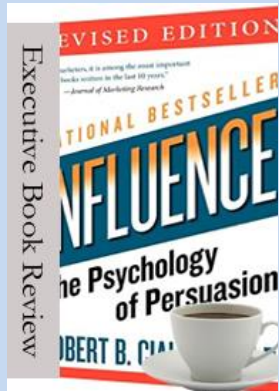


## Influence: Psychology of Persuasion

By Robert B. Cialdini

Reviewed by John Rugh



**About the Authors** Dr. Robert B. Cialdini (born April 27, 1945) is the Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University. His career focus has been the study of the science of influence. He is considered to be a leading expert in the fields of persuasion, compliance, and negotiation. He is often referred to as "The Godfather of Influence".

Dr. Cialdini is also the President and CEO of **Influence at Work**, a consulting firm whose clients include Google, Microsoft, Merrill Lynch, The Weather Channel and Pfizer.

**About the Book** **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion**, published in 1984, is Dr. Cialdini's most well-known book. It is based on his "undercover" research done while applying for jobs with and subsequently working with car dealerships, fundraising organizations and telemarketing firms.

The book delves into and tells us specific reasons why people say "Yes". And it tells us how to apply these findings in real life, everyday situations. It also tells you how to defend yourself when the persuasion principles mentioned in the book are being used against you in an unethical manner.

*"For marketers, this book is among the most important books written in the last ten years."* **Journal of Marketing Research**

*"Influence should be required reading for all business majors."* **Journal of Retailing**

*"This book will strike chords deep in the hearts and psyches of all of us."* **Best Sellers Magazine**

*"The material in Cialdini's Influence is a proverbial gold mine."* **Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology**

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## Influence and persuasion.

What do you think of when you hear these words? You might think they are important skills for sales people, politicians, hostage negotiators, and football coaches. And you would be right.

But what about the rest of us? The ability to persuade and influence matters to us as well. Think about it: whether you are a student, a spouse, a parent, a friend, an employee, an employer, or a solo entrepreneur, you need to be able to get other people to see your point of view and to say “Yes”. Don’t you agree?

As a result of his research, Dr. Cialdini concluded that influence is based on six key principles: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity. We will examine each of these today.

Each of the six principles in this book have been shown to help people like us become more influential and persuasive. Implement these principles properly and you stand to benefit in a big way.

## A Warning

Here is something to keep in mind though. These principles are powerful. And they can be harnessed for profound good or exploited for unspeakable evil. Please, for your sake, that of the people you encounter, and the world at large, use them morally and ethically.

So let’s dive into each of these principles. As we do, be thinking about how they might apply to you and your life and how you can harness their power for greater success.

*“I can admit it freely now. All my life I’ve been a patsy. For as long as I can recall, I’ve been an easy mark for the pitches of peddlers, fund-raisers, and operators of one sort or another. True, only some of these people had dishonorable motives. The others – representatives of certain charitable agencies, for instance – have had the best of intentions. No matter.*

*With personally disquieting frequency, I have always found myself in possession of unwanted magazine subscriptions or tickets to the sanitation workers’ ball. Probably this long-standing status as sucker accounts for my interest in the study of compliance: Just what are the factors that cause one person to say yes to another person? And which techniques most effectively use these factors to bring about such compliance? I wondered why it is that a request stated in a certain way will be rejected, while a request that asks for the same favor in a slightly different fashion will be successful”.* **Robert Cialdini, from the book’s introduction.**



## Six Weapons of Automatic Influence

### 1. Reciprocation

*“Pay every debt, as if God wrote the bill.”* Ralph Waldo Emerson

Cialdini tells the story of an experiment conducted by a university professor. He sent Christmas cards to a sampling of complete strangers. He received an overwhelming response. Christmas cards addressed to him came pouring back from many of the recipients, people who had never met or even heard of him.

*Pg. 17: “The great majority of those who returned a card never inquired into the identity of the unknown professor. They received his holiday greeting card, click, and whirr, they automatically sent one in return.”*

*Pg. 17: “While small in scope, this study nicely shows the action of one of the most potent of the weapons of influence around us – the rule for reciprocation. This rule says that we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us”.*

Now think about this. When someone does something for us, don't we feel an obligation to reciprocate? Yes! This is a deep, visceral response. *Click! Whirr!* We want to return the favor!

### 2. Commitment and Consistency

*“It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end.”* – Leonardo Da Vinci

We want our words and actions to be in alignment. We deeply desire, on some level, to be, and be seen as, people who are consistently committed to something good. We want to be seen as reliable. In many, perhaps even most, situations in our lives, commitment and consistency are good and useful.

*Pg. 57: “But because it is so typically in our best interest to be consistent, we easily fall into the habit of being automatically so, even in situations where it is not the sensible way to be.”*

*Pg. 57: “Like other weapons, this one lies deep within us, directing our actions with quiet power. It is, quite simply, our nearly obsessive desire to be (and to appear) consistent with what we have already done. Once we have made a choice or taken a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment. Those pressures will cause us to respond in ways that justify our earlier decision.”*



*Pg. 58: “Psychologists have long understood the power of the consistency principle to direct human action....The drive to be (and look) consistent constitutes a highly potent weapon of social influence, often causing us to act in ways that are clearly contrary to our own self interests.”*

### **3. Social Proof**

*“When all think alike, no one thinks very much.” – Walter Lippmann*

Let’s be honest, even if we like to fancy ourselves as leaders, even if we **are** leaders, on some level we are all followers. In many cases, what we like (and the degree to which we like it) is influenced by the likes and dislikes of other people.

