Hidden persuasion pdf

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Skip to main contentDiscover By Van Leeuwen Andrews, Van BaarenCopyright © 2013 Marc Andrews, Dr. van Leeuwen, Prof. Dr. van Baaren and BIS PublishersAll rights reserved.ISBN: 978-90-6369-314-5Introduction, Three needs, How to use, ACKNOWLEDGING RESISTANCE, FLUENCY, FOOT-IN-THE-DOOR, PROMISED LAND, SELF-PERSUASION, ALTERCASTING, SOCIAL PROOF, GUARANTEES, ATTRACTIVENESS, HUMOUR, SCARCITY, FLEETING ATTRACTION, DECOY, THAT'S NOT ALL, MERE EXPOSURE, ANCHORING, ASTROTURFING, ANTHROPOMORPHISM, TRUSTHWORTHINESS, DISRUPT & REFRAME, METAPHORS, IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS, RECIPROCITY, GOD TERMS, SEX, AUTHORITY, LOSS OR GAIN, RECENCY & PRIMACY, FEAR APPEALS, DOUBLESPEAK, PROJECTION, DOOR-IN-THE-FACE, SUBLIMINALS, Authors, References, Image credits, Recommended reading, CHAPTER 1ACKNOWLEDGING RESISTANCEOvercoming resistance by simply acknowledging it* * *Resistance to influence and persuasion is the single most problematic aspect of getting someone to do or purchase something. It is, therefore, no wonder that most persuaders and requesters do everything they can to avoid emphasising or calling attention to possible negative responses to their request. Paradoxically, research has shown that acknowledging someone's resistance to comply or emphasising that they are free to do as they want removes hesitation, increases liking of the requester, and induces compliance. The most remarkable thing about these two techniques is that they require no additional methods of persuasion to be used, and no extra information needs to be processed. It is as simple as saying, "I know you will not agree to this, but ..." before a proposal or adding, "But you are free to accept or refuse" after the proposal. While both techniques play into our tendency to resist influence, there are differences between these approaches.Acknowledging resistance (AR) necessitates that there be resistance to the upcoming proposal in advance, as would be expected when raising taxes or fees on a service. It plays into this existing resistance by simply acknowledging its presence. It not only eliminates the possibility of the target using the argument, "But I don't want to," but also communicates an empathic understanding of that person's opinion. Importantly, the acknowledgement must be at the beginning of the sentence or proposal. In a few cases, the technique can be used as an attempt at reverse psychology: Telling the target what they do not want, paradoxically, makes them want exactly this.The but you are free (BYAF) technique is hot off the press! It was first reported by Guegguen and Pascal in 2000, and a large review of 42 studies on its effectiveness appeared in 2013. This review showed that emphasising that people are free to choose at the end of a proposal doubled the overall compliance with a direct request. While AR works because the initial answer would be "No," BYAF makes no assumption about the original attitude. Instead, it generates and enhances a sense of freedom by allowing a "No" response. This makes the BYAF technique slightly more versatile and less prone to reactance.The specific wording of the AR and BYAF techniques is not that important, as long as there is an acknowledgement of resistance or an emphasis on freedom, respectively. Again, both techniques work, paradoxically, by highlighting the target's autonomy to say "No" and they have the added benefit of making the requester appear respectful of the target's choice. Both work best for face-to-face requests or in situations where the target is not anonymous – anonymity removes the need for self-presentation (and therefore resistance) because the request can be dismissed easily. Thus, the requester should be able to see whether the target follows up on the request. The two main benefits of these techniques are their non-reliance on the content of the proposal and their ease of use. By adding a few simple words to the beginning or the end of a request compliance can be significantly increased.Final remarks> Especially effective when the target feels he or she ought to comply with the proposal morally, but does not really want to or is avoiding it (e.g., campaigns promoting safe sex or donations).> BYAF is suitable for almost any request, and both AR and BYAF can be used easily in combination with other influence techniques.> The effect is strongest when the target is not anonymous.Related conceptsReverse psychology, TransparencyEffectiveness ***** X-Factor ***** Implementation *****FLUENCYA message should always be experienced fluently and with ease* * *A lot of people think that using difficult words and sentences make them look smart. The opposite is true; it actually makes you look less intelligent. This effect is not due to our sharp skills in detecting when someone is a poseur, but simply because human brains do not like complexity. Keep it simple, stupid!Smooth and automatic processing of information automatically leads to experiencing positive feelings. This works for visual, textual, and conceptual information alike. The quicker something is read, the easier an image is on the eye, and/or the faster a concept is understood, the more we will like it. Thus, choosing the right name, font, number, and image can make all the difference in whether a message will have any persuasive impact.NamingIn naming, the choice of pronounceable vs. unpronounceable names determines whether people find your product safe or threatening, boring or exciting. Researchers have found that when people were confronted with medicine names like Magnalroxate and Hnegripitrom the latter was reported as more threatening. This effect can, however, be used to your advantage. When naming theme park rides, researchers found that rides with unpronounceable Indian names (e.g., Tsiischili) were experienced as more exciting and sickening than ones with pronounceable names (e.g., Chunta). Thus, if