

PERSUASION IN INTERPERSONAL SELLING

Getting Customers To Like Us

SAVVY
MARKETER

When a salesperson talks, do customers listen? How does persuasion work for the salesperson? No matter how deserving our message, if our audience does not like us, the messenger, they are not going to hear our message. Every salesperson first has to get the customer to like him or her as a person. And in the game of life, everyone is a salesperson. So, here is how to get others to like us.³⁴

You could meet a total stranger, and, within five minutes, that person could decide whether or not he or she liked you. How does that happen? Basically, there are five factors at work: (1) good looks, (2) common ground, (3) aspirational persona, (4) utility, and (5) being liked in return. Let us briefly discuss each.

Good Looks Let us face it, other things being equal, looks matter. We are perhaps biologically wired to feel pleasure when we look at a person with good looks. This is unfair, but let us note that, to look good, one doesn't have to be a beauty queen or a handsome bodybuilder. Personal grooming and a happy facial expression can make most of us look good. That is why most service establishments have personal grooming prescriptions, and many explicitly advertise "hiring happy faces."

Common Ground The second factor that creates an affinity between two persons is "common ground," i.e., the sharing of some characteristic. This can be a common ethnic background, profession, technical background, alma mater ("Oh, you are a Hoosier too!"), common interest and hobbies (e.g., a common favorite sports team). Sometimes even an indirect similarity of background or interest helps (e.g., "You are from Belgium? My brother lived there once!")

Aspirational Persona If we find out that a person has a quality we admire or to which we aspire, we immediately begin to look at that person in a favorable way. This is why we like sports personalities and other celebrities; this is also why we have role models in our lives. However, this is also the reason we can develop an instant liking for someone we have just met. If we come to know that the person we are meeting is an accomplished author, or a champion chess player, or is heavily involved in community work, etc., then we might find that person inspiring; we might find his or her persona to be something we would aspire to. Consequently, he or she would earn our respect, and in turn, our liking.

Utility The fourth factor relates to whether the person can be of some use to us. If two persons move into the neighborhood, we like the one who has a pick-up truck and would be willing to loan it to us. We like a classmate who can teach us how to prepare a multi-media presentation. We like a salesperson who can give us free product samples. Whereas all other factors are psychological/emotional, the prospect of any utilitarian gains is, here, the only rational consideration. Too rational, actually—devoid of valuing a person as a person.

Being Liked Finally, the single most important factor is knowing that the other person likes us. We like people who like us. Period. It doesn't matter if they have nothing else to offer, we like them because they like us. Alternatively, no matter how much talent they have and how useful they might be, if we sense that they don't like us, then we won't like them, either. And of course, the more we think that they like us, the more we like them.³⁵

Five
Drivers
of
Personal
LikingGood
looksCommon
groundAspira-
tional
persona

Utility

Being
Liked

ESPKnowledgeBox . com

NUDGING OUR LOW INVOLVEMENT ATTITUDES

What is your attitude toward garbage—we mean toward the idea of placing your garbage in a trash can rather than just drop it anywhere? Most people don't hold any beliefs against it, nor do they have any negative feelings about the idea. On the other hand, they are not strongly motivated to do it either—pitch the trash in trash cans and nowhere else no matter what the effort. Except for some of us with a heightened sense of civic ethics and/or aesthetics, for most consumers, it is a low-involvement matter. They will do so if it is convenient. That is why, in most cities, local governments place trash cans every few blocks. China goes a step further—it does trash cans in style. See a sampling here. Channeling a low-involvement attitude into desirable behavior par excellence!



ESPKnowledgeBox