*Pg. 115: “Experiments have found that the use of canned merriment causes an audience to laugh longer and more often when humorous material is presented and to rate the material as funnier.”*

Would you find your favorite TV sitcom as funny as you do if it did not have pre-recorded laughter? Highly doubtful. Our enjoyment of the program is enhanced by the enjoyment of others laughing at it, even if those others are part of a canned laugh track.

This is just one example of the pervasiveness of social proof.

The influence of social proof goes far beyond the entertainment world. You can harness its power in your business or career. How? Here’s one small way: Collect testimonials from satisfied clients. Display them on your website and other marketing materials. In addition to you selling you, let them – your happy clients, sell you.

### **4. Liking**

*“The main work of a trial attorney is to make a jury like his client.” – Clarence Darrow*

Think about this common business cliché: *“People do business with those they know, like and trust”*. The Seinfeld “Soup Nazi” episode notwithstanding, we want to do business with people we like. So, it pays to be likeable.

*Pg. 167: “Few people would be surprised to learn that, as a rule, we most prefer to say yes to the requests of someone we know and like. What might be startling to note, however, is that this simple rule is used in hundreds of ways by total strangers to get us to comply with their requests. The clearest illustration I know of the professional exploitation of the liking rule is the Tupperware party, which I consider the quintessential American compliance setting.”*



Weapons of influence, including reciprocity, commitment, social proof and liking, are on display at a Tupperware party. Even if there is a company representative present, the primary purchasing request, the call to action, comes from a friend of every person in the room. Again, we buy from people we know, like and trust.

## 5. Authority

*“Follow an expert.”* – Virgil

**“I’m not a doctor, but I do play one on TV”.**

Remember this statement? Back in the day, drug companies would hire actors like Robert Young, AKA “Marcus Welby, MD” to star in their aspirin and other over-the-counter drug TV commercials. A more modern example is the YouTube ad for prescription smoking cessation drug Chantix, featuring actor Ray Liotta, who used the drug to help him quit smoking.

I recently saw a commercial for retirement planning featuring Tom Selleck. Not only does he have implied authority because of his celebrity status, because of his looks, physical stature, mature age and credible, gravitas-filled acting ability (Think of his role as NYC PD Commissioner Frank Reagan in “Blue Bloods”), he brings additional authority to the role of celebrity spokesman for a topic as serious as financial management and retirement.

These advertisers have a strong understanding of something important and powerful: Humans have a deep-seated sense of duty to authority figures. Celebrities, including (especially?) actors who play roles such as physicians on TV and big-city police commissioners, give viewers the strong perception of authority. Think about this the next time you see a celebrity endorsing a product. And ask yourself, “Is there a way I can harness the power of the authority principle in my business?”

## 6. Scarcity

*“The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost.”* – G. K. Chesterton

*Pg. 239: “Collectors of everything from baseball cards to antiques are keenly aware of the influence of the scarcity principle in determining the worth of an item. As a rule, if it is rare or becoming rare, it is more valuable.”*

You and I want what is rare, what is scarce, what we might easily lose access to. We tend to automatically assign it more value. Diamonds are considered valuable. Why? At least part of the reason is that they are rare.





The business implications of this principle are obvious. If there is something buyers want, but it is available only in limited supply, it naturally becomes more valuable.

### **Closing Thoughts**

If you are in marketing, or in sales, I recommend this book. Regardless of your role in the business world, even if you are retired or still in school, it has a lot of valuable information for you.

It was published in 1984. The studies and stories mentioned in it may seem dated. You might be inclined to dismiss it as a result and decide to go for the latest volume from the “marketing guru de jour” instead.

And that could very well be a mistake. Even though it was published thirty-four years ago, it is still a valuable and valid reference. It offers you a thorough examination of timeless principles that can help you be more successful in business and in life.



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### Actions

*What thought, or idea had the biggest impact on you today?*

*What is one specific action you will take TODAY from what was discussed?*

*HOW will you implement this action?*

### Calendar of Events

**First Friday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 7:30 – 9:00 [Sponsor: UTSA EMBA Alumni Association]**

- Nov 2                      Influence: Psychology of Persuasion
- Dec 7<sup>th</sup>                    Power of the Moment
- Jan 4<sup>th</sup>

**Wine & Cheese Wednesday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 5:30 – 7:00 PM [Sponsor: Haworth]**

- Nov 7<sup>th</sup>                    Killing Cats Leads to Rats
- Dec 5<sup>th</sup>                    Opposable Mind
- Jan 9<sup>th</sup>                    Make Your Bed

**Second Tuesday – Wittigs 401 William St. Corpus Christi 5:30 – 7:00 PM [Sponsor: Wittigs & Haworth]**

- Nov 13<sup>th</sup>                  Killing Cats Leads to Rats (Note: later in month due Holiday)
- Dec 11<sup>th</sup>                  Opposable Mind
- Jan 8<sup>th</sup>                    Make Your Bed

**Fourth Thursday – Haworth 2 E Greenway Plaza #100 Houston 11:30 –1:00 [Sponsor: Haworth & Wittigs]**

- Nov 15<sup>th</sup>                  Strengths-based Leadership
- Dec 13<sup>th</sup>                  It's My Pleasure
- Jan 24<sup>th</sup>                  Employee Experience Advantage

**Fourth Friday – Alpha Home 419 E. Magnolia Ave. San Antonio 8:00 – 9:30 [Sponsor: Alpha Home]**

- Nov 16<sup>th</sup>                  Strengths-based Leadership
- Dec 14<sup>th</sup>                  It's My Pleasure
- Jan 25<sup>th</sup>                  Employee Experience Advantage

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