to hide from painful truths that we would rather not recognize--in this way it functions as a shield against thought

Social Proof

What other people think or how they behave influences what we determine to be correct--particularly what constitutes correct behavior. But we fail to overlook the fact that the others we are following are most likely also using social evidence to guide their behavior. The problem is not that we go along with others, but we do so in situations that are fraudulent, dangerous, and harmful to ourselves.

- The principle of social proof is most powerful when applied to people that are the most similar to ourselves. We are more inclined to follow the actions and behavior of a similar person than a dissimilar one.
- We have a tendency to see an action as more appropriate when others are doing it. Wisdom of crowds--we make fewer mistakes by going with the flow than moving against it. Typically when a lot of people are doing something it is the right thing to do.

Liking

- Our attitudes or preference for certain things is influenced by the number of times that we have been exposed to it in the past.
- Our tendency to prefer something is partially due to how comfortable we are with it--how much or how often we have been exposed to it in the past.

Authority

- The tendency for us to obey individuals in a position of authority--even under the stress of what we know we are doing is morally wrong and emotionally trying

- Stanley Milgram's experiments: We have a deep-seated sense of duty to obey authority--despite any emotional stress we may exhibit during the course of our obedience.

"It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study."

Scarcity

The desire for things that are in limited supply. The power of coveting is amplified when we are in competition for items or when the experience of scarcity is new.

Scarcity works for two reasons. First, is our preference for short-cuts. We typically associate things that are scarce as being more valuable. Thus, availability, or lack thereof, is a quick way for us to decide on which item has higher quality. Second, we lose our freedom as opportunities become less available. When free choice is limited, the need to retain our freedoms makes us desire scarce items more than we otherwise would.

"Part of the problem is that our typical reaction to scarcity hinders our ability to think. When we watch something we want become less available, a physical agitation sets in. Especially in those cases involving direct competition, the blood comes up, the focus narrows, and emotions rise. As this visceral current advances, the cognitive, rational side retreats." [p. 266] (see Carl Richards 3 day rule when encountered with impulsive purchases)

"The joy is not in experiencing a scarce commodity but in possessing it. It is important that we not confuse the two." [p. 267]

Charlie Munger: The Psychology of Human Misjudgement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqzCfUglws&list=FLF0zVd8aSPvr4kOrOSfTG7g&t=2s&index=10>