you are selling a product designed to induce feelings of safety and familiarity, go for flow. If, on the other hand, you are selling something exciting or extravagant, you could name it Rhrtixtrax.NumberingThe way products are numbered can also increase fluency. You may have already noticed that many well-known brands incorporate numbers in their product line, such as Nikon D40 / D50 and BMW 1- / 3- / 5- series. These numbers not only help to distinguish one product from another, but can also increase product preference when chosen wisely. For example, an imaginary product would likely be evaluated as more desirable if named "Zinc 24" than if it was just called "Zinc."But why 24 and not 23? An interesting set of studies has explored which numbers are evaluated more positively than others. The research demonstrated that well-known (and therefore fluently processed) numbers in ads increased the positive evaluation of the product itself. Additionally, if the mathematical product of two displayed numbers was included, evaluations were even higher. For example, people were asked to make a choice between V8 and Campbell's soup. Some were told: "Get a full day's supply of 4 essential vitamins and 2 minerals with a bottle of V8," whereas others saw an advertisement that stated: "Get a full day's supply of essential vitamins and minerals with a bottle of V8." More people chose V8 when the numbers 2 and 4 were included. The number 8 is not only familiar and easily divisible, but also 2 × 4 = 8 making for an even more fluent processing of the message. The operands 2 and 4 then help the unconscious processing of the number 8. The researchers suggest that this only works for simple multiplications, as most of us have learned these by heart and are quick to recognise them.TypefaceFonts influence how easy it is to read a given text. As expected, the less readable the font, the less we like it. For example, one study found that when exercise instructions were written using a font that was difficult to read, participants thought that the exercise would take twice as long to complete and expected it to be more demanding. Of course this effect can also be used to our advantage. Presenting Japanese spring rolls on a menu using a font that was hard to read made people rate the dish as more complex (therefore superior). But unless you are an aspiring Michelin chef or selling advanced electronics it is better to avoid using the "wing dings" font.Now try to answer the following question, "How many animals of each kind did Moses take on the ark?" Most people respond with "Two" despite their knowledge that Moses never had an ark. When this sentence was written using a font that was more difficult to read, however, the percentage of readers detecting the trick question went from 17% to 41%. So, under certain circumstances, decreasing the fluency of text can jolt people into a more analytical processing mode. This is useful when you want people to consider the message carefully, and you are confident that it will hold up to scrutiny.The effect of fluency does not only work on a perceptual level. When we find an action easy to imagine we like it more and are more likely to perform it later. In a similar vein, if you show someone a scene that they could easily imagine themselves in (e.g., a beach from a first-person viewpoint), they are more likely to want to go there than to a scene that is harder to imagine (e.g., the same beach from an aerial viewpoint). Even more surprising, studies have shown that if you ask someone to imagine a positive product experience this actually has a positive impact on their product evaluations later, but only if the product itself was accompanied by vivid imagery. One can further facilitate imagery fluency by combi-ning images that support each other. For example, a picture of a lock is reported as more beautiful when preceded by an image of a key. In sum, it is not only the perceptual properties of text or images that are important, but also the ease with which something can be brought to mind.Overall, fluent processing is most effective when people process the information quickly and heuristically. In other words, fluency is good if your visual message relates to something that people do not need to pay much attention to or if you specifically want your target to remain in a peripheral processing mode. However, if you want to jolt people into carefully considering your message, you can do this by including a word that is difficult to pronounce or surprising imagery. Note that in most cases, however, an audience does not have the conscious capacity or the time to carefully consider presented messages. Therefore, familiar and fluent messages are an advertiser's safest bet.To conclude, people are highly sensitive to experiences of ease and difficulty, but are not aware of how this influences them. They tend to attribute any resulting positive and negative evaluations to other properties of the textual or visual material (e.g., they believe that they make their decisions based on the content) and will not recognise that understanding something with ease automatically induces positive affect.Final remarks> A message should be clean, simple, and perceptually pleasing. All fluent processing is experienced as positive affect, which is then transferred to the message and/or source.> Complicated messages are to be avoided, as they result in the audience perceiving the source as less intelligent or the message as less appealing.> If a product or message is all about sophistication and complexity, induce disfluency by using difficult fonts and confusing imagery.