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DEPLOY THE POWER OF PERSUASION

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As cited by Robert Cialdini, the leading academic expert on persuasion, in *Influence - The Psychology of Persuasion*, "because" is an extremely powerful persuasive word. Keep reading, because I am going to make a very powerful point on how the underlying concepts can energize your bottom line.

Cialdini cites an experiment in which a person asks if she can cut to the front of the line at a library copier. Simply asking to move to the front of the line ("Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?") generated a 60% compliance rate. But using the word "because" in the request ("Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine *because* I'm in a rush?") increased compliance to 94%.

Even if followed by an explanation containing no reason for compliance ("Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine *because* I have to make some copies?"), the use of "because" delivered a 93% compliance rate.

It's not exactly clear why this works, although some surmise it's because "because" is one of the words that we heard most from our parents: "Mommy, why do I have to go to sleep now? Because." Or, it might be because

"because" is a grammatically complete response to "Why?" and therefore satisfies. But why it works isn't important -- because it does.

Finding and using the right persuasive words is an art and a science for those in fields as far ranging as publicity to politics. And, it's absolutely essential in maximizing your group's opportunities.

Words have impact in the context of a "conversation" -- the conversation may be a traditional one-on-one discussion or it may be in one of several other forms. For example, a conversation can take place in a larger social setting, a conversation can appear in print or in other media, and a conversation need not be immediately sequential.

Similarly, although the fact often goes unnoticed, business relationships and contract negotiations are conversations. As with any conversation of substance, these conversations don't happen in a vacuum; they take place within a context -- the subject of the conversation. (See my Profit Center article on context: [Part 7 -- Increase negotiating power by controlling context.](#))

Take for example the work of pollster and consultant Frank Luntz, author of *Words That Work*, who helped achieve dramatic results through altering the frame of the political discussion from "estate tax" to "death tax."

There's a tremendous opportunity, then, to alter the outcome of your business relationships and negotiations by controlling the context of the business conversation. This kernel of context exists in every business relationship, including the relationship among your fellow group members and the relationship between your group and a facility.

Among the multiple elements of successfully controlling the frame is the requirement that you correctly identify the essence of the issue *from your perspective* and then create and communicate the persuasive phrases and talking

points necessary to shift context. This takes considerable planning and considerable time. It also requires expertise and properly directed effort.

Your efforts will fall flat if you mistakenly believe that you are making an intellectual argument: Nothing could be further from the truth. What words and phrases create the greatest emotional impact in the target audience? How can they be utilized in your situation to control context? How can your team be trained in their use? How long will the process take? How will these efforts dovetail with the other tactics employed by your group to control the frame?

In the political context, developing and deploying the most effective phraseology and constructing the proper framing must take into account a broad swath of the public. In the context of your group's activities, your target audience is much more precise. Although in some instances you will address the community at large, the target audience is normally more specific and varies on an occurrence-by-occurrence basis; e.g., the hospital in respect of "initiative 1" and the representatives of your potential joint venture partner in respect of "initiative 2."

If your group is simply "bargaining" without engaging in sophisticated deep and long-range preparation, you're not seriously engaged in the negotiation process, and you're leaving significant money on the table.

Will this work for you? Absolutely.

Why?

Because.

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