6 Expert Tips To Become a More Persuasive Person

“Outreach” in the government world often means “marketing.”  The goal is to persuade outside stakeholders to help you achieve your public service mission.

*The more persuasive you are, the better you will be able to recruit support and collaboration to achieve your ageny’s (or department’s) mission.*

This could be to exercise more, stop smoking, sign up for military service.

For many federal agencies, the primary stakeholder may be state and local governments who implement the mission at the local level.  Education, Transportation, and EPA come to mind.

When you persuade, you are cultivating stakeholder trust and spurring action.  You want them to do something to help you achieve your agency’s or department’s mission.

For the purposes of this blog, let’s assume that being persuasive is a good thing for all involved.  When federal agency staff and leadership (and their contractors) become experts at the art of persuasion, they more fully achieve the mission.

[Robert Cialdini’s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Cialdini) six tactics for influencing behavior offers insights on how to drive positive engagement and action.

| **Influencing Tactic** | **Example** |
| --- | --- |
| **1)** [**Reciprocity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reciprocity_(cultural_anthropology))– People tend to return a favor.    *.* | *Offering free samples is known to increase sales. The “good cop/bad cop” scenario works because the good cop is looking out for you* |
| **2) Commitment and Consistency –** If people commit, orally or in writing, to an idea or goal, they are more likely to honor it. | *Even when the original motivation is removed, this works because it is tied to an individual’s self-image of being honorable. Memorandums of Agreement are an example of this.* |
| **3). Social Proof** – People will do things that they see other people are doing. | *See* [*conformity*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conformity_(psychology))*, and the*[*Asch conformity experiments*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asch_conformity_experiments)*. Federal Highway Administration’s* [*Every Day Counts*](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/) *program is an example of using peer-to-peer best practices among state DoTs to drive improvement in highway construction.* |
| **4) Authority** – People will tend to obey authority figures, even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts. | *See the* [*Milgram experiments*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment)*in the early 1960s. Because government is inherently authoritative, this tactic should be used with caution.* |
| **5) Liking**— People are easily persuaded by people they like. | *Viral videos that we watch because a friend or family member shared it with us is an example of this. Often federal agencies will partner with a local organization to co-present their message. The assumption is that this organization is known and well-liked in the community.* |
| **6) Scarcity**—Perceived scarcity will generate demand. | *“Limited time only” sales pitches are an example. A recent example was the skyrocketing price for* [*Hamilton*](http://www.hamiltonbroadway.com/) *tickets for Lin Manuel Miranda’s final performances. Since government resources are limited, this tactic could be used to drive positive action.* |

If you can incorporate the above behavioral and decision sciences into your stakeholder engagement strategy, it will be more effective.

Please share how you have used any of the above tactics to drive positive behavior change within the government agency that you serve.

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