> Get people to read a message more carefully by using a font that is difficult to read (Caution: it could cause people to ignore the message altogether).Related conceptsEase of retrieval, Framing, Hot-cold empathy gap, Regulatory fitEffectiveness ***** X-Factor ***** Implementation *****FOOT-IN-THE-DOORBeginning with a small request paves the way for compliance to a bigger request* * *Imagine that someone asks you to donate a small amount of money to support volunteer work with the elderly, and you agree. A week later that same person approaches you and asks if you are willing to spend an hour at the local nursing home to interact with the residents, and you agree again. This is a successful instance of the foot-in-the-door technique (FITD).FITD is a multiple-step influence strategy. First you ask people to comply with a seemingly small request. A short while afterwards, you ask them a bigger request, which is in line with the smaller one. It turns out that starting with a small request strongly increases the chances of complying with the big request compared to only asking the big request.The exact psychological mechanism underlying FITD remains subject to debate. Most likely, several psychological processes account for its effect. The first explanation is self-perception, which means that you observe your behaviour (agreeing to donate) and then adjust your attitude to the behaviour (I must find that important/noble/good, etc.). Because you changed your attitude, the next request is in line with your newly adopted attitude. Other explanations centre round the themes of commitment and/or consistency. The idea is that you made a public commitment to a cause by agreeing to the first request and you don't want to appear inconsistent and unreliable by not agreeing to the second request. This effect will be even stronger when the first and second requests are made by the same person, as they know about your initial agreement.The FITD has been studied widely in the lab and has been used abundantly in real-life situations. It is one of the most famous influence techniques and one with a high success rate when performed correctly. The FITD is most effective when, among other things:- The first request involves some level of effort and is an actual behaviour; not just a simple "Yes."- People get complimented or receive recognition for taking the first step.- The bigger request is clearly related to and in line with the first request.Despite its strong effects when used correctly, there are several aspects of the FITD technique that can decrease its effectiveness. First, it may lead to resistance. When the same person approaches you twice, it may feel pushy or aggressive and lead to reactance. Second, the first request needs to be large enough that it requires action from the target, but it should not be too large or you'll get a "No." Obviously, the FITD only works when the first, smaller, request receives a "Yes."Final remarks> Asking for a big favour at once often leads to resistance; starting with a small, related request greatly increases the success rate.> The first request should neither be too small (it needs to be high in involvement) nor too big.Related conceptsRationalisation trap, Bait-and-switch, Ben Franklin effect, Low-ball TechniqueEffectiveness ***** X-Factor ***** Implementation *****PROMISED LANDBuy this product and follow me to the Promised Land* * *Normally, consumers buy products because they fulfil their basic needs (e.g., hunger, cleanliness). However, product-irrelevant needs (social, emotional, and sexual) can also be promised for purchasing a basic need product. The Promised Land is a persuasion technique which seduces consumers into buying a product because it will help them to achieve some desirable goal – even when the goal is unrealistic.This technique is opposite to those where the audience is persuaded to buy a product on the basis of concrete and "honest" attributes (rationally). The Promised Land is directly aimed at creating the strongest reward response in the brain of the perceiver. Even though the claims made are exaggerated or obvious lies, they target the important desires we carry with us, thereby making us vulnerable to them. This can happen in at least two ways:1. People want the exaggerated claims to be true. We may convince ourselves that even though we will, of course, not attract a horde of sexy models; we will at least get more attention from attractive women when we use a sexualised product like Axe deodorants (see next page).2. By presenting these brands with very attractive, but unrealistic situations, the ads create an association between our dreams and desires and the specific brand. When a teenage male goes out to a bar, attracting women is likely to be a motive, and the teenager most likely has some hopes and fantasies in that department. When he is in that frame of mind, liquor ads associated with sex are likely to come to his mind, since liquor has been linked to that goal previously.The Promised Land can be seen as an empowering promise; it will give you the right tools and powers to succeed. It is not so much about actual empowerment ("You will absolutely succeed when you buy this"), but about increasing the target's self-esteem ("I feel a (little) more confident now that I will attract these desirable women"). A straightforward example regarding the empowerment aspect of the promise is the iconic slogan by Nike, "Just do it!" It implies that you will succeed. It gives you some trust that wearing Nike products will make you a better athlete, and thus help you to reach your athletic goals.Final remarks> The Promised Land inspires people, even when they know that the promise is exaggerated or unrealistic.> Even unachievable desires are strong motivators for human behaviour.Related conceptsEmpowerment, Framing, Psychological transportationEffectiveness ***** X-Factor ***** Implementation *****(Continues...)Excerpted from Hidden Persuasion by Van Leeuwen Andrews, Van Baaren. Copyright © 2013 Marc Andrews, Dr. van Leeuwen, Prof. Dr. van Baaren and BIS Publishers. Excerpted by permission of BIS Publishers. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. solely for the personal use of visitors to this web site.

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